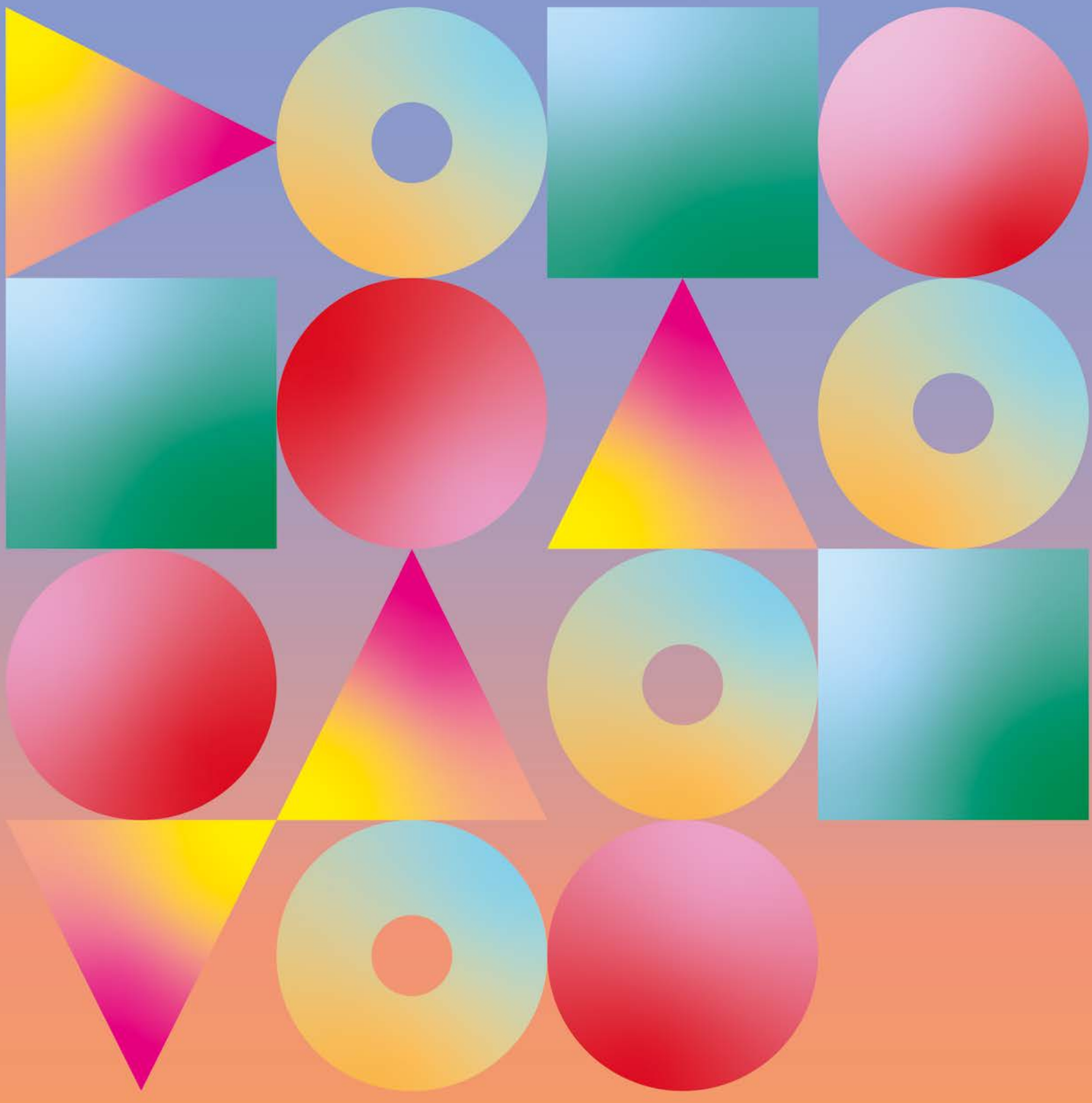
Brave, not perfect

Championing career and family

15 years of globegarden



Contents

6 Editorial
Shaping the future together

9 Brave, not perfect
Chronicles of courage: women in Switzerland – between career and family life

81 Empowering families
Chronicles of courage: from the perspective of women who shape the world of childcare

101 It takes a village
Chronicles of courage: parents explain why raising a child is a community project

110 Outgrowing the nursery
Educating children not just caring for them: how childcare has evolved in Switzerland

114 Working doesn't pay off, a second child even less
The most astonishing facts from the study by Prof. Bütler

117 The globegarden story
A good childcare adapts to what's best for the family, not the other way round

125 Future shapers
How globegarden kids imagine the future

129 Colorful spaces that inspire learning
How we are reinventing the world of childcare

Stories of encouragement

10 Children are simply not a private matter.
Kathrin Bertschy
National Councillor, Co-President of Alliance

14 There are no superwomen and supermen.
Tanja Vainio
Country President Switzerland Schneider Electric

18 I can hear very softly the mini-devil's voice that makes me feel guilty.
Giulia Tonell
Prima ballerina at the Zurich Opera House

22 Mothers have to fight against various stop signs.
Carolina Müller-Möhl
Founder and President of the Müller-Möhl Group and Foundation

26 Mom should bake the brownies.
Gina Domanig
CEO Emerald

30 My family knows how important they are to me – even when I am professionally challenged.
Prof. Nicole Ochsenbein-Kölble
Director of the Clinic for Obstetrics, University Hospital Zurich

34 You can also be a professor with children.
Prof. Dr. Sonja Perren
Professor at the University of Konstanz and University of Teacher Education Thurgau

38 You don't have to be a perfectionist.
Sandra Völler
CEO and founder Agilita AG

42 Mothers are allowed to take breaks.
Anna-Sabina Zürrer
Artist

46 Dare to accept help and to not be perfect!
Anna Mattsson
Partner McKinsey & Company

50 Thanks to good childcare, I was able to do what I love.
Mara Harvey
CEO VP Bank (Switzerland) AG

54 Have the courage to not always be perfect.
Sara Hürlimann
Dr. med. dent., founder and entrepreneur

58 Make no compromises!
Monika Bütler
Independent Economist, former professor at University of St. Gallen

62 My husband deserves a medal.
Katja Berlinger
Owner and Managing Director, Swiss Medi Kids AG

66 You have to fight against existing role models.
Jaël Malli
Musician and singer

70 My new perfect is my imperfect!
Dr. Annabella Bassler
CFO Ringier AG, Initiator EqualVoice

74 Being a working mum is an important sign for my daughter.
Claudia Lässer
CPO of blue Sport & blue News

78 Care work at home must be distributed more fairly between women and men.
Nicole Burth
Head of Communication Services and Member of the Executive Board of Swiss Post

82 As a mom, you need the right work environment.
Bettina Balliani
Educational Director, globegarden

84 Mothers need to be empowered to advance in their careers.
Galla Stambuk
Head of Family Solutions, globegarden

88 Becoming parents is a big project.
Patricia Bergès
Head of Accounting, globegarden

90 I look forward to getting back in the game.
Yvonne van Luijt
Specialist Area Manager, globegarden

92 I am happy as a mother and a professional woman.
Andrea Hebib
Area Manager, globegarden

94 Don't ever be discouraged.
Judit Kelemen
Educational Manager, globegarden

96 Good childcare is simply important.
Sara Bivetti
Educational Area Manager, globegarden

98 Care and support take the pressure of you.
Samira Poletti
Educational Manager, globegarden

Kristina Rebsamen
Christina Mair
Caroline Staehelin

— Editorial —

In a world defined by diversity and opportunities, we proudly celebrate 15 years of globegarden. This anniversary edition is an invitation to women, men, young families, and all those who dare to realize their dreams of family, career, and personal growth – not with fear of challenges, but with unwavering determination to pursue their own path.

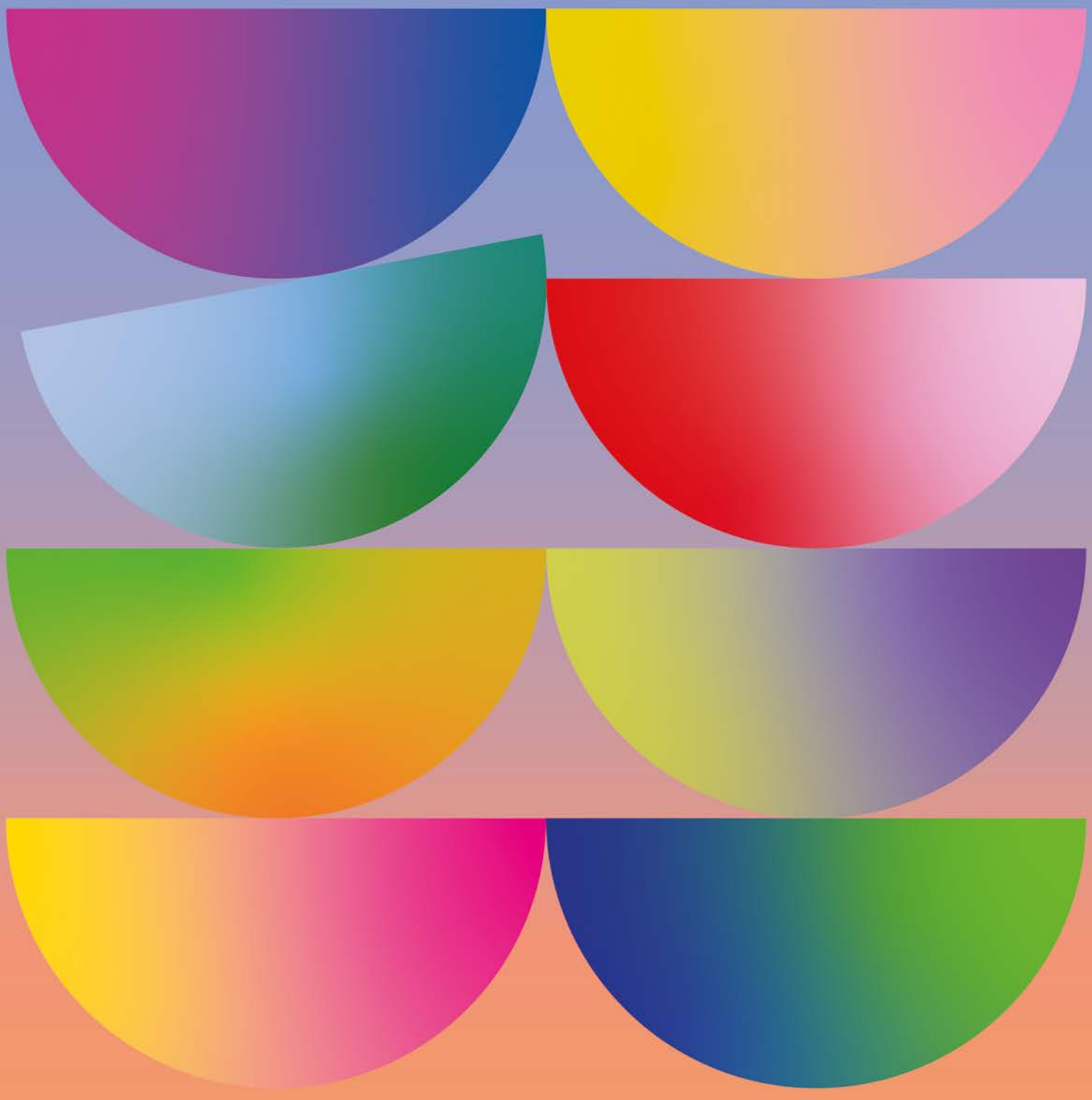
In our multifaceted Switzerland, where tradition and modernity blend harmoniously, we value the richness of diverse family forms. The growth of globegarden over the past 15 years highlights the importance of building bridges between professional life and family, finding individual paths to a fulfilling life.

Globegarden's vision, born 15 years ago, stemmed from the realization that professional ambitions and familial love can coexist. A pioneering study at the time by Professor Monika Bütler, titled "Working doesn't pay off, a second child even less", laid the foundation for our journey. A journey marked by rises and challenges, teaching us that perfection is an illusion and true courage lies in staying true to oneself.

The interviews with inspiring women from Switzerland we share speak of courage, resilience, and the art of drawing strength from vulnerability. These women demonstrate that it's not about being perfect, but about finding and growing in one's own path.

The title "Brave, not perfect" is a call to all. In a world demanding constant change, we celebrate the strength to remain authentic and not be swayed by unrealistic ideals of perfection. Globegarden, too, is not without flaws. We are a community experiencing highs and lows together, learning from our experiences.

Together, we shape the future of Switzerland, empowering each other and valuing the importance of family and career. Welcome to "Brave, not perfect – championing career and family: 15 years of globegarden." Here, we inspire one another to blaze our unique paths and fully embrace the diverse tapestry of life.



Brave not perfect

Chronicles of courage

Women in Switzerland – between work and family life

#empoweringfamilies

Children are simply not a private matter.

Kathrin Bertschy

44
National Councillor, Co-President of Alliance F
Two children (four and two years old)

Kathrin Bertschy has been active in Swiss politics for over 15 years, starting as a city councilor in Bern and working since 2011 as a National Councillor for the Green Liberal Party of Bern. The economist is committed to the major political issues of our era: European cooperation, climate protection, sustainability and equal rights for everyone. The mother of two views affordable childcare as a key infrastructure for Switzerland's economic development.

Mrs. Bertschy, why, despite many advances, does Switzerland still struggle with balancing family and career?

It's due to many factors: our system of direct democracy with a militia parliament dominated by men, which only functions because women support them; federalism, which means family support measures must be debated in each of the 26 cantonal levels; the late introduction of women's suffrage, which put women's political participation 50 years behind other countries; the prosperity of the post-war era, which, unlike in many countries, allowed for only one working parent in Switzerland; and the very persistent narrative that children and the family are a private matter, not of state concern. This narrative has primarily affected women and has been passively accepted.

What are the consequences?

Laws were shaped around this post-war family model – the man works, the woman takes care of the children – but women have been paying the price for this very patriarchal family image to this day. This is evident in the tax model, which makes a second income unattractive due to joint taxation, and in the pension system, where most women are financially much worse off in old age. This system creates barriers. And for a long time, it also prevented investments in supplementary childcare – and still does. The responsibility was delegated to the cantons and municipalities, which were more or less supportive. Now, we're hitting a wall because there's a huge gap between the economy's demand for more well-qualified women, traditional family and role models, and the inertia of our political system.

You're employed, a busy National Councillor and a mother. How do you manage it all?

I'm battling the same challenges countless other families face and hitting my limits. My partner and I consciously maintain an egalitarian role model with clear divisions of responsibility so that when I'm in charge, I can be fully there for the children. I'm "lucky" in that I have very young children and, as a politician during the pandemic, I had to attend fewer evening sessions and events. Had I started my political career 10 years earlier, it would have been different.

What role does external childcare play?

It's enormously important and fantastic – my children go to childcare or kindergarten two to three days a week. It enriches them because they are pedagogically supported, experience things with other children and do activities on a scale we could not offer them.

That sounds very good.

Yes, but it's not enough. For many middle-class families, childcare is barely affordable. For many Swiss families, the monthly

childcare bill consumes a significant portion of their income. On average, 35 percent of an income – in no other country in the world do parents have to spend such a high proportion of their earnings on supplementary childcare as in Switzerland. Switzerland must be a country where gainful employment is also worthwhile for middle-class families and especially for women. And it's not the rule in politics that it works. Politics in Switzerland often occurs outside the opening hours of supplementary family institutions. There are also no fixed voting times that can be scheduled into the daily routine as known by other parliaments. We vote when the last item on the agenda has been discussed. I'm also part-time employed and working. Without grandparents to cover all the irregularities, this wouldn't be feasible. Moreover, it's not a good quality of parliamentary democracy if it can actually only be exercised by people who are extremely flexible or receive great support in their private lives. This results in underrepresentation of population groups like young parents and makes it even more difficult to change the framework conditions for better compatibility.

What personal price do you pay?

It was my free choice. But yes, sports, maintaining friendships, leisure time and sleep are all scarce commodities for me. And professionally, I can't do everything I want or might be able to do. But that's the case for everyone with children. What's important to me is that my children are wonderfully cared for and educated, and they thrive thanks to stable care situations inside and outside the family. And I consciously chose this path, especially the political activity, because I can fight for something important to me and this country and also for my children. It gives me a lot of strength and motivates me. I have contributed significantly to the introduction of care vouchers in Bern. This has led to significant relief for families, even if they are still set too low, which affects the middle class. That's why I am committed at the federal level to the childcare law so that we finally get a reliable and good infrastructure.

You talk about infrastructure. What would this look like in concrete terms?

We need a reliable childcare infrastructure, just as the state offers in other areas. And we need to make it affordable for those who need it daily to pursue their employment or education. Just as the SBB aligns its train network, schedule and prices with commuters, not those who occasionally go on weekend trips.

We must move away from the thinking that infrastructures are made of concrete and steel. In the past, we invested in infrastructures that were significantly responsible for the prosperity of this country and the ability of our population to be employed. Reliable and affordable childcare is the infrastructure needed by today's workforce. It's about operating costs, investing in the quality of care, and in the education and training of staff, about fair wages. Empirical studies show that quality childcare encourages young parents, especially mothers, to maintain their employment. The Federal Court has held in leading cases on post-marital maintenance that women must be economically independent – the life-shaping marriage no longer exists, and the Federal Council wants to reform widow's pensions in the same direction. In short: women must be able to take care of themselves even more strongly in the future, especially if they have children. So we must also give them the chance to remain employed without interruption. Alongside affordable, high-quality childcare infrastructure, we need parental leave shared equally so that women no longer bear the risk of loss of earnings alone. We must create opportunities for parents to shoulder family responsibility and employment equally. Other countries are already doing this, it's high time that Switzerland catches up.

You have two daughters. What would you like to pass on to them when they are grown up?

That they live out their calling and demand from themselves, their environment and politics that this is compatible with a family. Knowing that it's not always easy. And that they fight for things to change for the better.

"This narrative persists stubbornly but is far from accurate: in the past, children have always been a woman's matter. They pay the price with low incomes, insufficient pensions and by putting their careers on hold. It's time for reliable and affordable childcare infrastructures."



There are no superwomen and super-men.

Tanja Vainio

48
Country President Switzerland at Schneider Electric
and Member of the Board of Directors Franke Group
Three children (a 13 year old and 16 year old twins)

Tanja Vainio is the Swiss head of an international electrical engineering conglomerate. Significant societal themes such as digitalization, energy transition, climate neutrality, sustainability and also gender equality are part of her everyday professional life. For her, as a mother of three children, it is crucial that progress in this area is also personally relevant to advance and shape these issues. A conversation about change, modern families and lived gender equality.

Tanja, what is your perspective on the change concerning gender equality?

In my view, gender equality has many dimensions. The equality between men and women is one of them. But it is crucial if we want to be a fair and progressive society. Switzerland has made a lot of progress recently in eliminating the still existing discrepancy in gender equality: in politics, in the job market and in the educational system. But there are still challenges, particularly regarding role distribution, professional advancement opportunities and affordable childcare. I deliberately say "affordable" because there are now a lot of offerings in urban areas. But for many families, it is still too expensive.

How do we change that?

We are all called upon to act: politics, businesses and society. Many companies are keeping up with the times and offer families some benefits that make balancing work and family life easier so that both parents can work if they want to. But the awareness of gender-specific stereotypes needs to change much more significantly. We need strong role models who lead the way and show that you can be and do whatever you want. Each of us can also reflect on our own behavior and question ourselves. Am I a good example as an employee, supervisor or friend? That also brings about a change in mindset. I am convinced that a society with gender equality also promotes economic progress.

You grew up in Finland. What was the understanding of gender equality in your home?

Both of my parents were employed. My mother even had a better position than my father. That definitely defined my understanding of gender equality, independence, personal commitment and readiness to work. In all families I knew, both parents worked. Not just my family, the entire environment shaped and inspired me to be brave and set ambitious goals for myself. I learned early on that everyone should pursue their professional goals – regardless of gender.

What has been your experience in balancing family and career?

It's always a challenge for mothers, but a beautiful one. I think every mother has moments when she wonders if she can manage everything, especially at times when you are very challenged professionally or the children might be going through a difficult phase at school. Flexibility and organization help. It is important to acknowledge that you can have everything, but not all at the same time. No one expects that from you. When the children were small, I consciously chose a job that required me to travel less. There are phases when you must set priorities. For me, at that moment, it was the family. You should not decide that alone but involve your partner and also the employer. I have always experienced a lot of support and flexibility from my employer. At the end of the day, none of us

is a superhuman. I am not a superwoman, and I suspect there are no supermen. People who support you are irreplaceable. As a mother, you need people you can rely on. Our parents, for example, do not live nearby. But, if we ask them, they come immediately to support us.

Is it easy to ask for help?

No. The advice is always easy to give to others: just ask if someone can help you. But it was never easy for me. I think it's not easy for many women. When my children were small, I should have done that much more – just to ask for support.

Were there particular situations where you would ask for help in retrospect?

There are always stressful phases in the job: a new job or an important project, for example. For us as parents, the first six months after a move were always very demanding. We moved frequently due to our jobs. Then you have to set up everything anew: a new school, new doctor, new friends. We always took great care that our three children settled in well and found friends. But one must not forget: we parents also need friends. When you work, you have to get used to the fact that there will always be appointments at school or childcare that you cannot attend because you are in the office or have other professional commitments. I have always received support from my husband at all times. Parenting is a joint matter for us. If I couldn't, he would go and vice versa.

Aside from that, do you have a division of tasks at home?

Since our third child, my husband has been a "Full-time dad." He is at home for our children and takes on many tasks and our entire organization. Since the children's grandparents live far away, this is a super solution for us. We decided on this when our youngest was one year old, and we moved to Hungary for work. At that time, there was a lot on our plate. It was not manageable with two working parents.

Was it challenging for him to put his career aside?

To do that, you need a great understanding of your partner and healthy self-confidence. Of course, people ask him curious questions: you don't work? When will you go back to your job? You have to be very stable in your self-confidence. For us, it was always clear: if one stays at home, then it's my husband. But we discussed it together, talked it over and weighed it up. Just because you agree in theory doesn't mean it works in practice. Recognition and appreciation are very important. It's not just about recognizing my career but also about appreciating what he does for our family. Gender equality also means recognition for both roles.

What obstacles do you see today for women who want to balance family and career?

From my perspective, we need even more childcare options. I also mean day schools. Small children can already be looked after all day, but as soon as they are older, it becomes more difficult again. In addition, there are still traditional role models: the woman stays with the children, the man works. If the mother goes back to her job, there are resentments in the environment against this decision. But a lot has already changed. If mothers work, they often have financial disadvantages due to high childcare costs. That should not be the case. And finally, there are often still inflexible working conditions. When the children are small, you just have to reschedule sometimes and work from home or take one day longer and the other shorter.

