



Families Report

Family Policy

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2017

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Indicator

Family Policy

Question

To what extent do family support policies enable women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Family support policies effectively enable women to combine parenting with employment.
- 8-6 = Family support policies provide some support for women who want to combine parenting and employment.
- 5-3 = Family support policies provide only few opportunities for women who want to combine parenting and employment.
- 2-1 = Family support policies force most women to opt for either parenting or employment.

France

Score 10

There is a long and consensual tradition of support for families, going back to the 1930s. The comprehensive policy mix which has developed since then has been successful in providing child care, financial support, parental leave and generous fiscal policies (income is not taxed individually but in each family unit, dividing up the total income by the number of people in a family). In addition, families using the child care support at home benefit from rebates on the social costs involved. These policies have been effective. Not only is the birth rate in France one of the highest in Europe, but also the percentage of women integrated in the labor market compares favorably to the European leaders (Scandinavian countries) in this domain. However, faced with the need to reduce the budget deficit, the Hollande government has lowered some financial benefits granted to families because these benefits were perceived as advantageous to “wealthy” families (these include the deductibility of charges related to the care of children or the capping of tax benefits which were obviously reserved to families paying income tax). After many controversies and hesitations, the government has scuttled the French welfare state’s “principle of universality” (i.e., social benefits for all, related to the number of children per family, without consideration of income and wealth), reducing the child allowance for families over an income ceiling. This highly contested measure has introduced a more realistic approach to policymaking, beyond the legalistic and formalistic principles which have prevailed since the Second World War. It remains to be seen if this will have a negative impact on birth rates; for the first time in years, the birth rate in 2015 fell slightly .

Sweden

Score 10

Sweden has been politically and economically committed to strong family policy for the past 50 years. Major features of Sweden's policy have been the separation of spouses' income and individual taxation, the expansion of public and private day care centers and a very generous parental leave program provided to both women and men, which has created much better possibilities to combine a professional career with parenthood. The parental leave program is expected to be expanded further, adding another month which can only be used by the father (a so-called "daddy-month"), thus incentivizing fathers to take more time off to engage in the care of their children.

The basic difference between the Social Democratic and Green, on the one hand, and that of the non-socialist Alliance parties, on the other, is that the former emphasize gender equality whereas the latter emphasize freedom of choice. Both constellations of parties are, however, fully committed to the overarching goals of family policy and see it as integral to promoting gender equality.

Citation:

Eydal, Guðný Björk/Rostgaard, Tine (eds.) (2015): *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States. Comparing Care Policies and Practice* (Bristol: Policy Press).

Pierre, Jon (ed) (2015), *Handbook of Swedish Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), esp. Section 1.

Denmark

Score 9

Denmark scores well on family policy in international comparisons. The country's system of day care centers, preschools and kindergartens allow flexibility for both parents to work. Indeed, female employment in Denmark is among the highest in OECD countries. Comparative research also shows that men in Nordic countries do more household work than men in many other countries. Danes regard day care and preschool facilities as an indispensable public service. The system of parental leave, in connection with childbirth, is relatively generous and men also have parental leave rights.

Municipalities are in charge of day care facilities which may be either public institutions or private. These facilities contribute to better family policy. Social parties and business play a role too.

The great majority of children attend day care facilities in Denmark. In 2010, 78% of children aged two and under were in day care, putting Denmark on a clear first place among OECD countries, well ahead of Sweden with 51%. Ninety percent of children aged 3 to 5 attended some kind of preschool institution, which put Denmark in 11th place among OECD countries in this category. There is a user payment (means

tested) for day care, but it does not cover the full cost, and the system is thus tax subsidized. There has been a large increase in the number of preschools in recent years.

Discussions about Danish family policy do take place. The aim of Denmark's policy is obviously to allow women to work. For many women, returning to work is a financial necessity, and many women want to have a career. Others would rather take care of their small children for years, which might actually not be bad for the children, but few actually do so. Recently, concerns have been raised on the quality and flexibility of day care due to strained finances in the municipalities.

