

Hanne Mette Dyrлие Kristensen, CEO

The Life Science Cluster

50 words: “Sometimes when I speak to international colleagues and acquaintances, the issue of family and career comes up. Whereas in many other places, women often have to postpone their career when children pop up, this is almost never the case here in Oslo. Here it is quite usual that both parents can continue working without sacrificing having a family”.

200 words: Hanne Mette Dyrлие Kristensen is the CEO of The Life Science Cluster, a leading Oslo-based cluster of companies and research institutions using life science to further advancements medicine, pharmaceuticals, food production and processing industries. She has, in other words, both of her hands full -- but as a mother of two teenage daughters, she can see that it is easier to balance her career with a family life in Oslo than many other places.

“I manage to have an interesting and fulfilling job and a family while also having time for sailing, kayaking and music - my favourite hobbies. I think that would be more difficult in many other places. I often talk to international colleagues, Europe and beyond, describing a reality where people - mostly women - essentially put their career on hold when children are on the way”.

In Oslo, as in Norway in general, the law is geared towards protecting a healthy work-life balance. Employees in both private and public sector are entitled to five weeks of paid vacation every year. Parents get over a year of paid parental leave, and the right to kindergarten is mandated by law. While not completely free, kindergartens are heavily subsidised and thereby accessible for all.

“Of course, for some demanding positions - being a CEO or founder of a company, for instance - it is difficult to fit everything into an eight-hour workday. But there’s always a strong culture of independence and flexibility in Norwegian companies, which means that everyone can find the time they need with their family.”

“Besides, there is a strong understanding that time spent at work does not always equal productivity. I know for myself that taking time off helps me process information from work and come up with ideas. And it really helps that so much of nature is really just outside the doorstep, meaning spending less time travelling places.”