Do you have any tips for young women facing the challenge of balancing family and career?

Quite simply: go for it. Be persistent. Don't let headwinds irritate you. Set clear goals. That helps to know and apply your priorities. I believe that's difficult for women. Men formulate their goals very simply. I want to be CEO. I want to be president. Women should trust themselves much more. And role models help. When you see that someone has made it, you know it's doable. Think about yourself. With women, work, family, friends often come first, and at the very end themselves. But you also have to take care of yourself to find your own balance. For me personally, it has always been important to have a network of other working mothers. You can talk about many things, you get support. And you learn from the stories of other working mothers that they also cook with water and you are not alone. None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes and learn from them. Allow yourself to not want to be perfect.

We talked a lot about gender equality. Why do you think so many care offerings in Switzerland are led by women or carried out by women?

I think it shows the commitment and solidarity of women. They advocate for the needs of other women and families. Women use their skills and knowledge to create the social structures that help families combine their careers and family life. They help men and women, thus creating equal opportunities for all. The work done in care centers deserves extreme recognition. And one must be aware, here it's not women standing up for women, but women for families. They make an important contribution to society.

“You learn from the stories of other working mothers that they too are just cooking with water and you are not alone. None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes and learn from them. Allow yourself to be imperfect.”



I can hear very softly the mini-devil's voice that makes me feel guilty.

Giulia Tonelli

40
Principal Ballerina at Zurich Opera House
Two children (one and four years old)

Giulia Tonelli is the prima ballerina at the Zurich Opera House. Although having children as a dancer is no longer uncommon today, it remains a balancing act to combine dancing with family life. This is demonstrated by the documentary "Becoming Giulia," which follows her life journey as she seeks and finds her way back into the elite ballet company after her first maternity leave. The native Italian often feels torn between her two great passions, ballet and her children. Sometimes she even rushes home between rehearsals to spend half an hour with her two sons. In the conversation, she explains why her choice makes her happy despite all the effort.

Mrs. Tonelli, how does a principal ballerina organize family life?

It's a challenge. My husband and I share the tasks equally. He is an engineer and also travels a lot for his job. Nevertheless, a larger portion of the tasks remains with him. Often on Saturdays, when I have a performance, he is alone with our two sons all day. If he wants to see a performance of mine, we need a babysitter. I love my job, but also my children. Sometimes I run home between rehearsals to be able to spend half an hour with them. My mother then tells me that it's too much and too exhausting for me. When I am at work, I should be fully there. But for me, it's a conscious decision. You simply pay a price if you want to combine a career and motherhood.

How did you grow up? Were both parents working?

Yes. That definitely shaped me: seeing that the mother works, that she has her own interests and pursues things that she enjoys and that have nothing to do with her role as a mom. That shapes little girls because they see what is possible and it awakens ambitions. Maybe I wouldn't be where I am today if my mother hadn't lived that way for me. My parents were politically interested, and in the evenings they often went to events. Then a babysitter was with us, or my older brother just looked after me. What is special about my parents is the support I have always experienced. I only decided to become a professional ballet dancer at 17. Normally you make that decision much earlier, so it was clear that it would be hard for me. But my parents never doubted me and entrusted me with the confidence to pursue a path they didn't know. Both had university degrees and no creative professions.

Is it particularly difficult to return to a physically demanding job like that of a ballerina after giving birth?

For me, it was always clear: I want to become a mother while I am still dancing professionally. As a ballerina, you know that your career will end at some point for age reasons. That's a big change in life because you grow up with ballet, with dancing, from when you're a child. It's a big part of your personality from a young age. You have to process the end of your career emotionally. I couldn't have imagined managing this identity change and growing into my new role as a mother at the same time. Therefore, I wanted to start my family beforehand. For me, it worked out very well. I knew exactly that I wanted to quickly participate in rehearsals again and be on stage. I wanted to come back and prove to everyone that I could become an even better dancer right now. It worked – with the first and also with the second child.

Do you sometimes feel torn between your two great passions, dancing and family?

Yes. After the birth of my second son, I returned to the stage early and only took a short break. I am ambitious and push

myself. But the second time, I definitely felt more doubts than before. My older son is now starting kindergarten, the younger one is at home with a nanny. It's very hard for me to entrust my child to childcare. He doesn't go there every weekday to begin with. I want him to be able to get used to it. Leaving the little one with the nanny is also challenging for me. Sometimes I feel a strong sense of guilt when I leave them. I feel trapped between two wonderful roles: that of the mother and that of the dancer. I want to fulfill both as best I can. When I am at rehearsals, I often hear this mini-devil's voice telling me: you should actually be with your children. I am not ashamed to openly say that I do everything I do with a sense of guilt in this phase. I know that you can have a wonderful connection with your children even if you don't see them all day. My father also traveled a lot. Nevertheless, we always had a very good relationship. But it gnaws at me to know that I am not the "perfect mother".

What does the "perfect mother" look like in your view?

That's a good question. The one who bakes the best apple pie? The one who crafts the most creative things with her children? I can't exactly say whether there is such a thing as a perfect mother at all. When I am in the park or on the playground with the children and tell other mothers that I work full time, I often receive astonished reactions. But does that make me a good or bad mother? Certainly not. I can honestly say that I miss my children when I work. Perhaps this feeling has intensified after the second child because I know. I won't have a third child and now is the last chance to directly experience this wonderful time when they are growing up. It's just a feeling that I always carry with me.

What would make working life easier for mothers?

It is very important that there are good childcare options. These must be affordable. Our costs for childcare and the nanny are enormous. They exceed my salary. And I think we as a society should talk about whether 16 weeks of maternity protection after birth is not too little. In Finland or Germany, you can stay with your children for over a year. I'm not saying that's the best solution, because that seems like a long time to me. But maybe we can find a middle way. Above all, this should not only concern women. Fathers should also have opportunities to take time for their children. We as a society must consider what can be done so that parents of small children can do justice to their job. There are women who really love their job, but feel that they simply do not have the opportunity to combine it with family.

What do you wish for the future of your children?

It is very important to me to have values and to pass these on to my children. I hope that these are a basis for them to later become exactly the person they want to be. And I hope that I am a role model for them to find and practice a profession that really fulfills them and that they don't just do for the money. Having goals that you pursue out of genuine passion and true curiosity is wonderful. And it also helps you make tough decisions.

“What does a perfect mother look like? Is it the one who bakes the best apple pie? The one who crafts the most creative things with her children? I can’t exactly say whether there is such a thing as a perfect mother at all.”



MOTHERS HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST VARIOUS STOP SIGNS.

Carolina Müller-Möhl

54
Founder and President of the Müller-Möhl Group and Foundation
One child (25 years old)

Carolina Müller-Möhl is the Chairwoman of the Board of the Müller-Möhl Group. Over 10 years ago, she founded the Müller-Möhl Foundation. In the foundation, she consolidates her extensive socio-political commitment to education and the better reconciliation of work and family life. Being actively involved in driving change and having a say is, for her, a unique privilege that should be taken advantage of, especially by women.

Mrs. Müller-Möhl, what is your view on the compatibility of career and family in Switzerland?

I know that we still struggle with this. There are various interconnected reasons that make the whole issue very complex. I see the causes on three levels: socio-cultural, systemic and the individual level of the woman herself.

Could you elaborate on that?

In Switzerland, we still have a very conservative understanding of roles between men and women. She is the homemaker, he is the breadwinner. This was just confirmed again by recent surveys of both genders and shows the problems on the socio-cultural level. When we talk about systemic issues, we are discussing the non-ideal conditions, such as the lack of and the too-expensive childcare spots, as well as the lack of comprehensive all-day schools and the negative employment incentives for women due to the current tax system.

And the individual level?

I mean the socialization that one experiences as a woman. This includes the societal norms already mentioned, the parental role model, and very banal things like the fact that Playmobil doesn't produce pilot figurines. This may seem unimportant but has a decisive influence on the development, ambitions and goals of young women.

And the consequences are...

In Switzerland, although 76 percent of women are employed, more than half of them work in part-time jobs of less than 50 percent. This means that taxpayers' money going into the education of these women, never results in a job. With very small workloads, it is hardly possible to really establish oneself in a profession.

This trend toward part-time work begins at the age of 30, when women become mothers for the first time, and increases with each additional child. However, the child ratio in Switzerland remains at 1.4.

This means that mothers who want to work more than just part-time must fight against these various stop signs and stereotypes. This requires a considerable amount of courage, a lot of perseverance and resilience. You must be able to continually motivate and push yourself.

Who influenced you as a child?

My sister and I would probably be referred to as "latchkey kids" today. We were very independent from an early age. Our parents, both 100 percent employed, exemplified equality to us. Both ran a practice together in our house, they went to congresses together, and took care of us children communally. In my memory, I was quite content with that.

You became a widow overnight due to a tragic event in 2000, suddenly had to take on a huge amount of responsibility, and threw yourself fully into professional life. Additionally, you became a person of public interest. How did you manage that?

It was extremely challenging. Looking back, I believe I succeeded because I was able to activate various strengths within me. I can make decisions very quickly and learned to solve problems as a child. If my bike had a flat tire and my parents were at work, I had to find a solution to get home.

Have you experienced envy or skepticism because you are successful as a mother and entrepreneur?

I think so. But I don't want to be guided by that. My profession brings me a lot of joy. I can draw a lot of energy from my activity and the opportunities that have presented themselves to me and that I was able to seize. That's why I would do it all over again today!

Looking back on your experience and in light of the ongoing political debates around the issue of reconciling family and career in Switzerland, what conclusions do you draw?

Although we are legally equal in Switzerland, we do not live it. Women should not give up their independence when they start a family – especially not in financial terms. It's a call to self-responsibility, not to rely on parents, on the partner, on marriage or on the state as a woman. This means maintaining an employment level of around 70 percent because that is about the amount needed for financial security. Mothers should stay professionally active and not make wrong compromises. And choosing a partner who not only affirms this endeavor but actively supports it. Because here too, the statistics are clear: 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce. There is the Gender Pension Gap and the Child Penalty. Both mean significant financial disadvantages for women.

You mentioned childcare provision as part of the framework conditions: what importance does this have for ensuring the independence of mothers?

A very important one, but that alone is not enough. We need a whole catalog of measures to set incentives so that more subsidies and childcare spots actually result in more employment. If after childcare there is no all-day school offer, the second income is not tax-beneficial or we continue to convey classic role models, we will not make progress.

Is that a state task?

Yes, the state also has a role to play. Besides our human capital, we don't have much in Switzerland. I think it is economically nonsensical, for example, if over 50 percent of all students at universities and colleges are women who then – when they become mothers – drop out of the workforce. Preventing this is in the interest of politics and the whole society. Better reconciliation of family and career is an investment in our future, just like compulsory education.

What advice would you give to young women – or young men?

To actively work for these changes and to take advantage of the unique privilege in this country to always have a say. And especially to elect more women to political bodies who can contribute to these issues.

“This means that mothers who want to work more than just part time must fight against these various stop signs and stereotypes. This requires a considerable amount of courage, a lot of perseverance and resilience.”



Mom should bake the brownies.

Gina Domanig

60
CEO Emerald
One child (26 years old)

In 2000, Gina Domanig founded Emerald Ventures, the first independent clean tech venture capital fund in Europe. Previously, she served as Senior Vice President at Sulzer, a multinational Swiss company. The native American has always worked full time throughout her career – even after the birth of her son. When her husband suggested she could take a career break, she just laughed and is still very happy with her decision today.

Gina Domanig chooses her words carefully, yet is clear and distinct: "Not working was simply never an option for me," she states. The reason lies in the cultural imprinting of her home country, America. She lived there until she moved with her husband to his homeland, Switzerland, at the end of the eighties. "As long as I can remember, everyone around me has always pursued a professional activity," she recalls. "I just don't know any different." Shortly before moving to Switzerland, her husband suggested that she might not need to work in Europe. "Today, he knows it was a strange proposal. Work is a significant part of me, a part of my identity," says Gina Domanig. Without her profession, she simply would not be happy.

The day has only 24 hours

Besides her role at Emerald Technology Ventures, Gina Domanig serves on the board of the insurance company *Die Mobiliar,* on the International Advisory Board of the Innovation Fund Denmark, holds the Executive Co-Chair Innovation at the World Energy Council, and has positions on the boards of several tech startups. Our interview was scheduled just before she flew to Singapore. Emerald has offices there and in Toronto. Today, it is again possible for her to travel a lot for business. Her son is grown and now enjoys time without his parents. When he was younger and needed care, the investor relied on the support of a trained nanny. "We were very grateful that this was possible for us," she remembers. For her, it was a time when she often had to make decisions. "I decided then for my work and my son. That meant for myself that I often felt that not everyone was one hundred percent happy with it. Be it in the family, at my son's school, among friends or just myself."

What made it easier were the working conditions in the nineties: little digital communication, no video conferences, no emails. "When you left the office, you also left work. You couldn't work from anywhere. When I was home, I had time for my family." Did she have to give up anything back then? "It doesn't work without sacrifice," she says. "I saw my friends and girlfriends little during that time. I hardly went out, was not at networking events. When I started again, people looked at me in surprise and asked why they had never seen me before. Simply because I was either at work or with my family. But that was a conscious choice, and it was exactly the right decision. You also have to be able to live with the less positive consequences."

A communal responsibility

Gina's husband also always worked full time. "He has always supported me incredibly in everything." She emphasizes this important factor for her. For her, it is crucial to recognize that a family and a career are the joint responsibility of two people. Since her husband had to travel less for work than she did, it was easier for Gina to coordinate her trips. That's just one example of how they organized themselves to create time for

the family and to support each other. “For example, I love to cook. He hates it. I prepared meals and left little notes for my two boys about what they should eat on days when I was away,” she laughs.

What still irritates her to this day is the choice of words by people. “I was often asked if my husband would help me. I think it’s important to understand that it’s not the sole responsibility of the woman to take care of a child. The father doesn’t just help; he shares the duties and responsibilities with the mother. It’s a division of tasks on an equal footing.” At the time when her son was attending school, this perception was not yet a matter of course. One story remained particularly memorable to her. When she returned home from a business trip at 11 pm, she found a handwritten note from her son in the hallway. On it, he had noted a simple request: “Mom, I need 25 brownies tomorrow morning.” The brownies were not baked. Instead, Gina drove to the bakery and bought cakes. “Of course, there were no brownies, and I had to buy something else,” she laughs. Then she becomes serious again. “For me, this showed that the entire society must recognize that it’s not always Mom who bakes. I asked my then six-year-old son why he didn’t ask his dad to bake the brownies. He would have been home. And his answer was that he noted it for me because the teacher explicitly said to ask his mother.”

Do not be deterred

Since her son is an only child, Gina placed great importance on him regularly being with other children. She herself has three siblings and loved growing up with them. Therefore, she was grateful for the opportunity to let him be cared for at childcare two days a week. “He used to cry terribly when I left. But then the childcare called me later and said I shouldn’t worry. He usually went straight to the other kids to play with them.” Nevertheless, the family also needed the nanny’s help on those days. Childcare did not yet offer full-day care back then.

Gina advises mothers who want to reconcile family and work to accept that you can’t have everything and there will always be something that isn’t perfect. Anyone who carefully weighs their decisions will find a solution. She herself never perceived the sacrifices she had to make as negative. The awareness of having actively decided for family and work gave her a tailwind. “I wouldn’t want to impose my life design on anyone because everyone deals with the demanding aspects of it differently. People should decide for themselves what is best for them. What society expects of them should not play a role in this decision.”

“I think it’s important to understand that it’s not the sole responsibility of the woman to take care of a child. The father doesn’t just help; he shares the duties and responsibilities with the mother. It’s a division of tasks on an equal footing.”



My family knows how important they are to me – even when I am professionally challenged.

Prof. Nicole Ochsenbein-Kölble

50
Director of the Clinic for Obstetrics at the University Hospital Zurich, Lecturer UZH
Four children (between 13 and 20 years old)

In September 2022, for the first time, a woman, Prof. Nicole Ochsenbein-Kölble, became the head of the Maternity Clinic at the largest University Hospital in Switzerland, the University Hospital Zurich. She is also a mother of four children. As a lecturer at ETH Zurich, she researches various scientific questions and is constantly furthering her education. A conversation about full schedules and the important support from the family.

Prof. Ochsenbein, how do you manage to meet all your obligations?

With a very patient husband and very patient children.

So your husband is not a doctor?

No, he is an economist and fortunately can manage his own time. He is much more flexible than I am. But that does not mean he doesn't occasionally remind me of family duties when I'm working through a weekend again.

Did you ever have to choose between family and career?

No. For me, it was always clear that I wanted children and a family first. At the same time, I always wanted to stand on my own two feet. I was just lucky that my husband supported me – and my children do too. He finds my research projects almost more exciting than I do and thus motivates me when I come home exhausted and still have to sit down at the desk. My children now cook for me. In short: my family supports me tremendously. Otherwise, it wouldn't work. That's the main reason why I am where I am today. I have one of the most beautiful professions, even though it is very demanding. And it is essentially the meaningfulness that is crucial in being able to shoulder both.

You have four children, what does that mean?

There is nothing better. And if my husband had come into my life even earlier, we might have continued this discussion a bit further.

What did it mean to have four young children at home?

It was exhausting. We tried everything: childcare, an au pair, and more. My in-laws moved close to us because they were so thrilled after the birth of my first daughter. She had them wrapped around her finger so much that we had coverage for the fringe hours. That was perfect. So we didn't have to take her to childcare and pick her up because their opening hours were not compatible with our working hours – and certainly not with mine as a doctor. When the other children came, we hired someone. From two children on, it pays off.

Were there moments when you felt uncomfortable as a mother?

Yes, there were and there still are. Like when my children had some performance in kindergarten or school, and all the parents were already sitting on their little chairs and I sneaked in, just in time for my child's performance. Then to ask yourself: what was it just now that you almost didn't make it again? Those were such moments. Or when you would have had to

divide yourself by 10, which simply isn't possible. Once, when my son was four, the phone rang because I was on call. We had other plans, but I had to go and explained to him that someone was bleeding and I had to help. He asked: why are you a helper? But on the other hand, I also learned to recognize what really matters: to be there for your own child despite everything. That has always brought me back into balance. And I've always told myself, should my children reproach me for not being there, then I would hang up my job.

But your children have never blamed you?

No, but there was also no reason. When I am at home, I am there. Sure, emergencies can happen – I am a doctor, I work in a hospital, it just comes with the territory. But I am in the fortunate position of having a family that knows they are the most important thing to me, even when I am very professionally challenged. That's why it's also so important to me that there is leisure time for us. We have clearly defined that. Occasionally something comes up, then everything is turned upside down again. But this flexibility works very well for us.

How do you assess the situation for working mothers in Switzerland?

I was abroad, in Belgium, where there are state childcare centers and no discussion at all about women going back to work despite having children. Here in Switzerland, parents have to organize themselves. And every working mother knows what that means. I also believe that childcare centers are mostly led by women because they are ultimately the ones who suffer if they do not organize themselves.

What experience have you had yourself?

Twenty years ago, it was much worse than now. Back then, there were almost no places; you actually had to apply for a spot before you were pregnant. Fortunately, this has improved. But in the end, it remains the responsibility of the parents and thus often the mothers to organize themselves.

Have you experienced professional disadvantages as a mother?

No, not in my perception. But I also never missed out because my children were sick or anything. I always got it organized, of course, because I had family support. For me, the breastfeeding period was a very good time because I finally had time to write my papers. So in that sense, I've always signaled that children are no reason not to work.

What would you advise your daughters and sons?

That they find the right partner. That's the be-all and end-all. And that there is always a way, you just have to want it. And that they make sure to stand on their own two feet – not to be dependent. That's how we raise them too. And I'm already looking forward to grandchildren! Then I can pass on the support I've received from my children to them too.

You are the director of a clinic, so you also have the responsibility for younger female doctors who may have children. How do you experience this situation?

The experience of one's own pregnancy and children is very valuable, especially in obstetrics. Anyone who has never experienced it or doesn't have children at home can't understand what it means to have to change diapers, wait for an appointment, and the baby wants to do something else at the same time. Or that as a woman, you function differently during pregnancy than otherwise.

Even if the mothers are temporarily absent as a workforce?

Of course, I could say as an employer, a pregnancy means a loss. Or a working mother is a burden because she needs flexibility. But there is always a solution. Our children are the future. That's why I support it. Of course, if my entire team is pregnant at the same time, I might not see it that way anymore. But if I don't have understanding and flexibility for this situation, then I wonder who will.

“I also believe that childcare centers are mostly led by women because they are ultimately the ones who suffer if they do not organize themselves.”



You can also be a professor with children.

Prof. Dr. Sonja Perren

53
Professor at the University of Konstanz and University of Education Thurgau
Two children (17 and nine years old)

The scientist Sonja Perren grew up in the canton of Valais. There, a traditional division of roles between mother and father shaped everyday life and her belief that as a woman, one could only choose between family or career. This only changed after she moved to the city, where she met professors with children at the university. A conversation about the expectations of others and the importance of good childcare.

Prof. Perren, is life with children different in rural areas compared to urban environments?

From my point of view, I would say that was the case when I was growing up. There were different expectations about the division of tasks within the family. My mother did not work. When we children were at home, she was always there. My father was a teacher. This gave him a certain flexibility. Childcare, however, was primarily the responsibility of my mother. That was also expected by the environment at that time. There were hardly any childcare options in the villages. But a lot has been done. Today, you can also find an appropriate offer here, but still a much smaller one than in the cities. Nevertheless, I believe that after the birth of my children, I would not have returned to my profession quickly, but would have stayed at home longer, had I still lived in my home village at that time.

Did this role distribution shape you?

For a long time, I thought that as a woman, I would have to decide for one: children or career. I only understood that this was not necessary when I moved to the city for my scientific work at the university. The academic environment showed me it's possible! There were several professors who had children. It takes a social environment that shows you that you can do both.

Were there still moments when you thought that both at the same time might not be possible?

No, never (laughs.) But I have felt the pressure of expectations from others. Unfortunately, there is still the expectation that the mother stays at home or works a maximum of part time. Even today, I am hardly asked what I actually do for work. This firmly rooted idea is really outdated by now.

What role did good childcare options play for you and your family?

A very big one. I returned to my full-time profession relatively quickly after the birth of our first daughter. For my husband, it was never an issue whether I stayed at home. Instead, it was natural for me to resume my work at the university. This support from the partner is very important. After the birth of the second daughter, I reduced my working hours for three years. Both children went to childcare quickly. Also, one of the grandmothers intensively supported us in the care. The childcare made it possible for me to pursue my profession and do justice to my family.

Do you have any advice for young mothers?