Citation:

"Vi må have en ny familiepolitik," <http://politiken.dk/debat/debatindlaeg/ECE1835524/vi-maa-have-en-ny-familiepolitik/> (accessed 19 April 2013)

"Denmark: Combining work and family successfully," http://europa.eu/epic/countries/denmark/index_en.htm (accessed 17 October 2014).

Estonia

Score 9

Estonia inherited a tradition of double-breadwinner families from Soviet times, when mothers typically worked full time. Despite huge social changes, this family pattern has continued, as evidenced by the high employment rate among women. Family policy has persistently been high on the political agenda due to the country's low fertility rate and labor market needs. Estonia has one of the most generous parental benefit systems in the OECD, entitling parents to benefits equal to her/his previous salary for 435 days. The generosity of the benefit and shortage of day care facilities in some urban areas for children aged zero to two explain why child care density in this age group has been persistently low. Under current parental benefit regulations, parents can only work up to a certain limit before losing the benefit. This has been regarded by various parties, including the governing coalition and the Trade Union Confederation, as too rigid and harmful for women's labor market participation. Legal amendments creating more flexibility when using the parental benefit are expected to be enacted in 2017.

Finland

Score 9

Family policy in Finland adheres to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other international agreements. Finland's family-policy programs aim to create a secure environment for children and support parents' physical and mental resources. By and large, family policy has been successful. For example, child poverty has practically been eradicated. Support for families has three main elements: financial support for services and family leave, child benefits, and the provision of day care services. Access to public day care is guaranteed to all children

under seven years of age, and allowances are paid for every child until they turn 17. However, the Sipilä government has implemented changes in the right to day care, with potentially far-reaching consequences. As of January 2016, the right to day care is limited to part-time coverage, if one of the parents is unemployed or on parental leave taking care of a younger sibling. This increases inequalities in early-childhood education and weakens the position of children in socially marginalized families.

Family policy also remains problematic with regard to gender equality. Although the employment rate among women is among the highest in the European Union and the fertility rate has somewhat increased, family policies have not been able to fully solve the challenge of combining parenting and employment. In practice, although the number of fathers that take paternity leave has increased, child care responsibilities still fall predominately on women, and mothers are more likely to be in part-time employment than are fathers. Also, Finnish women tend to leave the labor market after having a child for a longer period than do women in other countries. Yet evidence has shown that family-centered thinking is increasing among Finnish adults and within Finnish culture. In short, the family has become more important for the individual.

Citation:

Katja Repo, "The Contradiction of Finnish Childcare Policies", www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt

Iceland

Score 9

Family policy has long supported female participation in the labor force. Iceland's rate of female participation in the labor force, between 75% and 80% since 1991, has long been among the highest in the world. Family policy has also encouraged a more equitable distribution of the burden of child rearing between genders. For example, in 2005, almost 90% of eligible fathers utilized their right to take parental leave of three months.

However, as a consequence of the economic collapse, maximum state payments during parental leave were reduced from ISK 535,000 in 2008 to ISK 300,000 in 2010 and, despite increasing to ISK 370,000 in 2014 and 2015, remain 30% below the 2008 level not taking inflation into consideration. Furthermore, average wages for men are higher than for women. This discourages men from taking parental leave, especially since the 2008 economic collapse. In the April 2016 five-year budget plan of the Jóhannsson cabinet, a raise was announced from 370,000 per month to 500,000 per month in 2017.

Citation:

Women and men in Iceland 2014. The Center for Gender Equality (Jafnréttisstofa). http://jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/Kvk_og_kk_2014_IsI.pdf

Norway

Score 9

The labor-market participation rate for women in Norway is among the highest in the world; at above 70%, it is only slightly lower than the participation rate for men. However, there is clear gender segregation in the labor market, with much of the increase in women's employment rates coming in the form of public-sector and/or part-time jobs. The fertility rate is close to two children per woman, just below the replacement rate. As such, it ranks among the highest such rates in Europe.