Don't lose faith that both are possible. Stay flexible, look for solutions, and above all: find a good care situation for your child. It is important that you are sure that your child feels comfortable here and that the childcare offers high quality. Good quality gives a good feeling.

You yourself research the question of how, among other things, this quality affects the social and emotional development of children. What makes for good quality in a childcare?

I would like to answer this question from a personal and a scientific perspective. Let's start with my subjective view. It's important that the childcare is a good choice from the child's perspective. This includes that the care for the child is predictable and continuous, so there are specific childcare days. It's good if there aren't too many caregivers, so the children can form a bond with them. And for me, it was always the gut feeling that I had as a mother that was decisive. Looking back, I can identify situations, for example at mealtime, where I simply accepted the way the childcare handled it. I thought my child had to go through that. I would not accept that today. Mothers should dare to speak up if they feel uncomfortable with something. Good childcares are always open to all concerns of parents. This also means that the doors of the childcare are literally open to mothers and fathers. For example, being allowed to really go into the rooms when dropping off and picking up or being allowed to observe regularly. Good childcares offer the child the opportunity to learn and develop. It is not just "looked after".

And what does the scientific view say?

I examine, to put it simply, the social and emotional development of children aged three to six. I am particularly interested in two factors that influence this: one is the influence of playmates. The other, as already mentioned, is the quality of the childcare. Here, quality is mainly characterized by emotional and behavioral support and active learning support. Children should feel comfortable in the care and receive emotional support from the caregivers. That is important. On the other hand, the childcare environment should be designed so that the child has experiential worlds where they can learn in an age-appropriate way. The caregivers are there for the child and accompany them through these worlds. The interaction with them is not only emotionally supportive but also educational.

Looking into the future, what will childcare look like in 10 years?

I hope that the understanding that childcare is also about childhood education becomes even more widespread. A childcare is an educational institution that has a task. I think that care will become even more professional and the overall quality of childcare will increase. A lot has already changed. And I hope for more recognition for the profession of caregiver. This is often laughed off as "playing with children", yet it is such an important phase of the kids' lives. Accompanying them is an important, responsible and privileged activity.

"The childcare made it possible for me to pursue my profession and do justice to my family."



You don’t have to be a perfectionist.

Sandra Völler

CEO and Founder of Agilita AG
Two children

Sandra Völler founded her IT company in 2001. Today, she and her team of over 200 employees support Swiss SMEs and international companies on their journey of digital transformation. The business informatics specialist places particular importance on her professional and financial independence. It was always clear to her that starting a family would only be an issue once her personal career goals had been achieved. Reflections of an entrepreneur convinced that women should have the confidence to successfully combine their own careers with starting a family.

"I consciously decided not to have children before I reached a certain point in my career. This was my individual decision, which fit me and my own goals. I wanted to have certain qualifications and expertise so that I could always be confident in finding a corresponding job. When I founded my first and second companies, I became a mother during the startup phase. It gave me a real energy boost. Enjoying my work has always been very important to me. The job is simply a part of me. I could never have stayed at home. If my husband had come back from work and told me about his eventful day – I wouldn't have wanted to hear his stories."

Good organization is essential

"To be able to work as a mother, you need a strong partnership. The man must contribute his part. That means he must take the children to the doctor, pick them up from childcare or kindergarten, cook and take on other everyday tasks. A 'Dad Day' once a week is not enough. If only one parent has to shoulder everything around the children, it doesn't work. That was never a problem for us. We have always been very well organized. I know what I can trust myself to do and where I reach personal limits and need support. As a mother, you then also have to learn that it's okay if your child doesn't run into your arms first when it falls down, but maybe to grandma because it spends a lot of time with her. You have to let go and accept if your husband reacts differently to the children than you would have."

Stereotypical role models are still firmly anchored in society

"We live in a small village. I've often been confronted with the belief that many people still think you're a bad mother if you work and have your children looked after. Three months after the birth of our daughters, I started working again. Because it was important to me. Because I wanted to be independent. I could feel that some people thought that this was not good for our family. Sometimes people even ignored me on the street. My husband had a simple explanation for that: I show that something is possible that many are still convinced is not possible. It never bothered me. The ones who suffered were rather my daughters, who were asked by other mothers on the way to school if it was bad for them that their mother wasn't at home. But men have also sometimes asked me in surprise where my children are now. Unfortunately, the stereotypical role models are still firmly anchored in society."

Always give 150 percent

"For mothers, one realization is very important from my point of view: you don't have to be a perfectionist. Women tend to want to give 150 percent all the time: in the family, at work, among friends, in hobbies and everything else. Sometimes you have to be satisfied with less. This is certainly difficult because the environment is still very value-conservative. We have

experienced that we were critically viewed for a lifestyle that worked very well for us as a family. It's up to everyone how they design family life. But before you have children, you should be clear as a woman what is important to you and how you want to shape not only the future of the family but also your own. I had a conversation with a primary school teacher who reported that today many children still have this traditional role model as a future vision: a man who earns the money, children and a house. That needs to change."

Childcare needs more than just mom

"From my point of view, childcare in Switzerland is still not sufficient. There are now more and good offers, but affordability remains a challenge for families who do not have an above-average income. I would welcome more state support in this area. The existing system also assumes that there is always someone at home to look after the children. We had a triple net besides the care options to ensure that someone was there for the girls: we parents, a nanny and my mother. For the children, it was great because everyone structured the everyday life differently and they were allowed to experience a lot of variety. Nevertheless, rituals like having breakfast and dinner together were very important to us. And on weekends, we always did something together as a family. I largely avoided evening events. I simply placed my priority on the family. That's also part of it: to give up something for a certain time and consciously decide for something else."

Mom is the coolest

"Now my two daughters are already young women. The nicest compliment for me is that they tell me today that I was always the coolest mom for them and still am. When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I was at home for a year. The children quickly got used to it then and found it good to have me around all day. But at the same time, they also saw how much fun it is for me to work and make things happen. So then they also said that it's good that I can work again."

Stay independent

"Do I advise my daughters and other young women something? First, certainly: keep your economic independence. Always. A marriage is no guarantee of adequate material provision. I also find it important: choose a partner with whom you can really imagine starting a family. You need shared values. It's an illusion to believe that things that are difficult at the beginning of a relationship will suddenly change when things get serious. A family always involves both. Both must invest time. If you can't take freedoms, you will mostly fall behind as a woman. Talk in advance about how you want to shape family life. If you work only one day a week as a woman, the job will not fulfill you. That also includes something that for me is at the beginning of everything: find a job that you enjoy. That's the key to everything."

“For mothers, one realization is very important from my point of view: you don’t have to be a perfectionist.”



Mothers are allowed to take breaks.

Anna-Sabina Zürrer

42
Artist
One child (10 years old)

Anna-Sabina Zürrer knew early on that she wanted to make art her profession. This set her an ambitious goal. Living exclusively from artistic activity is only achieved by very few in the industry. Nevertheless, she put her plan into action: today she works as an artist in her studio in Lucerne and teaches young people in "Visual Design" at a cantonal school. For a long time, a life with a child was not in the cards for her – also because young mothers in the art scene have a particularly hard time establishing themselves successfully. A report from a creative mother who is resolutely committed to change.



"Whether I am successful in reconciling family and career is a good question. My son is now 10 years old and I am still trying. I have become much more relaxed over the years, and he has become more independent. I like to see my life as a colorful bouquet with many different types of flowers. This variety gives the bouquet its beauty. For me, every week is different and I like that. Overall, it gives me energy because I am doing what I love. My life currently consists of 50 % teaching art, 50 % making art, 50 % with my son, 40 % with my partner, 30 % dancing Tango Argentino and Lindy Hop, 20 % in the garden, 10 % attending cultural events or visiting friends, etc. A calculation that actually does not add up, but fulfills me in every sense of the word."

Child or art?

"Art is my profession. I knew during my studies that I wanted to be active in art mediation and also make and exhibit art myself. This combination often means a balancing act, but I see it as mutually enriching. There are only a few positions for art teachers in Switzerland. I started early to strive intensively for one of the rare jobs and have been working two to three days a week at a high school for 16 years. For a long time, I didn't want a child because my goal was to achieve something in art. As an artist, you quickly learn that a child is not necessarily conducive to your career. This is also because you need the so-called studio scholarships to make a name for yourself. But these almost always mean that you spend an extended period abroad. Leaving your child at home is just as impossible as taking your child to Paris for six months and focusing on your own creative process at the same time. I always told myself that I wanted to have a child when I had established myself as an artist to the extent that I could "afford" a family. Financially, art is profitable for only a few. I am glad for my teaching profession. It has not only brought me joy to this day but is also a welcome financial constant that allows me to be independent in art."

Art as a reaction of defiance

"When I became a mother, a reaction of defiance set in at first. I didn't want to be seen only as a mother, but definitely wanted to continue teaching and making art, even if both were in a slightly reduced form. I constantly felt the need to prove myself. At the time, my son's father and my parents were important support for me because I could always count on them for my son's care. Later, I went to the studio at night when my son was asleep and worked beyond my limits. But it was difficult to create new things because the time to immerse myself in art was very limited. Art became a secondary matter for a time because I was more than busy with the care and my activity at school. But the time with my son was sacred to me; the deceleration and spending a lot of time outdoors was beneficial. During this phase, I learned to fully enjoy the moment and to manage my time better. Still, I occasionally asked myself whether my life would be easier without art. Or the opposite question, whether it would be easier as an artist without a child. I can answer both questions with yes and yet wouldn't want to trade with anyone

else in the world. I believe every parent has asked themselves this or a similar question in a challenging moment. As strict as it can be: life with a child is so educational and enriching, it just makes me happy."

Those without children have more opportunities

"Most have to pursue another job besides their artistic activity to earn money. For artists with children, it is therefore a triple burden: they work for art, for the money job and for the family. To establish oneself and one's own artistic work successfully is a huge challenge because, as it has been for decades, mothers are clearly disadvantaged. The intensity of artistic work is still measured, among other things, by the number of exhibitions, prizes, and studio scholarships in your dossier that you submit for exhibition participation, competitions, etc. However, our time is limited; studio stays are not feasible for the reasons mentioned before. It is assumed that you put all your energy into art, are always available and are not distracted. Artists therefore often do not indicate in their documents that they have a child and a money job because it diminishes their chances of success. I find this discriminatory. If at all, most creatives have only one child. That has to change. There must also be a rethinking in the juries that decide on scholarships and funding. As a jury member, I have experienced that a young mother won a scholarship but had to decline because she would have had to go abroad and could not organize care for her child. The chances of success are much greater if you don't have a child."

Demanding change actively

"When my son was about a year and a half old, there was a time when I reached the limit of my capacity. For weeks I slept only four hours a night to meet all obligations, have time for my child school, and art. I organized two solo exhibitions in a short time – actually great projects that I couldn't really enjoy. Our apartment lease had been terminated and we had to move. At some point, I drove to school in the dark in the morning and only realized after a while that I was driving without lights. I was so overworked that I could hardly concentrate on anything. For these situations, you need a good network of friends and family who are there for you. Today my son lives half the time with his father and everything is more relaxed. Being a part-time single parent can be exhausting, but at least I have more time for myself the other half of the week.

I wish that a general rethinking takes place in the art scene. The challenges that artists with children face must be addressed. We need family friendly studio scholarships and general awareness of the issue. But we also have to dare to openly address and discuss these desires for change. Otherwise, no one will notice that there is a great need here. We need a new definition of what actually qualifies an artist. It can no longer be just their independence and the number of stays abroad."

Mothers are allowed to have hobbies

"Back then, I was very grateful for the opportunity to have my son looked after by childcare, a childminder or my parents on individual days. Today, I am less dependent on it. I tell all parents: take time outs. Time for yourselves or for hobbies. It is important to have enough energy for the child afterward. Today, when my son is with his father, I go to dance classes several times a week. It's incredibly fun. These breaks have helped me a lot to develop my current satisfaction."

"When I became a mother, a reaction of defiance set in at first. I didn't want to be seen only as a mother, but definitely wanted to continue teaching and making art."



DARE TO ACCEPT HELP AND TO NOT BE PERFECT!

Anna Mattsson

44
Partner at McKinsey & Company
Two children (12 and nine years old)

Anna Mattsson's schedule is packed: alongside her job as a partner at McKinsey, an international management consulting firm, the mother of two has also been the president of the board of Advance since May 2023. This Swiss business association actively advocates for gender equality in professional life, a cause close to the heart of the Swedish-born executive. As a working mother, she often wished to be everywhere at once – to meet her own standards and give her best in every area.

When asked when she was first confronted with the "child or career" question, Anna laughs. "Honestly, that was only after my arrival here in Switzerland, following a business appointment."

Born in Sweden and schooled in Germany, Anna's professional career started in London, before bringing her to Zurich over a decade ago. Abroad, neither she nor her then-husband questioned whether she should stay at home after the birth of their first child. "That's just not common in the UK. So you weren't looked at strangely if the child was cared for by others and the mother went to work," Anna reports. In Sweden, both her parents worked while the young Anna was with a childminder. That worked well and shaped her worldview. In Switzerland, however, she was questioned about her work status only a few months after her arrival.

It was on a Friday evening after a business appointment. A client overheard her talking to colleagues about her child. "He asked me directly why I wasn't with my daughter. I replied that her father was looking after her. As the conversation progressed, it turned out he wasn't referring to that specific moment, but wondered why I worked at all." She still shakes her head at the memory of this conversation.

Decisions are part of life

"In my job in strategic consulting, at least until the pandemic in 2020, I had to travel a lot. I did this with full conviction and passion. I like being with the client and appreciate the personal exchange," says Anna. Yet after the birth of her first daughter, she questioned whether she should immediately return to a role that would demand so much of her time. She initially chose a position in the office. There, the working hours were predictable; Anna was more flexible. Her plan was to return to a customer-facing function after a year. "But I quickly realized that I missed the part of the job that gave me the most energy," she reflects. "So I returned to active project care after only seven months."

Today, her children are 10 and 12 years old. When they were much younger, Anna considered reducing her workload and working part time, she admits. "To have more time for them. But in the end, I had to be honest with myself. I would have officially had a part-time job. But I know myself. In practice, I probably would have worked full time – for less pay," she laughs.

You can't be everywhere

As a working mother, Anna initially had worries. "Mothers should be able to openly express that they sometimes find themselves in an emotional conflict," she asserts. "I felt guilty towards my children when I was at work. And when I was at home, I felt guilty because I felt I was neglecting my professional duties." She was helped by the insight that no one can always do everything perfectly – not even as a mother. "And that should

be openly addressed. Often we are confronted with role models of mothers who are presented as absolute high-flyers. But they are also only human." Her recommendation: dare to accept help and not be shy about delegating certain tasks. This became especially clear to her when she started baking cupcakes for her daughter's birthday after a long workday at midnight. She was in the kitchen until the middle of the night, decorating the little cakes in different colors. "When my daughter woke up the next morning, I was still totally tired. I couldn't properly enjoy the moment with her. Whether the topping of the cupcakes was red or blue didn't matter to her as a one-year-old, of course. That's when I swore: from now on, I'll buy the cake and enjoy the time with her," she recounts.

Family is teamwork

The expert for mergers and acquisitions is annoyed that in Switzerland, it is usually women who scale back their professional ambitions after the birth of a child. "Despite a good education, many decide to take a career break for a while. Especially in times of skilled labor shortages, there should be more efforts to bring these talents back into the profession – or not to lose them in the first place with flexible offers," she demands. She shares this insight with the network Advance, in which Anna is active, which also points to the economic potential of better integration of women into the general workforce and into leadership positions. That the company Anna works for is consistently committed to this aspect, and even in a twofold way, has excited Anna from the beginning. "We publish numerous studies on the topic of women in the workforce. And of course, diversity and inclusion are values that we live every day; special programs for female employees are also offered."

Regarding the private sphere, Anna advises young couples to agree before starting a family on what life with a child should look like. Who works and to what extent? Who takes care of laundry? Who does the shopping? Who cooks? "There's no course that prepares you for family life. Joint planning pays off for everyone. Otherwise, there's a lot of potential for conflict," she says. She herself tries to teach her children that everyone has the same tasks in the household and in family life. "With us, there's nothing that only the girls or only the boys do. Everyone pitches in, my son as much as my daughter."

Looking into the future for oneself

In recent years, much has changed in Switzerland from Anna's perspective. "I see that young fathers also question the compatibility of family and career. Men take on more responsibility for their children. No one raises an eyebrow when this is the case," she emphasizes. She hopes that both parents can have the freedom to be parents. And another point is very important to her: the impact of a decision against the professional re-entry of mothers. In the short term, this may seem like a sensible step. Often the second salary barely covers the costs of external care. In the long run, however, this negatively affects the financial situation of women – significantly to their disadvantage. They not only earn less than men during their working lives but also suffer significant losses concerning their pension entitlements. Part-time work also reduces the chance of a career leap and financial independence. "Everyone should have the chance to work full time," Anna concludes.

"MOTHERS SHOULD BE ABLE TO OPENLY EXPRESS THAT THEY SOMETIMES FIND THEMSELVES IN AN EMOTIONAL CONFLICT."



Thanks to good childcare, I was able to do what I love.

Mara Harvey

52
CEO VP Bank (Schweiz) AG
Two children (26 and 18 years old)

Mara Harvey is the CEO of a Swiss private bank, a mother of two children and the author of a children's book series focused on financial education for young family members – a subject dear to the economist's heart. Family and job have always equally fulfilled her. Hence, giving up on either was never an option for her. Without childcare services, however, this would have never been possible for her as a single mother.

Mara is a woman who approaches challenges with a lot of energy and a broad smile. She knows how to inspire people for her topics and actively tackles the things she wants to change. This led to the creation of her book series *smart way to start.* Written in rhyme, the books enable children to approach important questions about money in an age-appropriate way. Marty, the main character of the books, is a girl. This was very important to Mara: "In my career at international banks, I saw every day that women are hardly involved when it comes to investing money. It has mostly been purely a men's topic. Girls and women are disadvantaged in all things financial. It starts with pocket money. Data shows that girls receive less on average than boys. That is unfair," she says, explaining her reasons for choosing a female protagonist. By the age of seven, a person's mindset about money is already shaped. "I researched which female role models there are for girls when it comes to money. There were simply none. They were all boys. I have changed that with the book series," she says. Much of her own experience as a mother flowed into the creation of the books. The rhyming form of the stories was chosen not only because they stay in the memory for a lifetime, but also because they are easy to read. "Parents can read them easily and relax with their children, even after a demanding workday," she laughs.

The importance of childcare

Mara's children went to childcare early. Her son was in full-time care from the age of four months, and her daughter from six months. A great relief for the financial expert, who returned to her job full time immediately: "I find childcare very important. I believe that children are offered much more there than if they just sit at home alone with their parents. There are wonderful educators there for them, trained to support these little people in their development, they have contact with other children, can play, be creative, read, experience new things." When she was looking for a childcare for her son, the options were limited. Thus, she remembers the first 10 years as a single working mother as a particularly challenging time. "There was no good childcare available, the opening hours of the childcare centers were not compatible with my working hours. I had to organize my son's care like a patchwork quilt. My family did not live in the area and I was very happy to have a network of very good friends who could step in at the worst-case scenario. A nanny and an au pair girl also helped me a lot. Without childcare, it would not have been possible for me to do what I love in my profession."

The other side of the coin

In the first years after the birth of her children, Mara saw her job as downtime for herself. "It's a great fortune that I can do professionally what fulfills me. So, I could see working hours as time for myself. Then my whole focus at home was on my children." Nevertheless, she often felt guilty. "Of course, there were always children's appointments that I couldn't attend. That's the other side of the coin. If you ask me if I regret any-

thing, it is not always having been there. At the time when my son was small, you couldn't just ask your boss if you could leave at four o'clock to be at your child's performance. You were then politely asked to take a day off. I'm very glad that has changed now. There is much greater acceptance on the corporate side for parents." Balancing a full-time job and her family was not always easy. Her worst moment was when Mara once forgot to pick up her child from childcare. "I arrived at the childcare an hour late. It was a very demanding time; I was commuting a lot between Frankfurt and Zurich. Since I spent so much time in Zurich, I brought my children with me. On that day, I was so engrossed in a project when it suddenly hit me like a blow: my daughter is still at the childcare! I immediately set off on my way. But I really felt terrible that day."

Dare to do something

Mara finds it important to encourage other women to take control of their own lives. She raised both children alone. She and her sister also grew up with their mother, who supported the family with a part-time job. She was a role model for Mara, as she demonstrated that it was possible to raise children and work at the same time. "Ironically, she later asked me whether I didn't want to stay at home with my children first," Mara smiles. Today, she is a passionate advocate for greater financial self-determination for women. In her book *Women and Risk,* she deals with the question of what women can do to shape their own financial future. "Women often see money primarily as a source of security, not as an opportunity to shape the future. Therefore, they also tend to not invest in the capital market." She sees this as a challenge. Especially since people are living longer and accordingly need to provide for old age. "I tell all women: dare to take your financial future into your own hands. Don't leave it to other people." A message that also appears in her children's books: know your worth and stand up for it. "When I wrote the books, my 12-year-old daughter was my first test reader. At some point, she asked: 'Mom, I don't understand this at all. Why should girls earn less than boys?' A more than legitimate question. But you need a skill set to tackle these injustices. I want to give these to children with my books," she says.

"I find childcare very important. I am convinced that children are offered much more there than if they just sit at home alone with their parents."



Have the courage to not always be perfect.

Sara Hürlimann

51
Dr. med. dent., founder and entrepreneur
Five children (18, 17, 15 year old twins and one 10-year-old)

Entrepreneur Sara Hürlimann grew up in Sweden. From a young age, she learned not to make gender-specific distinctions in care giving work. Her parents exemplified an egalitarian relationship, which shaped her understanding of roles. Together with her Swiss husband, she founded and runs several companies. The couple jointly takes care of their five children. A conversation about challenges and expectations one sets for oneself – and about the best baby food.

Mrs. Hürlimann, have you ever faced the decision between career or motherhood?

No. I also find it strange that women are so often asked this question. Today, it's entirely possible to combine both or to decide on one. Taking care of one's own children, organizing family life and the household is also a time-consuming job – almost like running a small company. In that sense, I have chosen two jobs: one at home and one in our companies.

A very challenging choice, isn't it?

As the children get older, of course, it becomes easier to balance both. Over the years, I have become more relaxed. My expectations of myself have changed. I am more forgiving towards myself. I also wish this for young mothers: have the courage to not always be perfect.

Does that mean you forgive yourself more?

Absolutely. For example, there's an experience that illustrates this well. When the children were very small, I naturally compared myself with other mothers. An important question was: who makes the best puree? It wasn't me, because I bought ready-made baby food from the supermarket. At first, this was very uncomfortable for me. Maybe I can even say that I was embarrassed. It took a while for that feeling to subside. Today, I think: that was a really sensible and efficient way.

Would you have had this feeling in your home country, Sweden?

I don't think so. There, the question doesn't even arise whether a parent should stay at home because in most cases, both have to work. I consider the situation here in Switzerland to be a great privilege: being able to decide what is important to you and to act accordingly. But it is also a dilemma that I have experienced myself. A part of me always wants to be with the children, another part wants to realize myself as a person and woman. I believe that not only presence counts, but children also notice how their mother feels. I would not want to pretend. One is also a role model for the children. Hiding feelings and moods is nonsensical.

You and your husband work together, not only founding a family but also many companies, and have successfully established them in the market. What does it take to complement each other as a couple in the various areas of life?

For me, this is one of the most important decisions one makes in life: with which person do I want to go my way and have children? A family is not just the mother's project, but both – mine and my husband's. We have children together, we work together, we run companies together. Of course, we divide the work. For example, he does everyday things that I find boring. I, on the other hand, organize school and leisure activities for our children.

Are there also things that cannot be divided?

Affection and attention. Children rightly expect this from both mother and father. In this respect, I used to feel guilty a bit quicker towards our children than my husband. I believe that sometimes that traditional understanding of roles flashed up. But meanwhile, our children are older, so that now it's often me who wishes for their attention (laughs).

Do you have enough time for yourself?

No question, this "me time" suffers when you are working and have a family. But I think that this phase is quite short. It lasts as long as the children are very small. That's when the burden is greatest and you find little time for yourself. But it passes quickly, also thanks to good childcare options. Time with the children is important to me. We have breakfast together every day and try to sit together at the table in the evenings to discuss the day. When the children are out of the house, I will have a lot of time for myself again and catch up on things that are currently neglected. Then I will read a lot again.

How do you generally view the situation of working mothers in Switzerland?

For me, it's a privilege to be allowed to live here. Our children went to kindergarten alone from home in their second week. That's not possible everywhere. Nor is the choice to have children or not and whether to work as a parent or not. Therefore, it is particularly important to me that we convey to our children, regardless of gender, the freedom to decide what is right for them.

Are you and your husband role models for your children in this respect?

Having role models is important. They shape and motivate one. I hope our children see us as role models. Especially young people take with them for their later life what they have seen lived by their own parents. If you are taught that you cannot work with children, then you stay at home.

Have you ever experienced others judging you for choosing to be an entrepreneur and a mother?

Yes, but fortunately, I can well ignore what I don't want to hear. Unfortunately, there is still the prejudice that one cannot be professionally successful and a good mother at the same time. You should not be irritated by the accusations of others. The less you listen to such things, the more satisfied you are in life.

What do you wish for your daughters when they grow up?

That they, just like the boys, find a task that they enjoy doing. You don't have to find your passion, I think that's exaggerated. But you have the chance to become really good at it if you enjoy doing something. That's a good basis for not being financially dependent on others and for standing on your own two feet. From my point of view, this is extremely important – especially for one's own satisfaction.

“Taking care of one’s own children, organizing family life and the household is also a time-consuming job – almost like running a small company. In that sense, I have chosen two jobs: one at home and one in our companies.”



Make no compro-mises!

Monika Bütler

62
Independent economist, former professor at the University of St. Gallen
Two sons (20 and 22 years old)

Swiss economist Prof. Monika Bütler grew up in a family configuration typical of the end of the last century: her father worked and her mother stayed at home with the children. It was clear to her that she did not want to give up her career in science for the sake of her family – nor should her family suffer due to professional obligations. Later, she even made the compatibility of career and family the subject of her research – with sobering results: especially for well-educated women, it is often not financially worthwhile in Switzerland to continue working a high volume – and even less so with a second child. In the conversation, she talks about her own experiences as a mother and professional, societal responsibility and why she sometimes feels sobered when discussing with young people.



You have two sons and an academically successful career, but you come from a family with a traditional division of roles. How has this influenced you?

My parents valued decency but allowed us many freedoms. My husband and I have also been very liberal in many ways regarding the upbringing of our now-adult children. My siblings and I grew up quite secluded, and contact with each other was very important – and still is. I never wanted an only child, and I wanted our house always to be open to other children. My mother took a relaxed approach to her assigned and unloved role as a housewife and therefore always had a bit of a guilty conscience. In this respect, I am very different from her; I am not ashamed if things are chaotic sometimes.

When you first became a mother, you were already on a successful academic path. Were you ever faced with the decision to choose one over the other?

I never asked myself that question; my professional independence and autonomy were always very important to me. For a long time, I did not know if I wanted children. The desire came later. And during a research stay in the USA, I experienced that it is a matter of course to have a career at the university and a family. It never occurred to me to give up my job.

You became a mother in the 2000s: what was it like then in Switzerland?

Back then, it was still rare for women to have both children and a career; mothers had to fight for it. In my environment, the recognition of this decision was somewhat limited. And sometimes there were discussions with my partner. It was always clear to me that we both had to engage equally, and neither had to step back more than the other. We managed that together. It was not easy for him either. We would have wished for good childcare options back then. At that time, there were still far too few in Switzerland. The childcare at the university took care of the children for a maximum of 3.5 days. My husband worked at the National Bank. Their childcare only took children whose mothers were employed at the bank. That was only 20 years ago. I am glad that things have changed since then.

How did you manage despite the challenging circumstances?

With a lot of organization, some chaos, patchwork, compromises and family support. Our recipe for success was a combination of nannies, childcare and collaboration with my single, also fully employed sister.

We divided the responsibilities: every day of the week, either she, my husband or I was responsible for the kids. I either had no child or three at once. If one became sick, the responsible

person would cancel their appointments; the children were the priority. We had to make sacrifices in terms of household, order and especially leisure time, but it worked.

Is there anything you regret as a mother?

I would have liked to have had more time for my children and myself occasionally. But I do not feel guilty about it. Ultimately, every decision about the division of labor in the family and at work has its price. But there were of course also moments when I felt I was doing something wrong. In retrospect, I think that guilt is gender-specific. Women tend to feel it more than men. My partner was much better at ignoring concerns.

Were there professional situations where you felt disadvantaged because of your role as a mother?

It is an illusion to think that motherhood comes at no cost – even for those who work 100 %. My second son suffered from a severe case of meningitis as a baby, which was very demanding on us as parents, both psychologically and emotionally. This reflected on my academic CV and was promptly criticized in a project funded by the national research foundation. That was tough. As a scientist, publishing in high-profile journals is important. Research activities often suffer when you have small children. Hence, I focused much more on public appearances, which has paid off for me.

You have taught many young people at the university. Is this generation more emancipated than yours was?

I'm not always so sure about that. For my generation, it wasn't a given to be able to reconcile family and career. We had to fight for compatibility, which still influences our thinking today. I sometimes miss this will to want to change something on one's own. Society is too quickly seen as responsible for inequalities. Many young women still subordinate their career choice to the possibility of working part time later as a mother – thus already accommodating the role of the primary caregiver. Sometimes I also hear the argument that young women don't want to work as hard as their mothers did. On the one hand, I understand this, but on the other hand, it also irritates me. Looking back, it was certainly exhausting, sometimes difficult; there were crises. But I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Of course, the outdated role models still exist. Young men are also exposed to these: the idea that they primarily should take on the role of the family breadwinner is not yet dispelled.

Has there been too little movement in Switzerland in this regard?

I see many young couples who are set up differently than twenty years ago. But there are also many where the division of roles is traditional – sometimes, however, with reversed signs when the father stays at home. Actually, it's nice that we have this choice at all in Switzerland. No matter what the relationship constellation, the role of the partner is crucial. We talk too much about organizational matters in childcare. Much more important is that it occurs on an equal footing and is cooperative. I wish that couples would argue more about this.

You held your inaugural lecture on care work in 2005, which also dealt with the compatibility of family and career. The core message was: especially for well-educated women, it is not financially worthwhile in Switzerland to continue working a high volume with the first child – and even less so with the second. Does this finding still hold true today?

Quite a bit has changed here. Although there are still negative incentives, many cantons and municipalities have tried to at least minimize them – with subsidies, new structures and different pricing policies. The availability of childcare options has increased significantly, and allocation is simpler. Those who need a place today usually find one. However, it is still the case that the financial burden is very high, especially for younger, well-educated mothers and fathers. Every support system has its negative sides, including the much-praised Scandinavian one. The question is: have we come far enough? Probably not. There are still cases where the cost of childcare exceeds the income. At least for a few years.

According to your study, it was primarily well-educated women who gave up their careers. Is this still the case, given the improved offerings?

We still see that mothers rarely return to their professions full time, even when their children are older. That's why the discussion about the extent and consequences of part-time employment is so important. Why is that? I don't have an empirical answer. One factor is family taxation, which heavily taxes the second income. Another is certainly the ability to manage one's own time in part-time work, which is difficult with a full-time position. In many professions, a longer absence makes re-entry difficult because the technical development is very dynamic. And generally, the longer a mother stays at home, the harder it is to return to work.

What would you advise young women?

Make smart compromises and don't give up your professional goals too quickly in favor of the family! Children grow up fast, and the time of difficult compatibility is short in the grand scheme of life. Negotiate with your partner, even when...

“But of course, there were also moments when I felt I was doing something wrong. Looking back, I think that guilt is gender-specific. Women tend to feel it more than men. My partner was much better at ignoring concerns.”



My husband deserves a medal.

Katja Berlinger

48
Owner and CEO of Swiss Medi Kids AG
Two children (14 and 12 years old)

Katja Berlinger is a lawyer, entrepreneur and holds an MBA from the prestigious INSEAD Business School. Through her company Swiss Medi Kids, she is committed to ensuring that every child receives the best possible medical care. For her, the choice of a partner and the joint decision on the division of tasks are crucial for balancing career and family. With her husband, she chose a model that was still unusual at the time – and she would like to award him a medal for this pioneering achievement today.



When you became pregnant for the first time, you also started your own business. Did you ever worry during that time that you might not be able to combine the two?

Of course. I worried again and again. My husband and I consciously restricted our standard of living during this phase to ensure that the pressure didn't become too great.

Were there moments that were particularly challenging?

Being a mother is a wonderful but also demanding task that constantly reflects your own nature. It is important to set consistent boundaries. That is not always easy for me. I falter again and again because I would like to yield, but should not.

What helped you in such moments?

Knowing that only a good upbringing will make my children happy and good people.

Your husband primarily takes care of your two children. How did you as a couple make this decision?

I consider the choice of a life partner to be the most important decision in life. It determines how we spend our lives, how we live as a family and also how free one is and remains in choosing a career. My husband, after his own company was in very difficult circumstances, suggested that we try this model. However, we also agreed that we would regularly discuss whether this division of tasks still works for both of us. Meanwhile, we are very happy that my husband was able to join our family business Swiss Medi Kids. An essential part of our role distribution was the agreement that I would not take on mandates with long absences abroad and would mostly be at home in the evenings. I have kept to that.

How did your environment react? Was everyone open to this model, or were there also surprised looks?

At the beginning, our decision met with a lot of incomprehension, especially in my professional environment. Neighbors and parents of school friends were also surprised. Meanwhile, times have changed a bit. The decision has become part of everyday life and is respected. My husband was simply ahead of his time and has pioneered the idea that a reversed role distribution can work very well. For that, he should actually get a medal.

How do you manage your daily life as an entrepreneur and mother?

Since I have children, there are only two priorities in my life. My family and my entrepreneurial activities. Everything else takes a back seat for the time being while my daughters still like to spend time with us. We organize our family time without

stress and without many appointments. Actually, I spend most evenings and weekends consciously with the family and I love doing so.

What hurdles are there in Switzerland for working mothers?

For entrepreneurs, the design of maternity leave is an absolute disaster. Anyone who continues to work in a very small capacity, for example, only attending one meeting, completely loses the claim to maternity compensation. It would be much more sensible to have the option to maintain a small workload and forgo part of the compensation. Anyone who, as a self-employed lawyer or board member, has to look for substitutes for four months runs a great risk of ultimately losing these mandates to their substitutes. It is also shocking that the regulation was recently changed for female politicians but not for all working mothers. The schools are still not based on block times, and children generally have very different schedules. Unfortunately, the social attitude toward working mothers is still very traditional.

What can be done against the discrimination of mothers in the professional environment?

Many mothers who decide to leave their jobs are not aware that their decision may cause their own poverty in old age. They will not be protected to the same extent in a divorce as under the old divorce law. If we were more aware that it would also be important for mothers to secure themselves for old age, the number of working mothers would increase. Then the special status could turn into a normal status. Against the backdrop of the shortage of skilled workers, we will not be able to avoid this anyway.

What role do good care services play for you and your family, or what role have they played?

Good childcare centers and meaningful after-hours care in schools are essential so that one can pursue their profession undisturbed and with a good feeling.

What would you advise women who want to combine family and career?

The most important thing is that the family clearly distributes roles within their own universe and sticks to them. The rules should be adapted depending on the age of the children and the situation of the partners, to ensure that all family members are mostly satisfied with the role distribution.

Childcare centers, whether individual ones or childcare networks like globegarden, are almost 100 % led by women in Switzerland. The initiatives often go back to mothers to this day. The caregivers in the centers are also predominantly women. Women seem to stand up for women here. How do you assess this situation?

I cannot judge this well, but in general, I believe in the power of diversity and hope that more young men will take up a profession in childcare. I am always pleased when a male medical practice assistant applies to us. Societally, we should move away from stereotypes in career choices. But this will only succeed if we also live it as an example.

You are the CEO of Swiss Medi Kids AG. Why is it important to advocate especially for the health of children and teenagers in Switzerland?

Unfortunately, the conditions for pediatric and adolescent medicine in Switzerland are absolutely inadequate. This is concerning for a country with our wealth. Changing this has become my calling, and we fight for it both with Swiss Medi Kids and politically.

The health sector is actually not very flexible. How do you create conditions at Swiss Medi Kids that facilitate the reconciliation of family and career?

We decided very early on to offer any form of part-time work. Today we have 150 employees who share 75 full-time positions. We offer part-time options from five percent, fixed days off or fixed service days. The workloads can be adjusted up or down at any time. Due to the size of the teams, we also have to ask people to step in, but it happens much less often because we can ask many people. The personnel administration costs us, of course, but this is how we successfully keep mothers in the team after maternity leave and do not lose them. My dream is to grow old with as many of our employees as possible.

Are there certain values that you want to pass on to your children?

The main reason to have children for me is to pass on values. That's why it's also important to consciously reserve time for the children despite being employed because otherwise, you can't live out the important values.

“I consider the choice of a life partner to be the most important decision in life. It determines how we spend our lives, how we live as a family and also how free one is in choosing and remaining in their profession.”



You have to fight against existing role models.

Jaël Malli

44
Musician and Singer
Two children (one and six years old)

The Swiss singer Jaël Malli is a mother of two children. After the birth of her son Eliah, she initially could not imagine him having a sibling later on because he was a colicky baby, barely slept, and was always dissatisfied: a stress test for the family. His little sister Liala, who was born in August 2022, made things easier for Jaël and her husband. This is a record of an artist openly discussing how she manages to juggle family, music, and concerts.

"When I am asked how I manage to balance family and career, I first don't know how to answer. I often am not even sure myself if I manage it so well. I am constantly looking for ways to create some space in my calendar and organize my daily routine so that I am not under constant stress. Unfortunately, it often feels like it's too much for me currently. My body also signals this to me again and again. We have support from a caregiver, for which I am very grateful. She supports us monthly for a certain time. Finding her was not so easy. But I also admit that this was partly due to myself. As a musician, you have a different program every week. Planning reliably is a challenge. Until recently, I needed two caregivers at the same time: someone to pick up my son from childcare in Bern and someone to support me and my daughter, whom I was still breastfeeding during the day, during interviews and concerts on the road. Organizing this was very difficult depending on my husband's schedule. So we are actually always looking for solutions that are bearable for as many of us as possible."

Being creative as a mom? A challenge.

"I'll be honest: the first two years with our son Eliah were simply a total state of emergency. He was a colicky baby. At night he woke up every 45 minutes and wanted to be breastfed. He only slept briefly and often only during the day if I carried him and was in motion. That pushed me to my limits – physically and emotionally. I then decided to stay home for over a year instead of three months. Anything else simply wouldn't have worked. In the second year, I started working again – recorded a new album in the studio, released it and gave countless interviews. That took its toll. When my tour for the album was supposed to start, I was physically and mentally exhausted. I couldn't sleep anymore and was just drained. That was at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly Switzerland went into lockdown and I had to postpone the planned tour. In hindsight, that was a fortunate twist. The experience has shaped me. Today I pay much more attention to organizing myself so that I don't burn out again someday."

Children first, then new projects

"For example, this works by not starting new projects until Liala is out of the early baby years. At the moment, to be honest, only a minimum amount of work is possible. For my job as a singer and songwriter, I need space in my head. Time to be creative and write new songs. Now that Liala is a year old, I have about two and a half days a week that I spend without the kids during the day. Then I do everything that needs to be done and sometimes I have to rest a bit, especially if I had a concert the night before and got to bed late and then still breastfed Liala at night. And with two toddlers, there's just not enough energy for more. I try to do office work when the little ones are in bed. But I often notice that after a long day, I can no longer concentrate and make mistakes."

Maternity leave is way too short

"From my point of view, in Switzerland, maternity leave is too short. In addition, there is a lack of care options for at home. In other countries, it is taken for granted that you get care and support already in the postnatal period. In Switzerland, you have to organize this yourself – and far from always succeed. I think we should also talk openly about the ugly sides of becoming a parent: as a woman, you have pain after giving birth, are weakened, and even if you don't have postnatal depression, you're still completely in hormonal chaos. It's actually unimaginable that the father goes back to work just a few days after birth. Then as a woman, you're at home alone, with a newborn and maybe even another sibling. How are you supposed to regain your strength then? 'It takes a village to raise a child' is not a meaningless saying. You need this proverbial village, but hardly anyone has it around them in their own four walls."

Deeply ingrained role distribution

"Even after birth, care work in most families still predominantly falls to women. I feel that as a modern couple, you have to fight against these deeply ingrained gender roles. In Germany, you can take up to three years of parental leave. In Denmark, parents have a joint entitlement to 48 weeks of parental leave after birth. It's quite different in Switzerland. I am convinced that as long as these conditions do not change, no matter how hard a couple tries, they will always fall back into the trap, against their will, where the man works more than the woman after birth. That's frustrating. How can we change something? Let's start by honestly naming what reality looks like. It should be normal for the father to share the care work with the mother. Instead, there is always a lot of praise if a 'Daddy Day' is completed once a week. But the woman still has a significantly higher time commitment. A prerequisite for this is the fair payment of men and women. Women must not be paid less than men. Only then can each couple decide independently and not be influenced by financial factors. Those who opt for childcare should be able to do so at financially manageable conditions. From childcare centers, I wish for more flexibility. We have experienced that many have required at least two days of care a week as a condition. Those who want to give their child half-day care in the hands of good childcare should be allowed to do so."

Being a mom and having a career should be possible

"I have experienced that even the most modern couples were catapulted back to the sixties after the birth of a child. She stays with the child; he works. Couples from creative professions are somewhat more resistant to this, as they are often more flexible in terms of time management and organize themselves in such a way that they can share the care work or the father even takes on the majority of it. For me, the time with my kids just goes by so fast. I am glad about the moments I can spend with them. I was always totally convinced that I would continue to work as a mom. That has changed. I definitely want to spend a lot of time with my children. I am very happy that I can afford to set my priorities so that currently my children come before work. I have been a musician for 20 years and don't feel like I'm missing anything when I take more time for my children during the toddler years."

Talking about change

"This classic role distribution of the breadwinner and the caregiver is still deeply rooted in our thinking. Something can only change here if we keep talking about it, live out modern gender roles, talk about it and create conditions in which these stereotypes become obsolete."

"This classic role distribution of the breadwinner and the caregiver is still deeply rooted in our mindset. Change can only occur if we continuously talk about it, embody modern gender roles, discuss them and create conditions in which these stereotypes become obsolete."



MY NEW PERFECT IS MY IMPERFECT!

Dr. Annabella Bassler

46
CFO of Ringier AG, Initiator of EqualVoice
Patchwork family with three children (19, 14, and nine years old)

Dr. Annabella Bassler is the CFO of the Swiss media and technology company Ringier, where she initiated the EqualVoice initiative. Its goal is to make women more visible in media reporting and to promote the equality of women and men. Her advice to working mothers: dare to be less perfectionistic!

How have you experienced and managed to combine family and career as a professionally successful woman and mother?

Combining family and career is undoubtedly a challenge, but also an important and fulfilling task. As CFO of the media company Ringier and initiator of EqualVoice, as well as a mother of a son, I have learned that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to achieving this balance perfectly, as everyone's requirements and circumstances are unique – but one thing always helps, which is humor. In my opinion, the coexistence of family and career is a continuous process that can change over time. It requires commitment, creativity, and flexibility. But it is worth it and has helped me grow both professionally and personally.

Sheryl Sandberg talks openly in her book *Lean In* about moments when she faltered as a mother. In *Brave, Not Perfect: Fear Less, Fail More, and Live Bolder,* Reshma Saujani advises women to have more courage and less perfectionism. Were there moments for you as a mother that were more challenging than others? Or moments when you wondered if it is possible to manage everything? What helped you in that moment?

Yes, as a mother and working woman, there were definitely moments that were more challenging than others, and times when I questioned whether I could manage everything. These moments are part of life and the balancing of family and career. Like Sheryl Sandberg and Reshma Saujani, I also learned important lessons in such moments. It is important to understand that perfectionism can often be an obstacle – the goal should always be to do your best, but also to allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them. Courage is also of crucial importance. Sometimes it takes courage to make unconventional decisions to reconcile family and career. Overall, I have learned that there is no perfect balance between family and career, but it is possible to find a meaningful and fulfilling integration that fits my life. These experiences have made me stronger and helped me grow both as a mother and in my professional role.

How do you organize your daily routine as a woman in a leadership position and a mother? Do you consciously take time for the family? Or do you have another "recipe for success"?

My "recipe for success" is a mix of different points:

- Effective time planning: a structured schedule is essential. Setting priorities for professional tasks and family time. I am also a big fan of to-do lists, so I keep track of various projects, topics, and always know where we stand.

- Delegating: the world's best team supports me – I can rely on my team at any time and delegate various tasks.

- Clear communication: openly discuss expectations, needs and challenges with partners, children and employers. Good communication facilitates coordination.

- Self-care: I also make sure to take time for myself. A healthy mental and physical condition helps to be successful in both career and family.

What are the hurdles in Switzerland for working mothers?

In Switzerland, despite progressive societal development, working mothers still have to overcome some hurdles. Some of the challenging aspects include:

- Childcare: the availability of affordable and flexible childcare can be a problem. Often, care places are limited, and long waiting lists are not uncommon.