The country's family policy is oriented toward promoting equal opportunity and an equitable representation of women in leadership positions, particularly in political and business settings. There is a 12-month maternal/paternal leave program that provides parents with 80% of their salary. Six of the weeks are reserved for the father. These reforms have increased paternal involvement in the first years of children's lives (about 90% of fathers now take these six weeks).

Government policy treats married and unmarried couples in a nondiscriminatory way. For example, tax declarations for labor income are filed individually, irrespective of whether a citizen is married or not. Informal cohabitation, as compared to formal marriage, is widespread. Almost all new unions start in informal cohabitation, and about half of the country's children are born to unmarried parents. About one in 10 children are born to single mothers, and institutional support for these women (e.g., the provision of day care and cash transfers) is stronger than in most countries.

Belgium

Score 8

Although child care for children below the age of three is rationed in Belgium, the country is a good performer in this regard overall. Essentially free public schooling is available for children after the age of three, and free or very cheap child care is available from 7:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. on working days.

Subsidies per child (allocations familiales/kinderbijslag), responsibility for which were recently devolved to the federated entities, are low for the first two children, but personal-income-tax cuts offer support to households with children.

High implicit tax rates on low-wage earners, which effectively create a substantial hurdle for low-qualified second earners in a couple (who are typically women), remain a hurdle to equitable family policy. Official statistics show that the labor-market activity rate for highly educated women is only five percentage points below the comparable men's rate, but is a full 18 points (35% compared to 53%) lower for women with less education.

Canada

Score 8

The labor-force participation rate for women with children all under six years of age in Canada is high by international standards. According to Statistics Canada, the number of two-income families nearly doubled over the past decades: in 2015, 69% of couples with a child under 16 years of age have two working parents, up from 36% in the 1970s. In recent years, one key policy has been the increase in the child tax credit, which has reduced the barriers associated with the so-called welfare wall. In the past, when single parents, mostly women, left welfare, they lost all income benefits for their children. With the integration of the welfare system with the universal, income-tested child benefits, there is now less disincentive to leave welfare and enter the labor market.

Canada does not have a universal child care system, and the absence of such a system may make it more difficult for some women to combine parenting and employment. The average net cost of child care in Canada is among the OECD's five highest, both as a share of the average wage and as a share of the average family income. Canada is below the OECD average in terms of participation rates in formal care and preschool participation rates for children under five years of age. Development of a national strategy for child care and early childhood education that incorporates the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as Indigenous peoples will commence over the next few years.

In July, the 2016 federal budget introduced the Canada Child Benefit, replacing the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the Universal Child Care Benefit. The government touted the program as “the most significant social policy innovation in a generation.” Under the Canada Child Benefit, families receive a single tax-free payment every month. The program is better targeted to those who need it most – and most importantly is more generous. Families benefitting will see an average increase in child benefits of almost \$2,300 during the 2016–17 tax year. The Canada Child Benefit will provide a maximum annual benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six and up to \$5,400 per child for those aged six through 17. Families with less than \$30,000 in net income will receive the maximum benefit. It is expected that the program will reduce child poverty significantly.

Citation:

OECD Family database www.oecd.org/els/social/family/data base

OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, Chapter 4. Reducing barriers to parental employment, <http://www.oecd.org/social/soc/doingbetterforfamilies.htm#publication>

Germany

Score 8

For decades, a broad consensus among political parties and major societal actors aligned the German system paradigmatically toward the male breadwinner model.

Universal family benefits, incentives tailored to the needs of married couples and single-earner families, and a shortage of public childcare contributed to women's low rate of participation in the labor market.