- Part-time work: although part-time work is an attractive option for many working mothers, it can negatively affect career development and income.

- Wage inequality: in Switzerland, there is still a gender pay gap. Working mothers are often affected by this inequality and earn less on average than their male counterparts.

- Traditional roles: although attitudes are changing, traditional gender roles are still present in some areas. This can lead to working mothers facing prejudices or expectations that could limit their professional development.

What can be done against the discrimination of mothers in the workplace?

To combat the discrimination of mothers in the workplace, companies must ensure equal opportunities, offer flexible working conditions and support parental leave policies. Gender sensitivity training and the promotion of female leaders are also crucial. Transparency in salary structures and legal frameworks for gender equality can further improve the situation. Creating a supportive network for mothers and promoting positive role models are also important steps towards eliminating the disadvantage of mothers in the profession.

In the end, it is also a matter of society. We must stop criticizing women for wanting to achieve professional success alongside their motherhood and stop praising men to the skies for spending Saturday morning with the children – family, household and career should be lived and shared equally. Both women's and men's roles should be redefined – here, too, we need role models.

What role do good childcare services play for you and your family, or what role have they played?

This was, of course, an important issue for our family. My son always enjoyed his time in the various care options, was encouraged and challenged. This gave me the opportunity to focus on my profession alongside my motherhood.

What would you advise women who want to combine family and career?

From my experience, one of the most important points is to set clear priorities: what is really important? And does it help me achieve my purpose? This helps to use time and energy effectively – in private life and in the profession. Another important point is open communication with the partner, family and employer. Together, a good solution can be found in (almost) any situation.

Another important point that I always notice: it is sometimes difficult for many working women (and men) to delegate and accept support. It is time that we learn to delegate certain tasks in the private sphere or accept support from family, friends or professional service providers. No one expects us to manage everything alone.

And what must not be forgotten: stop with the perfectionism – my new perfect is my imperfect!

“It is important to understand that perfectionism can often be an obstacle – the goal should always be to do your best, but also to allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them.”

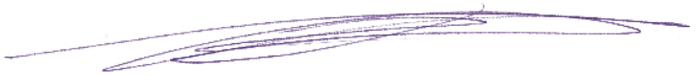


Being a working mum is an important sign for my daughter.

Claudia Lässer

46
CPO of blue Sport & blue News
One child (nine years old)

Claudia Lässer, as the CPO of blue Sport & News, oversees the largest sports television in Switzerland and the fourth-largest online platform in the country. By the time she became a mother, she was already where she wanted to be in her career. That is precisely why a break was not an option for her. She returned to work after the 14 weeks of maternity leave. Resilience, her family and good time management helped her to do justice to both her career and her daughter. Looking back, she wouldn't have done anything differently – except perhaps to allow herself a few more weeks at home after giving birth.



How did you experience the first weeks after your daughter's birth?

To be honest, they were a borderline experience. Right from the start, you're extremely challenged as a mom – mentally and physically. And this continues more or less over the first three years of your child's life. I went back to work after 14 weeks. That was my plan. But it was exhausting: breastfeeding, working and spending important time with my child. Today, I would allow myself a few more weeks at home.

Why did you decide to go back to work immediately?

My role as a leader and media manager brings me great joy. I am very passionate about it. Therefore, it was not an option to become a full-time mom at the time. I also see it as an important sign to my daughter. She experiences a mom who sets an example that it can work well to combine family and career.

How did you manage that?

I found a way quite quickly that made it easier for me to find this balance between the two: mindfulness – being completely present wherever I am. That means I focus on the situation and place where I am, as well as on the people who are with me there and the tasks I have there. When I work, my entire focus is on it. When I'm with my daughter, all my attention is on her. I try not to do a split. So I never really felt that my daughter was shortchanged – and she never made me feel that way. I think you also need to have a certain resilience. By that I mean to take care of oneself and to have a good sense of what one needs as a mother and woman, and what is good for oneself. "Me-time" is often neglected. You're not just a mother, partner and boss, but also a woman with needs that should also have space in this phase of life. It helps if you find tools that give you strength and energy.

Have you found your tools?

I've always done a lot of sports and meditated regularly. That has helped me a lot. I was able to integrate both well into my daily routine. By making sure to schedule this time for myself, I was also able to manage the demanding early days with little sleep. I have kept this up to this day, even though my daughter is now almost 10 years old.

Do you have such tools or rituals as a family?

Yes. We have quite a lot of rituals. I used to be a teacher and know from experience that structures and familiar routines can be helpful for children. These include especially the rituals that my daughter and I have. We always read a story in the evening. I used to read to her, now she often reads. In the evening, we have a fixed routine when we go to bed. In the morning, we have cuddle time together. Those are our 15 minutes after the alarm has gone off. Besides the weekend, Friday afternoon

is mom-daughter time. We do a lot of crafting or go on outings. Rituals give security and thereby strengthen children's self-confidence. Precisely because I am not always there, I want my daughter to know that she can rely on a clear and dependable structure in her school day. And by the way, this also includes my handling of the phone. That is something I count as part of "mindfulness". On Friday afternoon and on weekends, I put the phone away and am only reachable in emergencies. My daughter reminds me if I don't stick to it.

What role do good care offerings play for you and your family?

My parents have always been a great support to me and have helped me with the care. After the death of my father a few years ago, my mother is still always there for us. I also chose the Montessori school system early on. I greatly appreciate that the children there are continuously cared for by educators throughout the day. For me, that was a big relief. Switzerland simply lacks offerings that provide a good day structure for children. There is still a lot of room for improvement. One should be able to put one's child into care with the good knowledge that they will be well cared for throughout the day. The fact that care costs here are very high adds to the challenge.

What change would you like to see here?

That women receive more support regarding the costs of childcare. Childcare should not necessarily be free of charge. But especially women who want to return to the job with a small workload are in a difficult situation. Then you naturally weigh the costs and benefits very consciously against each other. Do you really want to spend your entire salary on care?

How important is the support of young families by the employer?

I think it's essential that the employer is aware of the challenge of reconciling work and family. Young families need support from this side as well. There should be possibilities to reduce the workload, as I have done. It's also important to realize that this issue affects not only mothers but also fathers. I have several dads on my team. For them, this is just as important an issue today as it is for the moms.

What advice do you have for young mothers?

Discuss seriously with your partner before becoming parents what changes you will experience as a family. Answer the question of what a child means to you as a couple and as a person. Who takes on how much responsibility for child care when the child is there? Do I have family support? What are the long-term consequences of my decision for or against working as a mother for me? Anyone who leaves the profession for several years today will probably find it difficult to return. One should calmly look 10 years into the future and ask oneself in which constellation one is happy as a woman and not just as a mother. Support is incredibly important: as a family and between man and woman. There is a lot of potential in that. By helping each other out, you can take the pressure off others.

“Me-time is often too short. You are not only a mother, partner and boss, but also a woman with needs that should also have space in this phase of life. It helps if you finds tools for yourself that give strength and energy.”



Care work at home must be distributed more fairly between women and men.

Nicole Burth

51
CEO Communication Services and Member of the Swiss Post Executive Board
Two children (14 and 12 years old)



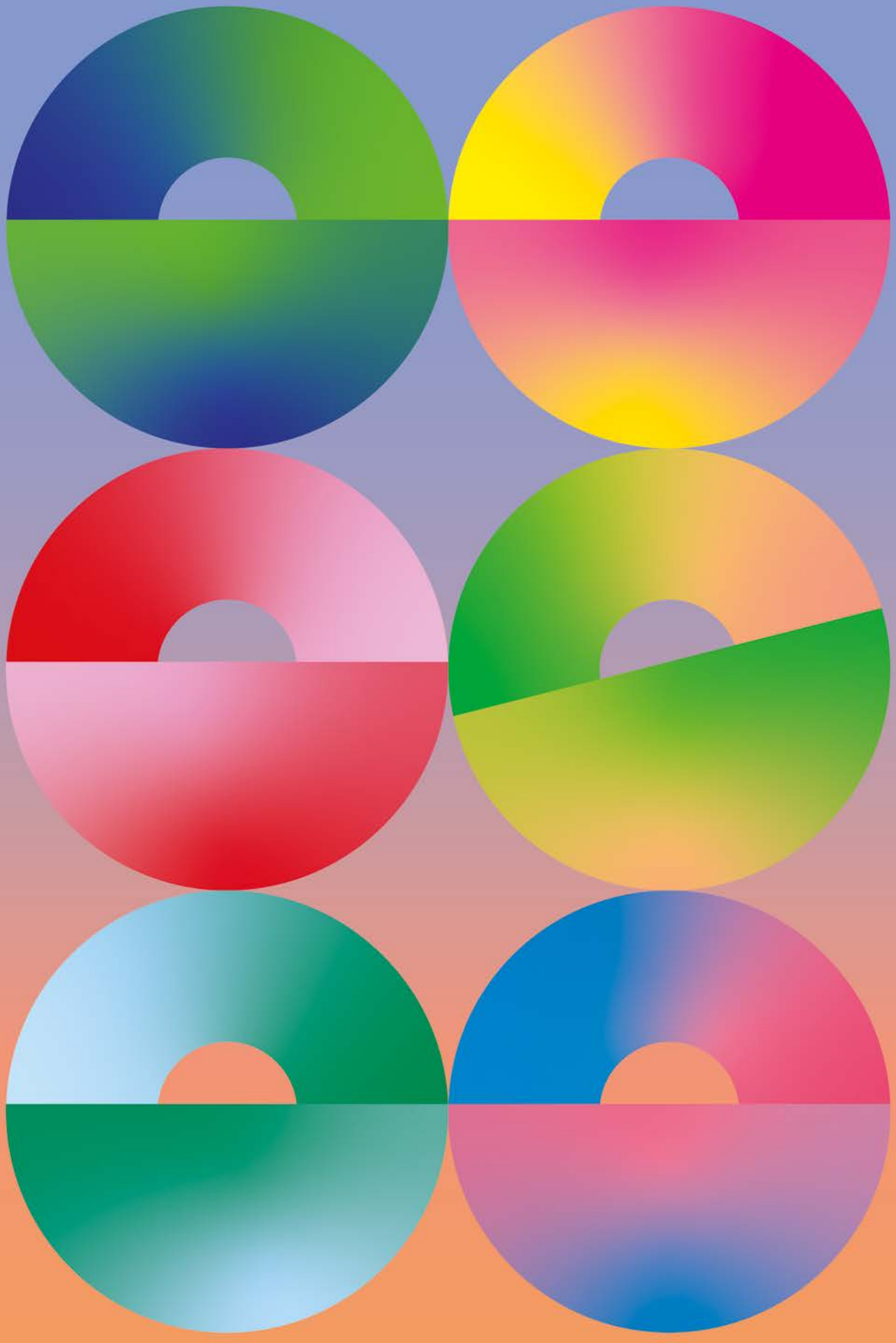
Nicole Burth heads Communication Services and is a member of the executive board at Swiss Post, as well as a board member at Advance. The married mother of two children is convinced that compatibility only succeeds if the whole family helps out.

"My mother ran a large restaurant and advocated for women in the workforce in our hometown. She was always an active and independent role model for me. We children learned early on to stand on our own two feet – and that everyone contributes to the whole. My husband and I maintain this today: we support each other so that the family does not come up short alongside work. The fact that he works part time helps enormously. In addition, we are lucky that grandmothers on both sides are highly committed."

"I am convinced that compatibility only succeeds if the whole family helps out. Unfortunately, the reality is still different. While six out of 10 women work part time today, it is just under 20 % for men. That's why I also advocate in my environment at Swiss Post that a reduction to 80 % is almost always possible. This would also mean that our teams could become more diverse and the care work at home could be distributed more fairly. 77 % of this work is currently exclusively carried by women in Switzerland!"

"As an employer, teams with a balanced ratio of women and men in leadership positions are important, not only for equality. It has long been proven that such teams sustainably perform much better. In addition, there is an acute shortage of skilled workers in Switzerland. At the same time, there are many women who are not employed at all or are in part-time positions. If we manage to activate more women for the labor market, then we can at least alleviate the skilled worker shortage. One more thing is very important to me: diversity is crucial for business success. That's why I deliberately rely on mixed teams. Because I am convinced that they find better and more innovative solutions thanks to diverse experiences, different ways of thinking and perspectives."

"I am convinced that compatibility only succeeds if the whole family helps out."



Empowering families

Chronicles of courage

From the perspective of women who shape the world of childcare

#empoweringfamilies

As a mom, you need the right work environment.

Bettina Balliani

35
Educational Director, globegarden
One child (2 years old)



"You just want to spend time with your children while they are still small. It's true that children grow up so quickly. However, I don't want to give up my job, which gives me a lot of energy and which I really like."

Bettina Balliani is the educational director at a globegarden childcare. The daily contact with parents and children is what makes her work so special. Being there for others and supporting them gives her energy. As the mother of a daughter, she knows all too well how important this support is for working moms.

This Saturday, the childcare is exceptionally open. All children and their families, as well as curious neighbors and expectant parents looking for a childcare spot, are invited to experience what makes globegarden stand out, live and in color. Bettina is in demand: she opens the door, balances a tray of mini pizzas for the kids through the busy entrance area, greets parents, answers questions, and in between, praises her team for the good organization of the day. You can feel that her job fulfills and motivates her. Among all the families, her husband is somewhere with their daughter. The two of them couldn't miss today. Her daughter is especially looking forward to the clown who will soon impress the children with a few magic tricks.

"Of course, it's a challenge"

Having her daughter here today is just an exception. Usually, she is still cared for at home. Bettina knows firsthand the challenges faced by many mothers in Switzerland: "No one can claim that it's easy to balance children and a career," she states calmly but assertively. "Of course, it isn't. But it can still work." For her, it's crucial that employers create an environment where both are possible for mothers. "Globegarden shows that it can be done. The founders themselves lead by example. And the culture here is characterized by a great understanding of all employees and ways of life."

Relief and flexibility

Bettina herself has recently undergone a professional change within the company – for family reasons. She greatly appreciates that this was possible. She now works in a childcare that is much closer to her home. More than two hours of commuting to work are now eliminated for her. And that brings her more time for her little daughter. "You just want to spend time with your children while they are still small. It's true that children grow up so quickly. However, at the same time, I do not want to give up my job, which gives me a lot of energy and which I really like. The fact that it was possible to find a solution that works for everyone from the employer's side is not something to be taken for granted," Bettina shares.

Giving a good feeling

Bettina experiences daily how important good and diverse care offerings are for parents. "Many have fulfilling jobs that also demand a lot from them during the week. It's a real relief for them when they know they can leave their child in good hands." She and her team create colorful and varied days for the cared-for children: "We have such a great program, into which the entire team always puts a lot of love and effort. Whether yoga, singing or exciting excursions – there's always something going on." The parents appreciate this. Her team has often heard from parents how much it relieves them that their child can have an exciting day and be well cared for. "This gives them the peace of mind to focus on their jobs during the day or to develop themselves further. And the energy to consciously take time for their child after childcare," she reports. As a mom, Bettina knows: "That's just very valuable."

Mothers need to be empowered to advance in their careers.

Galla Stambuk

37
Head of Family Solutions, globegarden
Two children (nine and seven years old)

Galla Stambuk leads the department of family solutions at globegarden. She always has an open ear for the questions and concerns of families whose children are enrolled for in one of the over 70 childcare centers in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. As a mother of two children, she understands their concerns particularly well.

Galla is a cheerful, open person. You can tell she loves her job immediately by the enthusiasm with which she talks about it. Balancing motherhood with her personal career was challenging at first. When her daughter was born, she held a managerial position in a logistics company. "That meant above all: a lot of responsibility, commitment, long days and being ready to work late evenings or weekends," she recalls. She quickly realized that this, in addition to the responsibility she now had for her daughter, became a lot. When her son was born later, she decided to take a professional break: "At that time, the challenge of combining the two was just too great." After a year, she felt the desire for a change. "I actually wanted to return to my career. And at the same time, I noticed that childcare would be good for my son. There, kids simply have completely different opportunities to develop. Childcare offers them a lot that parents at home can't provide, such as community with peers and thus the development of initial social skills. And especially varied days," says Galla.

From godmother to dream job

However, repositioning herself was easier said than done. For Galla, it was clear that she wanted to return to her profession with a workload of at least 60 or 80 percent to continue her career development. This was against the high childcare costs. "One inevitably asks oneself whether this is proportional," she concludes. However, part-time work was not an option for her. Finally, the idea of her best friend, who is also the godmother of Galla's two children, came to the rescue. The two had met at their previous job, and her friend was now working at globegarden. "She suggested that I should just work there, and so it happened," laughs Galla.

A place for family and career

Initially, she was cautious about her professional ambitions: "I was very happy that my children were cared for in the globegarden childcares during the day and that I had time for my job. I had still planned to take it slow at first." She never felt misunderstood. Instead, direct communication with the founders always gave her a good feeling. But things turned out a bit differently than planned, as Galla remembers with a smile: "I actually came from a management position and knew what additional responsibility that entails. I had sworn to myself to just take a normal job at first. But after a year, the founders offered me to take over the management of the family services. I couldn't and didn't want to say no!"

Strong teamwork

Today, her children are already in school – and Galla couldn't imagine life without her job anymore. "I've never enjoyed going to work so much. We have a great team with which we can respond to families and the children. I get to work with so

many amazing women. I am heard and appreciated. This gives me something I have never experienced in a job before." But even today, care is still a topic for her. While the childcares are closed only a few days a year, the school holidays have become a challenge again. Here, her flexible work environment helps her to organize well and still be there for her children.

"We think for families"

Changing something for families in Switzerland drives Galla every day. She finds it unfortunate that as a result of the pandemic, the old gender roles of man and woman are sometimes more pronounced again. "We should actually move away from that," she says. That the globegarden founders themselves are mothers and show that family and career can be well reconciled is another important aspect of her work environment for her. "All mothers who are well-educated should have the opportunity today to return to their job after giving birth and not have to stay at home due to external influences such as care costs or the availability of care places," she states emphatically.

Does she miss anything sometimes? "What I sometimes miss is the social and political appreciation for the entire industry. Here, so many great people work and commit themselves to families in Switzerland every day – I think that sometimes goes a bit unnoticed. Yet, it's so important for families and society as a whole!"

The childcare centers offers children many things that parents at home cannot provide, such as the community with peers and thereby the development of social skills. And above all, inspiring days with lots of early education.



BECOMING PARENTS IS A BIG PROJECT.

Patricia Bergès

54
Head of Accounting, globegarden
Two children (22 and 18 years old)



"What I love about my job is that we actually enable families, but especially women, to do and be what they want every day. I see this as a certain kind of *feminism*."

Patricia Bergès, originally from France, has been part of the globegarden family for a long time. “I almost feel like a dinosaur in the company,” she laughs. The mother of two loves the flexibility of her workplace and is convinced that it is a key to balancing family and career.

Patricia met her husband while working in Germany. Together, they moved to Switzerland. He started a doctorate at ETH Zurich, she launched her career, and at the same time, had her first child. Not returning to work after birth was never up for debate for her. She was not used to this in France. What surprised the young parents after the birth of their first daughter was how limited the childcare options were at the time. “Our children are grown up now. So it’s really been a while – over 20 years. But back then, it was hard to find a place. The relieving call from a childcare came only when my children were going to primary school. Fortunately, we found a place for both of them on our own,” she recalls.

Childcare and division of tasks

It was important for the parents, both of whom were childcare children themselves, to find good childcare for their kids. Also, because Patricia is convinced that childcare is crucial for the overall development of children. “I’m certainly not the expert for babies or toddlers: in childcare, they get so many stimuli: they discover, learn and develop social skills with and from peers. I can’t provide that as a mom alone at home,” says Patricia. She also highlights the importance of the caregivers: “They are wonderfully trained and loving people who do a very important job. They support the children in their development and are reference persons outside their own home.” Later, they enrolled both children in the French school. For very pragmatic reasons: there was already all-day care available back then.

Mastering challenges together

It was important for both parents that they could both work. Because her husband, as a doctoral student, only had a small income. At the same time, the academic environment also allowed the family a lot of flexibility. “My husband and I always divided the tasks equally. We supported each other. He often went to the lab on weekends and conducted experiments. It was great that we lived nearby,” she recalls. She still describes the first two years after birth with a smile as a “challenge”. “The first two years are simply demanding. But it went well as a team. Becoming parents is a big project with a lot of responsibility, which you just can’t prepare for. You have to be flexible and willing to compromise.”

Flexible and loyal work environment

Patricia started at globegarden almost 14 years ago, shortly after it was founded. At first, she had reservations about the industry: “I had no idea what to expect and whether it would suit me,” she says. However, her doubt quickly disappeared as she saw the importance and need in childcare. “What I love about my job is that we actually enable families, but especially women, to do and be what they want every day. I understand this as a certain kind of ‘feminism’ .” She herself has been working at 80 % since the birth of her first child. Wednesday is her day off, which she always devoted entirely to the children. Now she uses the time for herself, as the children have moved out and are studying. “Families need flexibility. You don’t just get it from your employer but also from your entire team. We all support each other here and step in for one another.”

I look forward to getting back in the game.

Yvonne van Luijt

38
Departmental Head, globegarden
Two children (two years old and two months old)



"I love what I do, and I was eager to get back to it. But still, I initially had a nervous feeling about taking our little one to childcare. Today I know that every mom feels this way. The first time being separated from your child is just a big step."

Being a mother and holding a leadership position professionally does not work without making some sacrifices. Yvonne van Luijt, who has been working at globegarden for three years, has experienced this herself. A good childcare offer, a flexible employer and the support of her partner enabled her to achieve her personal goals and have time for her son.

The trained teacher and bank clerk says she hit the jackpot with her job at the childcare network: “I find the industry very exciting. I started directly with a full-time workload and had a lot of fun with my tasks,” she remembers. She works closely with one of the three founders. “That totally motivated me. It was so cool to tackle and move things together with her. She is also a mom and was really something like a role model for me,” says Yvonne.

Nothing but congratulations

When she became a mother for the first time, Yvonne had not been with globegarden for long. Accordingly, she was initially a little worried about how the news would be received. Her worries proved unfounded. At the workplace, everyone received the news of her pregnancy very positively. “I only received congratulations. It was a great feeling. I was so happy to have a child and felt that all my colleagues shared my excitement,” she recalls. So Yvonne also determined that she wanted to return to work quickly after giving birth: “I wanted to continue in my leadership position and therefore thought: I’ll come back directly after three months with an 80 % workload.”

Openly discussing boundaries

After three months at home, Yvonne’s partner took over childcare for a total of two months. Afterward, her son could go to the baby group of a globegarden childcare. For Yvonne, this was a critical moment: “I love what I do, and I wanted to get back to it. But still, I initially had a strange feeling about taking our little one to childcare. Today I know that every mom feels this way. The first time being separated from your child is just a big step.” For Yvonne, things moved quickly at work. The everyday life with many appointments and tasks fully engaged her again. After some time, she realized that she had reached her personal limit. “I simply reached a limit. Today I am very grateful that the open corporate culture at globegarden allowed me to speak up honestly about it. I went to my boss and told her that I couldn’t manage it this way.” The reaction was pragmatic and innovative. “I was able to reduce my workload to 60 %. Even more fantastic was that they looked at where my skills could be best utilized and quickly offered me another role that better suited the reduced workload,” she shares.

“I am allowed to be a leader and a mom.”

This trust that was placed in her gave her a sense of security. Now she is expecting another child and did not let many of the thoughts she had during her last pregnancy arise at all. “Today I wonder why I ever felt uneasy about letting my child be cared for externally for four days. Our son loves childcare. He packs his bag in the morning and insists on being taken to childcare,” she laughs. She and her husband share the care and organization together. “My husband is from the Netherlands. There, it is a matter of course that men actively participate in care and upbringing. He took two months of paternity leave when I restarted my job. Even now, we have clearly divided up the days and share the responsibility and tasks. You have children together and it works very well for us this way.” Both are looking forward to the birth of their second child. “I have the confidence that I can do it. In my job, I am allowed to be a leader and a mom. That is the best thing that could have happened to me.”

I AM HAPPY AS A MOTHER AND A PROFESSIONAL.

Andrea Hebib

39
Regional Manager, globegarden
Three children (17, 15, and seven years old)



"Neither my partner nor I have ever questioned whether I should work or not. I find that crucial for our children, too. Of course, I want to be there for them and spend time with them. But I don't want to pretend either. I really enjoy working and that makes me happy."

Andrea-Laura Hebib is a Regional Manager at globegarden – and a mom of three children. Combining family and career is natural for her. Not working was never an option for the early childhood educator. A conversation about long days, the importance of serenity, and good childcare.

In your job, you're responsible for around 65 employees. Your youngest child is still in primary school. How do you manage that?

We are very well organized as a family. Everyone takes on their tasks and responsibilities. In the evening, we spend time together as a family. It's also important that each of us has some time for ourselves. I'm often asked how I can manage both. For me, it's a matter of attitude. Neither my partner nor I have ever questioned whether I should work or not. I find that crucial for our children too. Of course, I want to be there for them and spend time with them. But I don't want to pretend either. I really enjoy working and that makes me happy. If I were to sit at home frustrated or bored, they wouldn't benefit from that either.

Are there also moments when you think you might have taken on too much?

Yes, of course. It would be strange if not. I think every working mother knows this feeling. What helps me is that I really love my job and it makes me happy. From this, I can draw calmness and serenity – even when things get tough. The supportive and appreciative atmosphere at globegarden certainly helps too. Even at the executive level, the principle "The child comes first" applies. When things get challenging with our own kids in care, there are always flexible and pragmatic solutions. This is not something you can take for granted with many employers. I really appreciate it. It has contributed to me never feeling pressured to choose between being a mother and my profession.

How important are good childcare offers to your family?

When our first child was born, the childcare offerings were very sparse. Large parts of society saw this as the woman's task. Mothers who wanted to remain professionally active had a tough time. If there was outside care, it was more likely to be grandparents or childminders. That wasn't enough for me. Childcare should be associated with encouragement and education. Playing is a very important element. But other things are important too: social skills, for example, which you only learn in a group, then languages, dealing with numbers, making music or crafting, just to name a few. This is what educational childcares like those operated by globegarden can provide. That's why I'm happy that quite a bit has changed here and the offerings are much larger and better. Childcares relieve families and give parents freedom. From my point of view, this is important for the whole family and everyone benefits from it.

Don’t ever be discouraged.

Judit Kelemen

38
Educational Director, globegarden
Two children (10 and eight years old)



“I have the utmost respect for anyone who takes on the challenge of combining a career and family. Do not be discouraged: the start can be bumpy, but it’s worth it!”

Judit Kelemen is the educational director at globegarden Lilienthal. She has been working for the childcare provider for many years. Her two children know and like their mother's job. The best experience for her is when they come along and help their mom. Judit's advice to all expectant parents: have patience; the journey is worthwhile!



You work full time and have two children. How do you experience the compatibility of family and career?

In the first four to five years, it really takes a lot of discipline, effort and hard work to do justice to both. Flexibility and patience have always helped me a lot. As a parent, you suddenly have an important new responsibility. But it enriches your life, motivates you and at the same time sets the pace of your everyday life. As the children got older, it became easier for me to focus completely on my job again. When I see parents who have just had a child, I always empathize with them. I have the utmost respect for anyone who takes on the challenge of combining a career and family. Do not be discouraged: the start can be bumpy, but it's worth it!

Are there things that you have found particularly challenging?

The hormonal chaos after birth is definitely not to be underestimated. In addition, you get very little sleep at the beginning and only a minimum of time for yourself. In general, it bothers me that everyone in your environment has expectations of you as a mother. You need a good self-confidence to be able to do your thing and to have the courage to clearly say "I'm doing this now the way I think is right." Then there are also the general societal expectations of mothers. Either they view it critically that you work at all as a mom, or they expect you to handle everything with ease like a superwoman. A bit more acceptance of less perfection would be nice.

How important are good childcare solutions for your family?

Children are the greatest treasure of their parents. And this treasure needs the best place there is when parents go to work. Raising a child requires a lot of time and energy from the parents. Having childcare that supports the development of the child and relieves tasks from mother and father is an important contribution. Good childcare is an investment in the child's future that ideally shapes them for the rest of their lives. My children love the childcare. They even like to come to work with me. On "Open House Day" they were with me in the childcare, supported me, and had a great day. I appreciate it very much that they feel so comfortable here and see my job as part of our family life.

How important is the personal environment for working mothers?

In my view, that's one of the decisive factors. You need a partner who supports you. No one can do it alone. I love my job and was very happy to come back after giving birth. My grandmother helped me at home during that time. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been so smooth for me. I recommend to everyone to involve the older generation in raising and growing up children. It's not only a relief but enriching for everyone. The first year after birth was the most difficult for me. But it also went by very quickly. You had little time to think because you were always busy.

Good child-care is simply important.

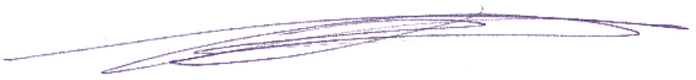
Sara Bivetti

Educational Area Manager, globegarden
Two children



"As a family, it was clear to us from the start that the children should also go to childcare. There, they have even more opportunities to discover the world than at home. Of course, as a mom, it's also challenging to step back into the profession after giving birth. You'd like to be everywhere at once to do justice to everything."

Sara Bivetti, who has advanced to the area management of several globegarden childcares, introduces herself with a laugh as globegarden veteran. She has been part of the team for a long time and is highly valued by her colleagues. Her two children were also cared for at globegarden, allowing her to fulfill her role both to her family and to her profession, which for her is a vocation.



Why do you love your profession?

Children are our future, and I firmly believe that early childhood education and care have a tremendous influence on their development. In childcare, we have the opportunity to lay the foundations for lifelong learning and social skills. It's fulfilling to see how the children develop, discover the world with curiosity and unfold their personalities. Accompanying the kids in this phase of life is a privilege. My job is super fun.

You are a mom of two children yourself. How important are good childcare offers to you?

Extremely important. As a family, it was clear to us from the start that the children should also go to childcare. There, they have even more opportunities to discover the world than at home. Of course, as a mom, it's also challenging to step back into the profession after giving birth. You'd like to be everywhere at once to do justice to everything. Work is also personally very important to me. I wouldn't have wanted to miss it. So I had the chance to return at the pace that was right for me and my family.

What does it mean to you to know that your children are well cared for during the day while you work?

It's just incredibly relieving. I've been with globegarden for a long time now. Before I became a mom myself, I witnessed with the parents of the childcare kids that this certainty made it much easier for them to part with their children. You then simply have a much better feeling; you can concentrate fully on your day and your tasks, and at the same time, you're already looking forward to the time you have together after childcare.

What role does workplace culture play for working mothers?

A very important one. I have always experienced a lot of support in everything at globegarden. A solution is always found together. A certain degree of flexibility is possible. You just need that as a mom. Something unforeseen can always happen. Then you need to be able to react. That's totally important, especially when grandparents can't just step in. This appreciative way simply makes it much easier to organize both things well and to create a bit of time for oneself.

Care and support take the pressure of you.

Samira Poletti

31
Educational Director, globegarden
One child (1.5 years old)



"I think that's very important for moms in general: that there is a culture of appreciation at their workplace and an emphasis on finding solutions together."

The childcare centers of globegarden are the professional home of Samira Poletti. Here she progressed from being a group leader to a childcare center director. After the birth of her son, she transferred to a newly opened childcare center in Wädenswil, her hometown. A conversation about what it feels like to arrive professionally – in the truest sense of the word.

Many people at globegarden continue to develop within the company. How have you experienced your professional journey?

For me, the open and constructive atmosphere at globegarden has always been important. You really have the opportunity to actively shape your path and commit yourself to achieving your personal goals. When I felt ready to take on more responsibility and lead a house with several groups, we found an optimal solution together. After becoming a mom, it was important for me to have time for my son. I wanted to step back a bit from my professional responsibilities. That was also possible without much fuss. This supportive culture that prevails at globegarden makes it possible. You are understood and seen as a mother.

Now you work in a childcare in your hometown. What does it feel like to combine family and work?

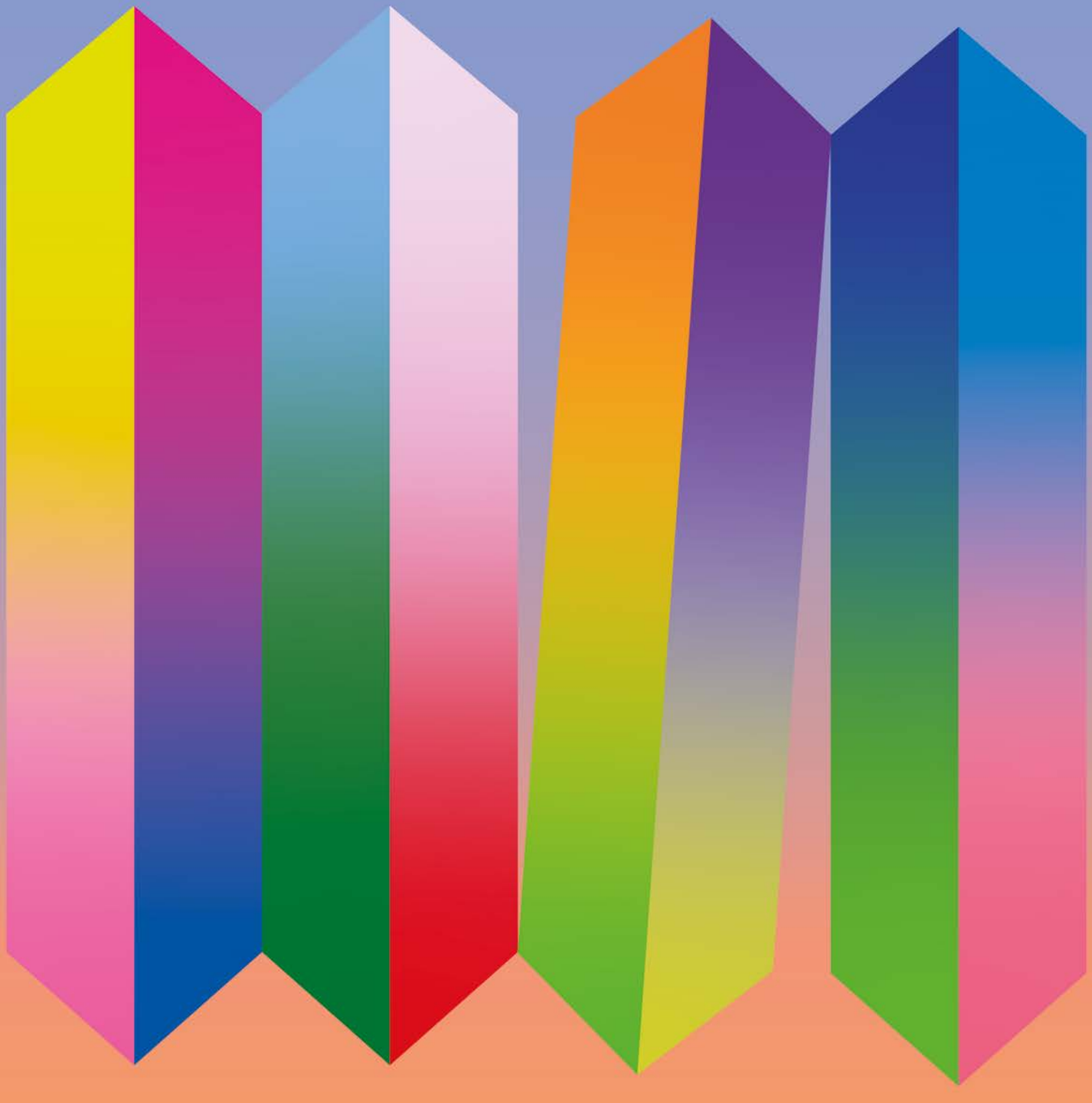
I coincidentally learned during a lunch with one of the founders that a new childcare was going to open in Wädenswil. I had always worked in Zurich before and I really enjoyed it. But when I heard that, I knew: this is my job! I grew up in Wädenswil. My family lives there. The childcare is near our home. It was a perfect fit. I was so happy about this opportunity. Last November, my son and I had our first day at the new childcare together. Being able to take him with me and knowing he is cared for at my workplace makes so many things easier.

Was it always clear to you that you wanted to return to your job after giving birth?

Absolutely. That was always clear to me. I wanted to return to the childcare and stay with globegarden. Nothing else would have been an option. I am very grateful that we found a way together. My birth was very difficult. I was out much longer than I had planned. I received so much support during that time – not only from my family but also from my employer. I think that's very important for moms in general: That there is a culture of appreciation at their workplace and an emphasis on finding solutions together. this is not just for a certain period of time at globegarden. Even now, I can be flexible when my son is sick. The support and especially the option of childcare take a lot of pressure off as a mom.

What importance do childcare offers have for Swiss families?

A big one, I think. They give parents time to focus on other things – their job, their hobbies, personal goals. They give parents a piece of freedom. I am very grateful that we as a family have the opportunity to use these offers. They are incredibly important.



It takes a village to raise child

Why good childcare options are important for parents
#empoweringfamilies

— It takes a village to raise child —

It takes a village to raise a child. The exact origin of this saying isn't documented, but it is believed to be from Africa. It suggests that it takes many people, perhaps even an entire community, to ensure a child grows up safely and well.

Childcare centers are a part of this "village." They support parents and the rest of the family in preparing young people for life as best as possible and in imparting important values. That's why we wanted to know from parents what difference a good external childcare option makes for them and their children. We received countless responses, from which we would like to share a selection.

The answers were diverse, personal and sincere. Often the word "village" was used literally, referring to the care for a growing child, of which the childcare is a part. Many parents also emphasized that childcare gives them time and space to focus on themselves, their jobs and their careers. It's important for them to know their children are in good hands. But also, the word "balance" came to mind for many, as their childcare enables them to find a personal balance between work and family.

Hearing that one belongs to a family, an open and tolerant place that allows all family members to live their lives the way they wish, is a great compliment for a childcare. It shows that an egalitarian society needs good care solutions, and these are not just for the children. The responses from families demonstrate the importance of care solutions today. They record how vital these are for Switzerland and for every individual. They have captured a piece of contemporary history.

1 “Families form the foundation of our society. You can’t expect working parents to fully concentrate on their jobs if they can’t be sure that their child is well cared for. Good childcare options allow parents to focus on their work, thereby making an important contribution to society. Today’s children are the adults and thus the leaders of tomorrow. If we all collectively raise them well and offer them love, respect, and empathy, the world has a good chance.”

2 “I am a single parent and therefore work full time. I am happy that the childcare is a second home for my children when my family can’t look after them. The childcare is part of our ‘village’ — because ‘It takes a village’ — and that is a great relief.”

Margarida[1] Florian[2] Markus[3] Vincent[4] Mor[5] Adrian[6] Elizabeth[7] Laura[8] Linda[9] Christina[10]

3 “Childcare options allow every member of our family to focus on their individuality – whether it’s work, hobbies or travel. Every person is unique and childcare gives us the flexibility and time we need to have time for ourselves. You feel a little like you’re losing something when your own child isn’t with you all day. But the assurance that the child is having a good time, learning new things and making friends helps one cope with this feeling.”

4 “Reliable childcare options are crucial for balancing work and family life. They enable us parents to fulfill our responsibilities and engage in both our professional and family daily lives.”

5 “The childcare gives us as parents a sense of calm. We know that the children are in good hands throughout the day, they are active and continue to develop. Parents can focus on their careers during this time. This combination brings a good balance to the family — and satisfaction too.”

6 “Childcare options are important because they allow the adults in the family to be equal. Without them, only one partner could/would/must work. The other would have to take care of the children. This leads to unequal treatment. One of them follows the profession for which he or she has probably invested in training. The other would not have this opportunity. Many very well and expensively educated people could not work without childcare.”

7 “Childcare options offer our children what they cannot experience at home: the childcare allows me to focus on my own topics for a certain time of the day. When I am with the kids, I focus 100 % on them.”

8 “Childcare options enable families to balance work and life and support parents in not completely giving up the life they both had before the child.”

9 “As parents, childcare options give us the certainty that our little treasures are in good hands. We can continue to pursue our profession without worry. The childcare workers really do great things! Our 14-month-old son absolutely loves going to childcare. It’s adorable to see how he develops and what he takes away from childcare.”

10 “We both work full time. For us, it is crucial that the childcare is a place that gives us a good feeling and that the children enjoy going to. When our youngest stands by the door in the morning with shoes in hand, eager to go and play, it shows me that he likes going to childcare. At globegarden, lifelong friendships have been formed. I am now the godparent of the little sister of one of our son’s longest friends.”

11 “Good and reliable childcare solutions are important for families. Parents have to juggle many tasks, especially when they work and don’t have family or relatives nearby who can help with child care. A good childcare enables parents to plan and organize their work in a calm, reliable and functioning setup.”

12 “For our family, a good childcare offering is indispensable. Both of us, mom and dad, don’t want to give up our jobs, which we do part time. For us, workdays are easier knowing that the little guy is in good hands and will have fun when we drop him off at childcare in the morning. We love the ‘spontaneous actions’ of our childcare – on Valentine’s Day, the little one could stay until 9 pm and we parents could enjoy a lovely dinner for two. It’s good to know that pedagogically trained women and men are engaging with the kids. As parents, we learn something new in every stage of our son’s life. We are glad when we can just inquire and ask questions at the childcare caregivers.”

13 “Thanks to good childcare solutions, families manage to find a balance: the more secure and fulfilled the children are, the more parents can focus on their work and personal well-being. This has a direct positive impact on the children and the family as a whole. In childcare, the little ones grow up in a ‘miniature society’ where values like sharing, listening, respect and care are significant.”

14 “Good childcare solutions are irreplaceable for modern families. They not only allow all family members to contribute equally to the household but also to pursue their life outside their own home as well as their ambitions and dreams. The childcare takes a huge load off my shoulders: when I go to work, I can be sure that my child is safe and is heard and understood by the caregivers.”

15 “It’s important that every family member can also give space to their personal interests and needs to unfold them. Childcares offer children the opportunity to learn and develop together with peers. They give parents the opportunity to develop professionally and personally. Thus, parents can create a solid foundation to be present when the child is at home.”

16 “Childcare solutions are essential for working parents. They provide peace of mind. The children learn life skills there and spend an exciting time.”

17 “The childcare gives us the reassuring feeling that our son is in good hands, having a good time learning, developing and making friends. He can develop his social behavior, internalize the language and simply have fun in a group with other children.”

18 “It takes a village to raise a child into a responsible person. That’s why support in childcare is so important. It allows every family member to grow.”

19 “A family is not just one person. Each family member is an individual with special needs. Whether it’s financial or more about self-fulfillment, it doesn’t matter. For inner peace and satisfaction, it’s important to meet this need. That’s why good childcare is essential, so our little ones are safe and protected while family members can pursue their individual needs.”

20 “For us, good year-round childcare options are important so that we can spend as much time together as a family outside of our work – without time constraints.”

21 “Good childcare in the early years is the most effective ‘investment’ in the education of the little ones.”

Natalia[11] Marko[12] Myriam[13] Ana[14] Simona[15] Stefanie[16] Lucia[17] Anna[18] Antonella[19] Heike[20] Hacer[21]

22 “Our childcare has been a big part of our daily life for six years. Without their support, my husband and I could never have continued our professional journey. Our two older daughters spent a significant part of their early childhood years in two different globegarden childcare centers. And even today, they always like to come along to pick up their little sister. That’s the best proof that they felt very comfortable!”

23 “The childcare helps us have a balanced family life. We can all develop differently and come home full of energy to spend time with each other and give each other love and attention.”

24 “Good childcare solutions are important for us families. We entrust them with our most precious achievements to look after when we are busy providing for them: our children. In our case, we specifically looked for an open and tolerant childcare. Our son was born to a surrogate mother and has two fathers. We greatly appreciated the open and warm nature of the people at our childcare and it gave us a sense of security.”

25 “Only when I can be sure that my son is well cared for can I concentrate on my work. A good childcare offering allows us a flexible lifestyle. What our son experiences in childcare, we alone could not offer him: other children, rules of community life, outings and other languages.”

26 “Childcare options allow children to develop their social skills and provide a change from the family routine. They have caregivers outside the family in childcare. The caregivers are very important for their development! Thanks to external care, I was able to resume my professional activity.”

27 “Childcare solutions allow us parents, besides being mom and dad, to lead a self-determined professional life. The childcare offers children worlds of experience, structures and social interaction, so they can gain experiences outside the family and make friendships.”

28 “When our child is in childcare, we parents can take time to focus on other tasks and responsibilities. We also use the time to reflect and discover ideas and strategies for parenting. Our son develops social, but also linguistic and other competencies in childcare.”

29 “As parents, we are glad that the childcare supports us in the development of our child. It takes some of the load off our shoulders. We can go about our work without worrying about our child. We know he is doing well and is well cared for. We have met other families through childcare and made new friendships.”

30 “Good childcare options are important to balance family and work. They promote contact with other children and enable the little ones to engage in great, educational and fun activities.”

31 “When our baby was in intensive care, we were able to drop off our older son at childcare every day. They were so flexible and gave us great support. We need childcare options because the family can’t always take care of the children. They also allow us parents to stay in the game professionally.”