Today, this traditional approach has been substantially corrected. Parental leave, previously short and lacking adequate compensation, has been extended. Paternity leave has been introduced and promoted. Today, a parent's net income while on leave is on average just 25% less than their net income prior to leave. Additionally, the number of public childcare places has increased. A legal right to childcare beginning at age one came into effect in August 2013. By March 2015, the ratio of children under three with access to a childcare institution had increased to 32.9% (Datenreport 2016: 2). The number of children per kindergarten teacher varies considerably between states with higher child-teacher ratios in eastern states.

A highly contested financial childcare supplement for children up to age three not attending a childcare facility was introduced in 2012, but retracted in 2015. This childcare supplement was hotly debated inside and outside the Bundestag, with critics arguing that it provided poor incentives and would serve as a hindrance to integration. In July 2015, the Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2015) decided that the federal government exceeded its competences and declared the regulation unconstitutional. However, the Bavarian state government has continued to provide the childcare supplement on a state level.

In November 2014, a new bill was passed stipulating further measures to facilitate both work and family. Parents who want to work part-time while on parental leave may apply for parental allowance Plus (ElterngeldPlus).

In summary, these measures, in combination with an increasing shortage of qualified labor, have led to a considerable increase in women's labor market participation. While in 2000 only 57.7% of 15 to 64 year old women were employed, this measure has increased to 73% (Statistisches Bundesamt 2016). In the EU today, Germany (together with Denmark) ranks second only behind Sweden in terms of female labor market participation (Eurostat). However, German women are particularly often in part-time work. Although low by international standards, Germany's fertility rate has started to increase. By 2014, after three successive year-on-year increases, Germany's fertility rate had reached 1.5 children per woman (Statistisches Bundesamt 2016).

Citation:

Bundesverfassungsgericht

(2015):

<https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2015/bvg15-057.html>

https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetige/BroschuereArbeitsmarktBlick010022169004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Datenreport/Downloads/Datenreport2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdfhttp://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_10&language=en

Luxembourg

Score 8

Luxembourg's corporatist welfare regime has gradually evolved over the years to a more universal system with a high degree of anonymity of patients. One indicator is the shift from a predominant transfer system to transfer and service system, with specific provisions for children and the elderly.

Luxembourg has positively responded to its changing demographics by adapting family policy measures. In this context, the government has pushed for policies to offer a wide range of child rearing allowances and child care services, such as child benefits, maternity leave, parental leave, birth and post-birth allowances.

Furthermore, indirect help is also offered, such as subsidized mortgage interest rates, depending on the number of children at home. In general, Luxembourg offers the highest level of child benefits within the European Union. Today, it is one of the four leading EU member states in terms of family benefits. It has made sustainable improvements in terms of family-friendly workplace arrangements, while gender-based job segmentation and the gender pay gap have decreased.

When compared internationally, Luxembourg's tax policy is family-friendly. Women's labor-market participation has considerably increased since the launch of the European Employment Strategy. At the same time, the government has invested heavily in child care facilities, with the aim of making it easier for women to work.

Yet, despite a strong increase in recent years, women's workforce participation rate remains comparatively low at 65% compared to an EU average of 64.3%, with Luxembourg ranked 17 out of 28 EU member states.

Luxembourg's public child care institutions include the "Maisons Relais" or general daycare centers; the "éducation précoce," a third preschool year and "foyers de jour" or after-school centers. Since August 2016, there will be one fixed allowance per child, regardless of the family composition. Child bonuses and child allowances will be paid in one sum, €65 per child. The government also plans to cut education and maternity allowances as part of this new coherent family policy. The Chamber of Labor has criticized this new policy, noting that a family with two children would lose 19% of its annual benefits through the 2016 reform. To compensate for this decline in financial support, the government intends to offer free child care facilities for one to three-year-olds, early language support and intercultural education for migrants.