32 “Good childcare options make it possible to remain in the profession as parents. The childcare gives me time to get important things done or have time for myself. Without it, I would depend on a few other people.”

Kathrin[22] Sammy[23] Xavier[24] Katja[25] Jelena[26] Gabriela[27] Dina[28] Olle[29] Fam. Engelsing[30] Simon[31] Dinah[32]

33 “Balance between all family members is necessary, and that’s what the childcare provides us. It’s very important for us to see that our child goes to childcare happily and eagerly. There, they can play with their first friends and develop independently within a community. Good childcare solutions reduce the mental load that we have as parents.”

34 “Without the childcare offer, I would not have been able to combine my professional activities with my family duties. My professional development would not have happened without the childcare. The globegarden teachers are like a second family to us. The kids learn in childcare to feel comfortable early on in a community outside the family and to find their ‘own place’.”

35 “Organizing family everyday life is a very challenging task. It is enormously relieving when the children like to go to childcare and we parents know they are in good hands. Only then can we carry out our professional activity with motivation and joy.”

36 “As a family, the childcare gives us freedom. As parents, it brings us independence. To our children, it provides a loving second home with many small and big role models.”

37 “Good childcare options enable women to be true role models as ‘working moms’ and to contribute to the financial stability of the family. Through their work, they inspire their children to pursue their own career paths. They can confidently pursue their career while knowing that their children are safe in childcare and enjoy many benefits. The right childcare environment promotes children in their development; they learn something new every day and grow into socially competent and responsible individuals.”

38 “Childcare offerings are so crucial because they take care of the most important people in our lives: our children. I am new to Switzerland. The childcare enables me to learn German. With some luck and a lot of effort, hopefully, I will soon be good enough to work in my profession in a pediatric practice. Children find friends in childcare, try new things they can’t at home, get used to new faces and understand that parents come back after being away for a few hours. Trained professionals accompany them in their development. We are from Argentina. All the friends our son has found in childcare are like family to us.”

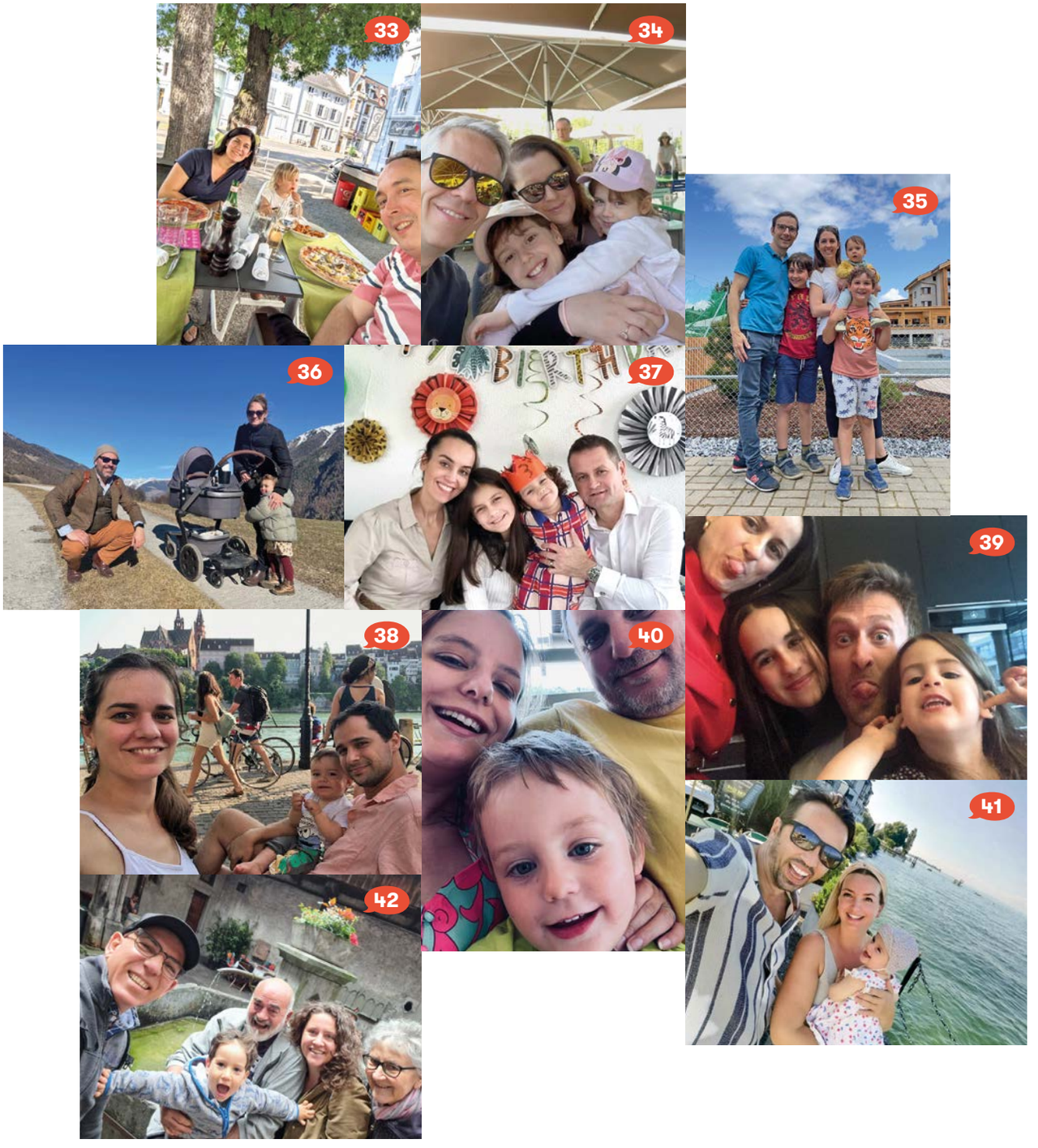
39 “For us, childcare is a relief. It enables better work-life balance and gives parents the chance to take some time for themselves – for example, for couple time, me time, work time or simply hobbies.”

40 “For us as working parents, childcare options mean flexibility. Our child learns many things there and can later integrate well into society. This is particularly beneficial for only children as they learn social integrity at childcare.”

41 “My family does not live in Switzerland. I have no grandparents, siblings or other relatives and friends to help me with childcare. When you’re working, you rely even more on good childcare options. In today’s world, it is more important than ever that there is more support for families in childcare. Knowing that the child is well cared for and that you can do things for yourself in the meantime contributes to personal well-being, which in turn benefits the whole family.”

42 “Thanks to the childcare, I can remain professionally active, especially since I am often on the road. It reassures me to know that my child is well cared for. The flexibility of the childcare and the support of the grandparents on Monday afternoons are invaluable to us. Our son benefits from the time in childcare, learns new things and how to interact with other children. This facilitates a regulated and stress-free family life for us.”

Samuel[33] Clotilde[34] Caroline[35] Ladina[36] Fam. Sarkadi-Kis[37] Paula[38] Claudia[39] Nicole[40] Aferdita[41] Pamela[42]


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43 "Good childcare options positively relieve parents. In that time, you can do something for yourself – whether it's cleaning, shopping, working, or having a coffee. This provides mental balance. Afterwards, you can be fully there for the family again!"

44 "Good childcare options play a crucial role for families for so many reasons: they foster children's development, help 'working parents', prepare for school, support socialization and ensure children's well-being. They contribute to the stability, happiness and success of families in today's fast-paced and demanding world."

45 "A trustworthy childcare solution is even more important to families than a good care. We greatly appreciate the external childcare offer because we don't have to organize anything in everyday life and as a family, we have found a very good rhythm."

48 "What is crucial for us parents is that we have a feeling of security, knowing that our children like going to childcare and are also gaining valuable experiences. The childcare provides our children with a protected space to grow and learn new things. With these conditions, it's not hard for us to leave the children and go to work. We know they are in good hands and feel comfortable. Thus, we can fully concentrate on our work and not have another pending issue in mind."

a business trip. The childcare has always given my daughter the space she needed to learn, develop and grow up safe and secure without restricting her personality or authenticity."

51 "When children like going to childcare, it helps mothers not to feel guilty about leaving them there while they work themselves. For our family, childcare means the security of knowing that the children are happy there because they enjoy the interaction with the caregivers and other children. When childcare offers are really good, they enable children to dive into a great adventure."

52 "I can't imagine going to work if I didn't know if my children were safe and well cared for during that time.

Pamela[43] Bie[44] Laura[45] Patrícia[46] Fam. Huber[47] Kerstin[48] Isabelle[49] Lydie[50] Jonas[51] Pedro[52]

one. When we leave our baby at childcare, we know they are in good hands and can fully concentrate on our work. Our baby learns so much there every day: observing other children, discovering new toys and learning to play independently. Childcare is part of their development!"

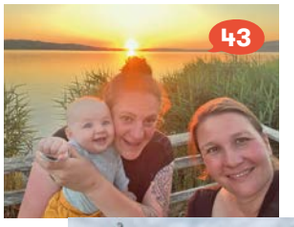
46 "Leaving your child and going to work is incredibly difficult. When I know that my child is in good hands and the care is good, then my heart hurts a little less."

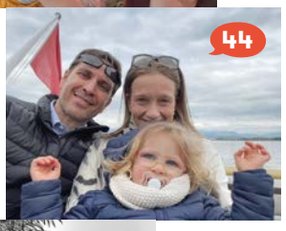
47 "The childcare is super important for us. It allows us to pursue our professional activities without having to involve the grandparents for

49 "Without good childcare options, I could not remain employed as a mother. It would be impossible. The social component that childcare offers my child cannot be opened up by me as an adult. The varied activities in childcare help the children learn and experience as many things as possible."

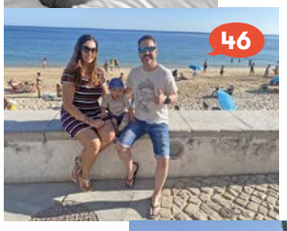
50 "I think as a mother, you need good childcare options. I want to be sure that my daughter is safe, heard, happy and can have fun with her friends when I drop her off at childcare in the morning. What is also very important to me: I can rely on the childcare if I'm stuck at work, in traffic or on

I find it very important that they get to know other perspectives outside of my own. They do that in childcare. Childcare is important for their personal development. They learn to share their views and experiences with other children. As they grow up, they hopefully have a lot of empathy and respect for others."













Geetika[53] Sarah[54] Jin[55] Marion[56] Fernanda[57] Maria[58]

53 "As an expat, the childcare has helped me raise my child with strong values and integrate them into society. Thanks to the caregivers, my daughter speaks fluent Swiss German, has learned the independence of a Swiss child and has found numerous friends from different cultures. She is an independent, confident and assertive child – thanks to the experiences in childcare and at home."

54 "The last years of my career to date have been the best and most rewarding. I am grateful that I could reconcile my work with family life – thanks to a very good childcare offer. As a 'working parent', it is crucial for me to know that my daughter is well cared for during the day and, in addition, has a good time and experiences many new and exciting things. My daughter feels at home in childcare and loves going there. The childcare is part of our small family, and the experiences our daughter collects there are enriching for her. I see that she acts very relaxed in new environments or social situations. Her time in childcare has made a significant contribution to this."

55 "Good childcare options have the potential to bring harmony into the family and reduce the stress that weighs on parents. Parents can recharge and find their balance. Childcare is very important for those who don't have grandparents nearby to help with care."

56 "For both parents to work, good childcare options are needed. They help families get organized. For us, it's priceless to know that someone is taking good care of our child."

57 "I'm a 'working mum' from another country. Good childcare options are more than just superficial to me. They allow my daughter to become part of society. Having access to good childcare allows me to rediscover myself. I can fully devote myself to my work without feeling guilty or burdened. If my daughter wasn't in childcare, I couldn't offer her 'quality time' during my working hours. That, in turn, would make me feel that she is wasting her potential and her need to learn and explore the world."

58 "Childcares are a huge support for families. They create space to help parents continue to develop their professional and personal lives. For the children, childcare is a 'safe space' to grow by learning to interact with other children and adults."

Outgrowing the nursery

A brief look at the history of Swiss childcare centers



The first childcare center was established in Basel in 1870.

Switzerland invests only 0.1% of its GDP in supplementary family care. Other OECD countries invest an average of 0.8%.

One caregiver for 150 children
The first opportunity to have children cared for outside one's own home were infant schools and kindergartens that emerged in the first half of the 19th century. It was during this time that the first women began to work outside the home, which was not really anticipated by the prevailing role model for women at the time. Mothers were expected to stay at home with the children and take care of the household. Financially, however, this was no longer viable for many families. Thus, by 1870, more than half of Swiss women were working. They could only place their children in one of these schools once they reached three years old. Given the ratio of one caregiver for 150 children, these schools were more akin to mass processing. They had nothing in common with today's childcare offerings.

Support for working families
From the mid to late 19th century, additional childcare options began to emerge. This initiative was led by private individuals: women's associations, doctors and pastors founded childcares or after-school care for older children. These were mostly located in workers' districts, where the demand for childcare was high. However, the organizations also set conditions for the parents. Children of unmarried women were rejected for moral reasons. Parents were required to hand over their children clean, bathed and diapered. The individual and loving care that we take for granted today did not exist back then. The centers were only concerned with ensuring that the children were not neglected while their parents were at work. Why was this? Probably because the providers of the childcare centers clung to their bourgeois-influenced roles. They were banking on the idea that mothers would soon no longer need to work and thus saw themselves only as a stopgap until that time came. The families had to pay for the care even then. That's why in Zurich, initially, almost exclusively children from artisan families were cared for. People who worked in the factories could hardly afford the costs.

For bourgeois families, childcare was not an issue back then. They employed nannies or wet nurses. The mothers took care of the household and other tasks.

A role model changes
At the end of the 19th century, the role model for women began to change. After the First World War, fewer and fewer of them worked. Society assigned them the role "behind the stove," where they took care of the household and children. As a result, external childcare services were increasingly less sought after. The growing middle class could live well with the father as the sole earner. In 1941, the statistically measured employment rate of Swiss women reached a low point. Only 35 % of them were working. The relevance of childcare offers also declined. For many families, such offers were not even an issue: the compatibility of motherhood and career was not discussed in public and political discourse for a long time. In the early sixties, only a few Swiss families used childcare services.

Pioneering work of the Italians
Movement only came back into the issue when, after the Second World War, Italian guest workers were the first foreign labor force to come to Switzerland. They were followed by Portuguese, Spaniards and then Yugoslavians. In 1960, an incredible 75 percent of all female workers in Switzerland were from abroad. They started families but often returned to work shortly after giving birth. Now there was a need for childcare services! Because the families of these people had remained abroad. The grandparents couldn't step in. However, there was still no offer available, so people had

According to a UNICEF study, Switzerland ranks 38 out of 41 countries on the subject of childcare in comparison with OECD countries.[1]

GDP could be increased by 6% if mothers were fully employed.

The birth rate in Switzerland is 1.46 births per woman. In France, it is 1.83.

to take matters into their own hands. The Italian Catholic missionary order, for example, began to expand the so-called "Asili." Here, the children of guest workers were looked after during the week and even received a lunch, something that until a few years ago was still not a matter of course for Swiss childcare offers for children! But the centers remained primarily reserved for the children of Italian women – probably also because Italian was spoken here and the caregivers came from the neighboring country. For Swiss families, care by the mother remained the preferred solution.

Demand for change

It wasn't until the seventies that things started moving again in Switzerland. More women were working, and the women's movement actively demanded a larger offering of childcare services. What seems completely normal to us today, wasn't back then: only from 1976 did women no longer need their husband's permission to work.

New services emerged, and the view on childcare began to change. The idea of actively engaging with the children and incorporating educational aspects into the care took hold. Childcare mother associations were established. Their goal was more personal care. At the same time, parents were to have more say when it came to the day care of their children. The image of childcares also began to change. Gradually, they were no longer seen as a stopgap solution but were perceived as useful and supportive institutions. Investment was made in the training of staff, and the centers became more professional.

Still much to do

The political sector recognized the great need for childcare services only when the birth rate in Switzerland began to decline from 1990 onwards. It became clear: more must be done to improve the compatibility of career and family. The sector professionalized, and the state took over private associations, including the still-existing Italian-speaking "Asili." There were initial funding efforts to create more offers.

Despite everything, only 36 % of children living in Switzerland were cared for in a childcare center or a school supplementing center in 2021. The number of offers is still scarce and heavily dependent on location. In addition, there are the high costs: a full-time childcare place costs in Switzerland on average more than a quarter of the total family income. In an international comparison, this is an extremely poor value.[2] For many families, this means: the person with the lower income – and that is still often the mother – works only part time or withdraws completely from professional life.

— Study by Prof. Monika Bütler —

“Working doesn’t pay off, a second child even less”, or how a scientific study contributed to the founding of globegarden

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Monika Bütler studied mathematics and is an honorary professor at the University of St. Gallen, where she served as a full professor of economic policy and director of the Swiss Institute for Empirical Economic Research, which she co-founded, until 2021. She is a board member at Huber+Suhner, Schindler Holding and Swiss Life. Monika Bütler is considered one of the 10 most influential economists in Switzerland. In 2007, she published a study “Working does not pay off – a second child even less”, in which she examined the effects of income-dependent childcare prices on the work behavior of women. The study’s results question the compatibility of career and family in Switzerland.

34% of children attend childcare because the middle class can hardly afford it.

Switzerland invests 0.1% of its GDP in childcare, while 0.8% of its GDP goes into the military.

64% of children between zero to two years old from high-income families attend childcare.

The middle class has to spend 46% of the family income on childcare.

The findings of the study were the trigger for the founders of globegarden to take action. They believed: not every woman must want to work, but everyone who wants to should be able to. What has changed after 15 years regarding the study's results? Despite some progress, the fundamental message of the study is still relevant. Childcare continues to be a private matter and thus usually a woman's issue.

On the path to equality

In 2007, Monika Bütler not only found that those who work more also have to pay more for external childcare for their child. Alarmingly, the additional costs often exceed the second income. State support for childcare in Switzerland is income-dependent and particularly has a negative influence on the income of well-earning women. This leads to many families no longer receiving subsidies and childcare costs rising as women increasingly work and earn more income.

The middle class is affected

Especially for families with middle incomes, this is a problem. The average per capita income is about 80,000 Swiss Francs. This means that parents who work full time at the average wage must bear the costs of childcare privately; about CHF 32,000 per child. A significant financial burden.

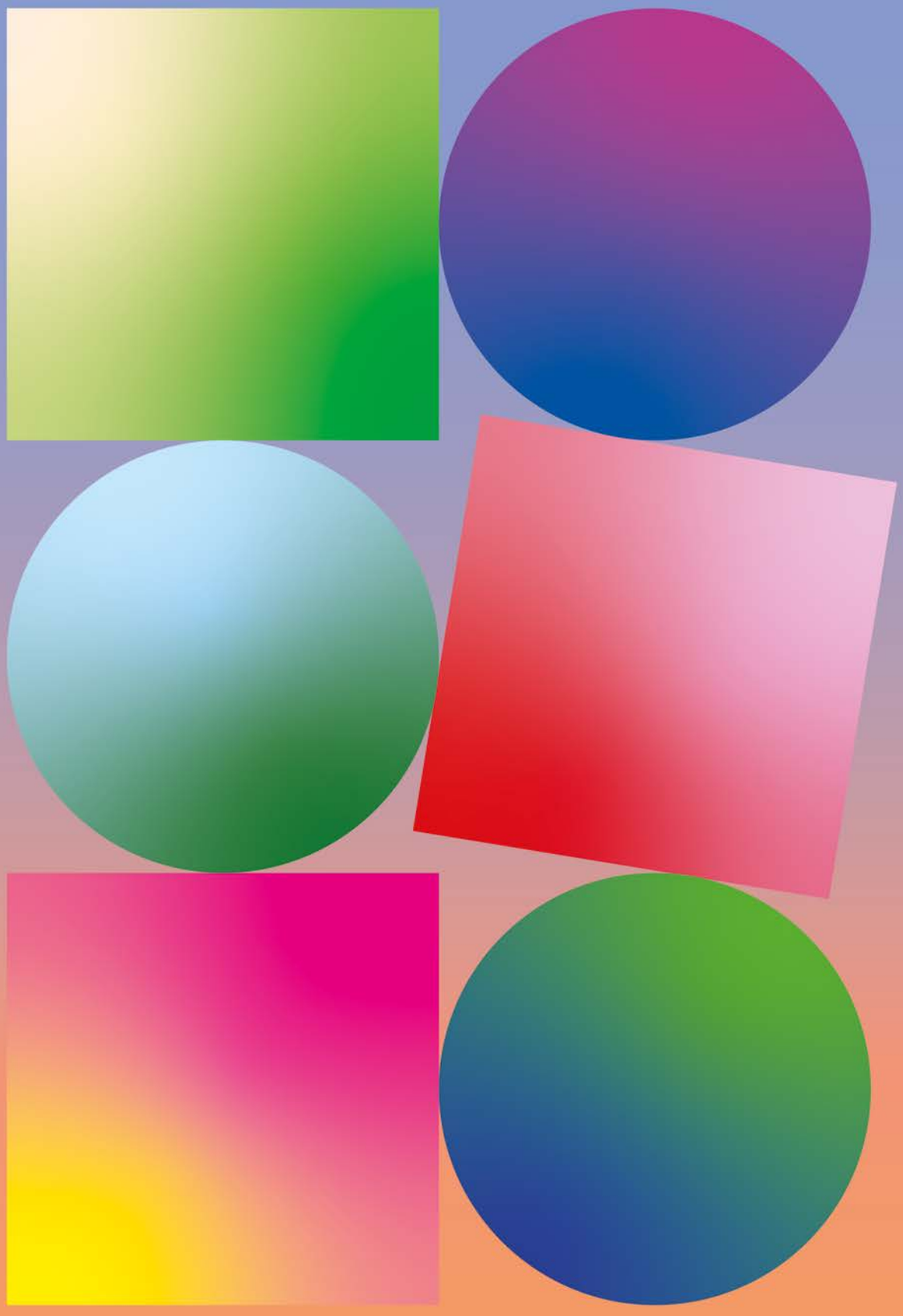
For dual-earning middle-class parents with two childcare children, around 46 % of the earnings go to care (practically the full second income); state-subsidized single parents spend 10.4 % of their income. This is reflected in childcare usage: Only 34 % of children in Switzerland are cared for in a childcare; because the working middle class can hardly afford it. However, Swiss families with high incomes send their children aged zero to two to childcare centers about 64 % of the time.[3]

Empower women, secure the future

Monika Bütler's study emphasizes the role of childcare costs in relation to parental income. It remains a fact that women are more likely to work part time and, from an economic point of view, earn 18 % less than men, which has significant financial consequences for their retirement provision and often leads to an inevitable career break. Today's legal decisions emphasize the self-responsibility of women for their financial independence. The once life-shaping institution of marriage has changed according to Federal Court rulings, and divorce rates in Switzerland have reached around 41 %. Not least, the shortage of skilled workers highlights the necessity of investment in childcare infrastructure.

Courage is like change – just sooner

A revision of the system is necessary as it disadvantages well-educated and ambitious parents of the middle class. This results from the limited accessibility to childcares, due to low investments in childcare compared to other expenditures. While Switzerland spends 0.8 % of its GDP on the military, the investment in childcare is only 0.1 %. And while only 34 % of children are cared for in childcares here, the figures are 78 % in Germany, 80 % in Sweden, and 99 % in France. Not every woman must want to work, but everyone who wants to should be able to. A realignment requires courage.



The globegarden story

A good childcare adapts to what's best for the family, not the other way round

A partner for the whole family

“Empowering families, empowering women” – that’s the motto of globegarden. It’s not just about care: globegarden is a partner for the entire family.

With over 70 centers, globegarden today is the leading provider of childcare in Switzerland. The childcare centers offer more than just care. They are vibrant worlds of learning and life where children can grow, learn together and explore the world with curiosity. Countless families have trusted globegarden for years, and thousands of children look forward to it every day. The story of globegarden began 15 years ago with a study that the three founders could hardly believe the results of.


KAPLA
KAPLA

In 2007, a scientific investigation by the Swiss economist Monika Bütler was published, focusing on the compatibility of family and career. The sobering thesis was: "Working doesn't pay off – a second child even less so". Lack of or too expensive childcare options would make it difficult for families to opt for both career and children. The challenge was something the globegarden founders Christina Mair, Kristina Rebsamen and Caroline Staehelin already knew from their friends and work colleagues. Finding affordable and good childcare was nearly impossible for young families. At that time, the founders didn't have children of their own but gave much thought to how the situation might look for them in the future. They began to gather information, visited childcare centers and discussed with friends and family until an idea was born: if there's no childcare that offers what we wish for children, we'll start our own!

The beginnings of globegarden

For globegarden, values and visions are of central importance. This has not changed since its inception. The founders knew each other long before they became entrepreneurs together: Christina and Caroline are sisters and Kristina is a long-time friend of both. Initially, it was just the three of them working on the realization of a vision, but the globegarden family now has well over 1,000 members. Appreciation and recognition shape the coexistence and development of globegarden.

The first globegarden opened in 2009 at Paradeplatz in Zurich. In the time leading up to the opening, there was a startup spirit: the logo was created on a napkin over a glass of wine in an Italian restaurant, and the administrative tasks were completed at the living room table by Christina Mair. The founders determined what was important to them and the role globegarden should play in the lives of parents and children:

"A good childcare center is based on what's good for the family – not the other way around. We make children ready for school and fit for the future. We make life a little easier for their parents by helping them balance family life and career. Through early childhood support, we provide children with the necessary skills for education, integration and participation. It's about much more than just care at globegarden. After all, a child who finds a good place in a childcare center will find it easier to find their place in life later on."

Together, they defined the core values that guide all action at globegarden:

SHARE every moment
TEACH the future
ACT reliable and responsible
RESPECT every family

These values were first put into practice on Monday, August 17, 2009, at globegarden Talacker, where the first globegarden families were welcomed. A special touch: the three founders worked with groups alongside their teachers as "interns". They were taught by their own employees, who passed on their expertise. Understanding day-to-day life in a daycare center from the perspective of the people who work there was crucial to our founders. The experience allows them to run the business in a way that brings all perspectives on board. At globegarden, there are no decisions made only at desks. To this day, the founders visit facilities frequently and listen to employees' experiences. Globegarden is a learning organization that invites everyone to help shape future of early education.

A vision becomes reality

Christina Mair's living room table quickly became too small for the many tasks that arose. Globegarden struck a nerve. What started out as a "tiny" operation became a "pretty big deal" over the years. While the founders initially dreamed of three childcare centers, there were soon already a dozen centers throughout Switzerland. This increased the administrative workload, which

the entrepreneurs did not want to leave to the childcares. The employees there should have the opportunity to focus on the children. Therefore, tasks were soon centralized in the administration in Zurich. Today, an interdisciplinary team of professionals works there, supporting employees in the childcare centers, being points of contact for families and businesses, and further developing the concept of early education.

Now, over 70 centers in Switzerland belong to globegarden. With a lot of passion, commitment and conviction, the founders have created something very special and rethought the concept of childcare in Switzerland. Today, all three are mothers. Would they do anything differently? No, not at all. With globegarden, they have created exactly the place they always wanted for their children.



globegarden – ready for the future

Globegarden has reinvented childcare. What began as an idea now offers numerous parents the opportunity to balance family and career. The founders have continuously developed their innovative concept over the years. Today, globegarden is a place where everyone can grow above and beyond themselves.

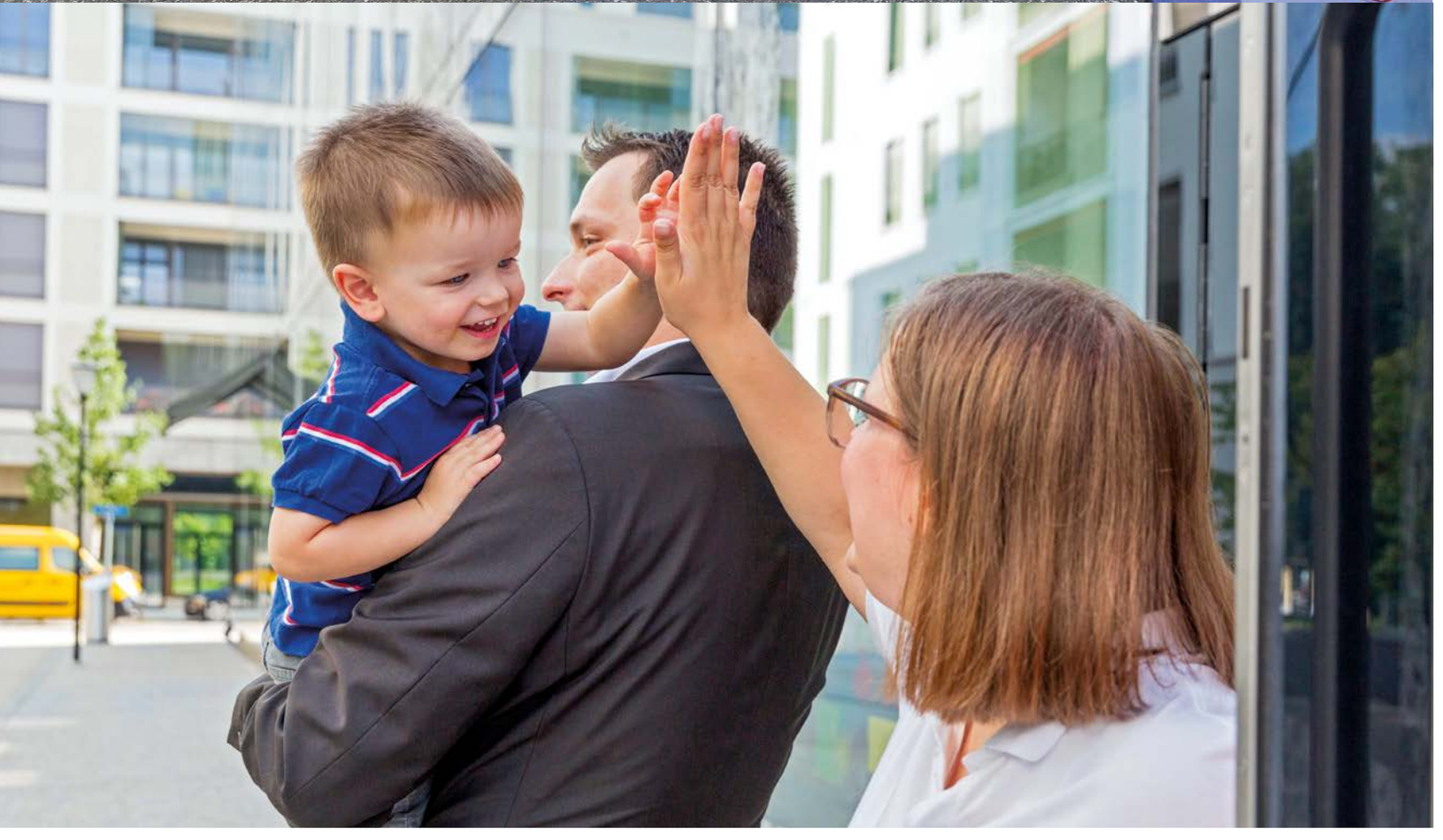
Not every child wants to study astrophysics in the future. But shouldn't every child at least have the chance? The founders are convinced of that. The most important is a good start in life. At globegarden, children can experiment and marvel, make first friendships and learn in an inclusive and diverse environment to meet people and cultures without prejudice. Free play, romping, climbing and swinging in the park or in the childcare's own garden are just as much a part of daily life as doing gymnastics together or transforming into a cobra during children's yoga. Globegarden centers have always been about much more than just care.

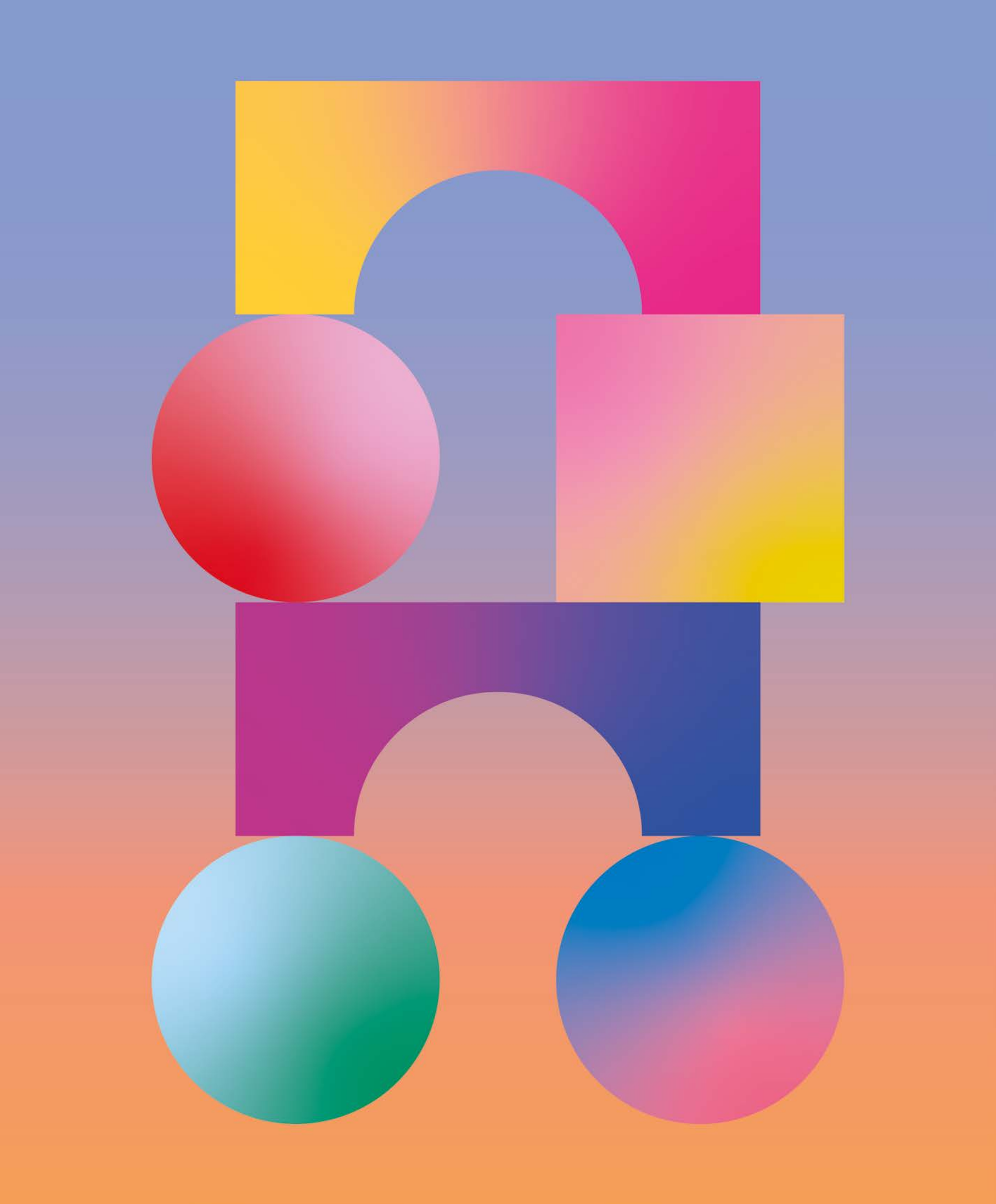
As colorful as the world is, so are the globegarden childcare centers today. Because globegarden lives cultural diversity. Children, parents and employees at globegarden come into contact with new languages and cultures in a playful way, which opens not only horizons but also their hearts.

Today, numerous pioneers, visionaries, explorers and reformers work at globegarden. For 15 years, the globegarden family has been reinventing the childcare world every day. Employees describe globegarden as innovative, colorful and open. Because that's what it takes to create a magical place for children – without any magic at all.

The globegarden family is ready for the future every day; because the best is not behind us, but ahead of us.


GLOBE GARDEN
Sommerfest
Dienstag



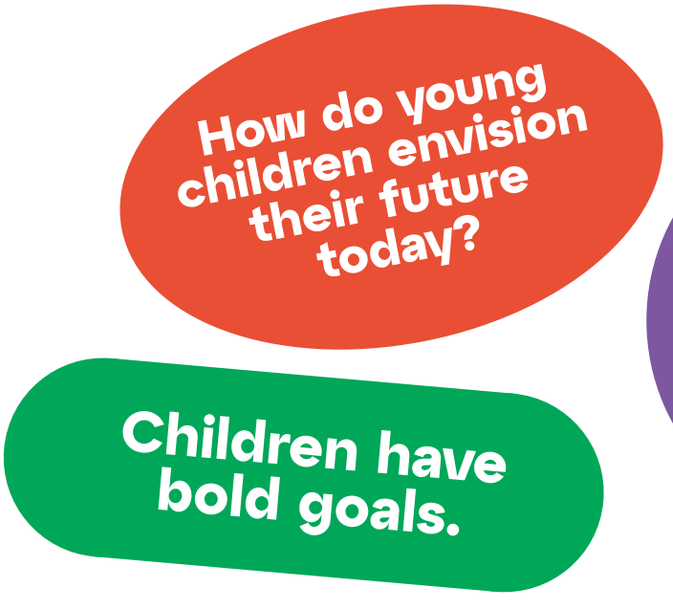


Future shapers



How globegarden kids imagine the future
#empoweringkids

Children are the future. Values that are imparted to them at a young age can have a significant impact on their later development. How do young children envision their future today? One thing is clear: they have bold goals and many dreams, they desire a large family and they already know exactly who will do the cleaning at home.



“When I grow up, I want to be a princess. Maybe a doctor, like my mom. I love going to childcare. I want to have four children who will also go to globegarden.”
Lilly

“My dad is really good at doing laundry. My mom is good at cutting bread. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher and have five children, who should all come here to childcare too.”
Laura

“When I grow up, I want to marry a woman and become a policewoman. My wife and I will do everything together. She’ll also be a policewoman. I want my children to go to globegarden too because it’s so nice here.”
Alma

“I want to be a farmer, uh, a farm woman. I will have 20 children who someone will need to take good care of when I work. That’s why they all should go to globegarden. I’ll marry a man and a woman and we’ll share all the work.”
Sophia

“I want to have a lot of jobs when I grow up. I like cleaning up at globegarden, so I want to be a cleaning lady. But I also want to be an English teacher and a dance teacher. One day I’ll be a cleaning lady, the other two days I’ll be a teacher. On the third day, I’d also like to be a singer and on the fourth a policewoman.”
Charlotte

“I want to be Mickey Mouse by profession. I want to have many children who will also go to globegarden. My wife and I will share the household tasks. I’ll clean because I like it. Our children should then be able to spend equal time with their mom and dad.”
Adrian

“I like airplanes. That’s why I’ll become a pilot. At home, I’ll do all the chores. My child should also go to globegarden and have as many friends as I do.”
Fymen

“Can you be a dinosaur by profession? Because dinosaurs are cool. Then I’ll have a big dinosaur family that also comes here to childcare.”
Klara

“I’m going to be a professional soccer player. My children should then also go to the globegarden here in Basel. We all do the chores at home together. I think that’s good.”
Jari

“I like spending time with mom and dad the most. We can do everything together at home. Sometimes I help with cooking. Maybe I’ll become a chef when I grow up. I also like cake. Maybe I can also be a cake baker by profession.”
Daniel

“When I grow up, I want to be a mom. Or a unicorn. I work every day and my children go to childcare. The nanny picks them up from there when I’m still at work.”
Victoria

“Dad makes dinner well. Mom can read stories really well. I want to be able to do that too. I like it best when both are there and I can play with both. But I also like going to childcare. That’s why my children should come here later too.”
Oliver

“When I grow up, I want to be like Simba. Simba is brave and has a great dad. But lions can’t go to childcare, which is silly.”
Philipp

“I want to be a teacher later because I really like the teachers here at childcare. Maybe I’ll also be a policewoman because I like blue so much. Then I can always wear blue things. Later with my husband, I’ll share all the chores at home. Everyone should do something.”
Sandra

“I want to go to space when I grow up. Last year we built a space station at childcare. It was so much fun. My husband can come to space with me. We live in a rocket together.”
Nadja

“At globegarden, there is a family with five children, but only one dad and one mom. That’s not possible. They need two dads. Two of the children are already in school and you also need a dad to drive the children to school, while the others are brought to childcare, right?”

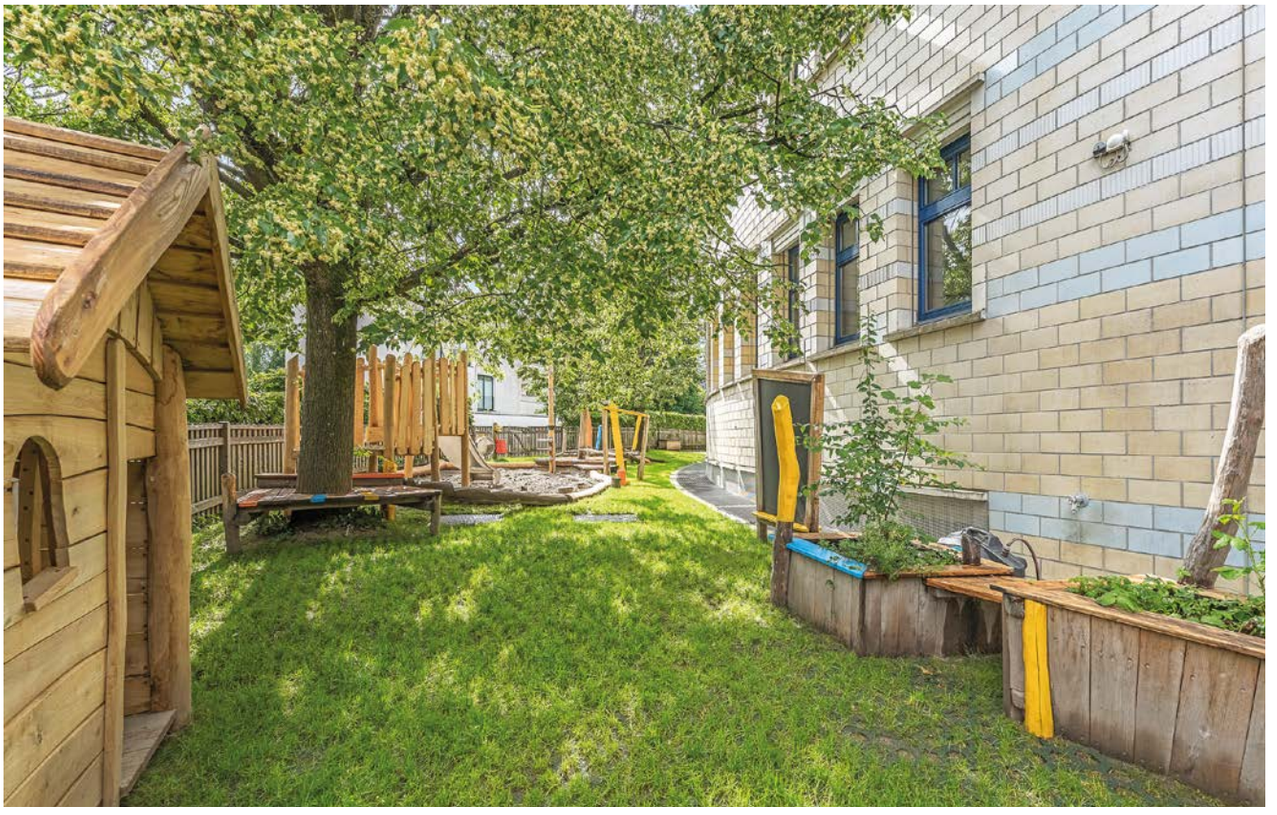
Coco

The favorite jobs of the globegarden kids



How we are reinventing the world of childcare

globegarden Dorfstrasse
in Kilchberg



globegarden Mühlackerstrasse in Affoltern, Zurich



+70 centers, +3000 families, +1000 employees – and a whole lot of time for every single child

Globegarden childcare centers are as diverse and colorful as the world around us. Each childcare center tells its own story, each one a chapter in a big book of childhood adventures. With commitment and attention to detail, globegarden develops bright spaces where creativity and discovery are inspired creating learning environments where children can thrive. Take a look around and discover how globegarden continually reinvents new childcare worlds.

globegarden Uhlandstrasse in Wipkingen, Zurich



globegarden Circle
at the airport, Zurich



globegarden Alpenquai
directly on the lake, Lucerne



globegarden Seldwyla
at Hirslanden and Balgrist, Zurich





globegarden Konradstrasse
in Wallisellen



globegarden Bernhardswies
in the Bruggen quarter, St. Gallen

globegarden Glasi
in Bülach



globegarden Paulusgasse in Basel



globegarden Farbstrasse in Thalwil



globegarden Alpenquai directly on the lake, Lucerne



globegarden Kilchbergsteig in Wollishofen, Zurich



globegarden Neubadrain in Binningen



globegarden Wengistrasse at Kreis 4, Zurich



globegarden Schiffbauplatz
at Kreis 5, Zurich



globegarden Metalli
in the city center, Zug



globegarden Schulgasse
in Dietlikon



globegarden Huebergass in the Holligen district, Bern



globegarden Paulusgasse in Basel



Hier kommt die letzte Seite
der deutschen Version