Citation:

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“European employment strategy.” European Commission, ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=101. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

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Rapport d’activité 2015. Ministre de l’Éducation nationale, 2016. www.men.public.lu/catalogue-publications/themes-transversaux/rapport-activites-ministere/2015/1-fr.pdf. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

Rapport d’activité 2015. Ministère de l’Égalité des Chances, 2016. www.gouvernement.lu/5752341/2015-rapport-activite-mega.pdf. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

Regards 03 - L’emploi des femmes. Statec, 2014. www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/regards/2014/PDF-03-2014.pdf. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

Netherlands

Score 8

Family policy in the Netherlands is formally characterized by the need to recognize a child’s best interests and to provide support for the family and the development of parenting skills. In practice, however, child support for families is an instrument designed to improve parents’ labor-market participation. Enabling a work-family balance is less of a guiding policy principle. All Dutch families receive child allowance depending on the number of children. In 2013, child allowances were not indexed for inflation. In 2015, one in 10 Dutch children lived in poverty, leading to social exclusion due to the lack of money for items such as sports-club memberships, musical education or scouting events. According to EU-28 data, the Dutch spend approximately 32% of GDP on social protections (health care, old age, housing, unemployment, family), just 4% of which spent on family costs (compared to an EU-28 average of 8%). Day care centers for young children are becoming a luxury item, as they are not directly subsidized and parents face a steep increase in costs based on higher contributions for higher taxable income. The government has established an extensive system of child protection through its policy of municipally based “close to home” youth and family centers (almost all of which had commenced operation by 2012), which are tasked with establishing a system of digital information related to

parenting, education and health for every child. Nevertheless, parents complain about lack of access and lack of information to youth and family centers. Local governments have in some cases violated decision-making privacy rules in the allocation of youth-care assistance. In recent years, there were several scandals involving the death of very young children due to parental abuse undetected as a result of uncoordinated and/or belated interventions by youth-care organizations. Devolution of powers in youth health care to local government in 2016 resulted in cases where necessary psychiatric care was withheld due to a lack of financing. Beginning in January 2009, parental leave for mothers was extended from 13 to 16 weeks. Parental leave for fathers is two days, the lowest such benefit in Europe after Ireland and Albania. In the case of divorce, parents are obliged to submit a parenting plan to the court with agreements on the division of child care tasks. This appears to have raised the share of acrimonious divorces. According to the OECD, around two-thirds of Dutch working women (including many with high levels of education attainment) choose part-time jobs, which brought down the country's average working time to one of the lowest such levels in the OECD. Full-time female labor-force participation is hindered mainly by a high marginal effective tax burden on second earners, reflecting the withdrawal of social benefits according to family income. Consequently, in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2016, the Netherlands ranked 16 out of 144 countries, having ranked 9 out of 130 countries in 2008.

Citation:

Nederlands Jeugd Instituut. Kennis over jeugd en opvoeding, nji.nl (consulted 2 November 2016)

"Ons vaderschapsverlof is hopeloos ouderwets", in NRC-Handelsblad, 28 August 2015

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World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index, 2016

Macht gemeenten ondermijnt jeugdzorg, NRC-Handelsblad, 5 November 2016

New Zealand

Score 8

The labor force participation rate of women is comparatively high. However, women have been more susceptible to unemployment than men following the global financial crisis. In 2015, the gender pay gap in New Zealand was 11.8%, a 2% increase from the previous year. Participation of women in the labor force, including business and politics (e.g. women make up only a third of members of parliament), is still well below that of men. Paid parental leave is funded by the government and covers loss of income for up to 16 weeks, with an extension to 18 weeks from 2016

onward. In June 2016, Finance Minister Bill English vetoed legislation introduced by a Labour MP seeking to extend paid parental leave to 26 weeks, arguing that this would have been too costly. Furthermore, as well as deploying his little-known veto power to override a parliamentary majority on the issue, English later admitted that he made a mathematical error while calculating the costs. From 1 July 2016, parental leave payments increased to reflect the 2.1 % rise in the average weekly earnings.

Despite an effort to target resources to serve low-income families and beneficiaries, child poverty levels remain high. If the poverty line is determined to be less than 60% of the median household income, then some 285,000 children were considered to be in poverty in 2014. This has led to increased public criticism, for example by UNICEF New Zealand. Community-based efforts to provide needy children with food in schools have been supported by businesses and government initiatives.

A strengthening of family violence laws was announced in September 2016. According to the prime minister, “the rate of family violence in New Zealand is unacceptable.” This will involve reforming civil and criminal law. The list of proposed changes is available to read on the Ministry of Justice website.

Citation:

Govt again vetoes paid parental leave bill. 29 June, 2016 (<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/307590/govt-again-vetoes-paid-parental-leave-bill>) (accessed 13 September, 2016).

Safer Sooner: Strengthening family violence laws. The Ministry of Justice: <https://www.justice.govt.nz/about/news-and-media/news/safer-sooner-strengthening-family-violence-laws/> (accessed October 3, 2016).

Jonathan Boston, Simon Chapple, 2014. *Child Poverty in New Zealand*, Wellington Bridget Williams Books.

Slovenia

Score 8

The employment rate among women in Slovenia is above the EU average. At 72.5%, the employment rate of mothers with children under six was among the highest in the EU in 2014. Part-time work is rare among women, but its incidence is growing slowly. The New Parental and Family Benefit Act that came into force in 2014 extended the right to part-time work when having two children from six years of age until the end of first grade of primary school. Reconciling parenting and employment is facilitated by a provision of child-care facilities that exceeds the EU average, and meets the Barcelona targets both for children under three years of age and between three and five years of age. At 105 working days, the maximum duration of maternity leave is near the European average. In addition, each parent has the right to take 130 days of parental leave, part of which is paid.

Citation:

European Commission (2016): Slovenia: A dynamic family policy to improve work-life balance. Brussels (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1248&langId=en&intPageId=3656>).

United Kingdom

Score 8

Over the last twenty years, policy initiatives to improve the work-life balance and opportunities for women's participation in the labor-market have included expanding the provision of childcare facilities extending maternity leave and the introduction of paternity leave. More recently, there have been public calls for companies to increase the number of women on their board of directors, while the possibility of introducing quotas for company boards has been raised.

The Cameron government had emphasized the Troubled Families program, established in 2011. The program aims to help families in precarious situations with personal mentoring and support from local social workers. However, a recent evaluation from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research revealed mixed results. The increased spending apparently did not result in any statistically significant betterment in the living conditions of the supported families, though at the same time the subjective reporting of the supported families did improve.

Cuts in welfare spending, associated with the central policy of reducing the budget deficit, have negatively affected some core family policy measures, especially for single mothers who rely disproportionately on social benefits.

Citation:

National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme

Australia

Score 7

The election of the Labor government in November 2007 saw a somewhat increased emphasis on promoting the employment of mothers, mainly via increased child care subsidies. The coalition government has retained these subsidies and is similarly committed to promoting employment participation. Part-time employment nonetheless remains the dominant form of employment for women with dependent children, whether partnered or single.

The low level of child care density for the three-to-five-year age group continues to be a problem for many families in Australia. At the same time, fertility rates are much higher than in other OECD countries, with much better child care on offer. However, in the 2015 budget, the government announced a plan to spend 3.5 billion AUD over five years on child care assistance, including a new Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Initially intended to commence on 1 July 2017, it is now planned to commence on 1 July 2018. Replacing several existing subsidy programs, the CCS is a single subsidy based on family income. Families earning around 65,000 AUD or less will receive a subsidy of 85% of their child care fees, with the subsidy gradually tapering to 50% for families earning around 170,000 AUD or more. There will be no

annual cap for families earning around 185,000 AUD or less, while families earning more than this amount will have an annual cap of 10,000 AUD on the total amount of assistance provided per child. Eligibility for the CCS will be determined by an activity test that closely aligns the hours of subsidized care with the amount of work, training, study or any other recognized activity such as volunteering by parents.

In October 2015, the government announced a plan to reduce family payments (known as the Family Tax Benefit) to help fund the CCS. It has not been unable to successfully implement all planned reductions. However, in 2016 the government did manage to secure passage through the senate of some of the proposed changes, including reducing payments to families where the youngest child is between the ages of 13 and 18, and to families with a household income over 80,000 AUD per year.

A government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011. Prior to the scheme, only 54% of female employees and 50% of male employees had access to some form of PPL. The scheme therefore considerably expanded access to PPL. However, the Turnbull government is seeking to tighten access to the scheme by limiting access to individuals whose employer does not provide parental-leave entitlements. In cases where individuals are given less generous parental-leave entitlements from their employer, the government will top up the amount paid until it is equal to the full amount available under the existing scheme.

Welfare policy has increasingly encouraged or compelled mothers who are welfare recipients to take up employment. Starting in July 2006, new single-parent recipients were transferred to the unemployment benefit once the youngest child reached eight years of age. In January 2013, this policy was applied to all recipients of Parenting Payment irrespective of when they began receiving it; in the case of partnered recipients of Parenting Payment, transfer to the unemployment benefit occurs once the youngest child reaches six years of age. With unemployment benefits, single parents receive a lower level of benefits and are required to seek employment of at least 15 hours per week.

Citation:

OECD, Economic Survey Australia 2014, p. 61 and 69.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/health/little-support-for-parents-of-austistic-kids-20161020-gs6vov.html>

Austria

Score 7

Both the Austrian government and mainstream public opinion accepts that the model of a traditional nuclear family, defined by stable and clearly divided gender roles, cannot be seen as the reality for all families in the second decade of the 21st century. Access for married women to the labor market is not seriously disputed. Nevertheless, the provision of child care is still overwhelmingly left to families themselves, which de facto means that primary responsibility is left to mothers.

Public child care centers exist, but despite some recent improvements, fail to satisfy demand. Child care facilities for children aged zero to one are mostly lacking outside the capital Vienna, while facilities for children aged two to five often do not manage to serve working parents' needs. Thus, the disproportionate burden borne by women within Austrian families is seen as an aspect of de facto gender discrimination. Also, Austrian welfare transfers for mothers are designed in a way that keep mothers out of the labor market, an outcome that stands in stark contrast to those associated with policies promoting allowances in kind. In numerous cases, legal provisions for the protection of parents, such as job protection for parents switching to part-time work, are not respected by employers.

“Family” is still a highly ideological term in Austria. But despite contradicting programmatic positions (conservative insistence on a traditional mother-father-child family, progressive ideas of breaking any kind of gender barrier), the Austrian political system was and still is able to implement compromises which are flexible enough to adapt to new social developments and challenges. State governments and communities have improved the services of pre-school institutions (Kindergarten).

Patchwork families and families based on same-sex partnerships are gradually accepted in Austrian society. Austrian law provides an institutional framework for same-sex partnerships, though they are not identified as marriages, and are not endowed with the same rights as those granted to a heterosexual marriage.

Ireland

Score 7

The Irish income tax system incorporates the principle of “individualization,” which means that at any given level of combined income, the tax burden is lower on households in which both spouses are employed than in those in which only one spouse is employed.

The income tax code thus generates some incentive for spouses to take up employment outside the home. However, its progressive structure implies that at relatively modest income levels the second partner entering paid employment faces high marginal income tax rates. Furthermore, the income tax code does not permit the deduction of child care expenses. This, combined with the high cost of child care and the paucity of public provision in this area, has been viewed as a serious obstacle to women combining parenting with employment outside the home. In recognition of this problem, the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme was significantly extended in the 2016 budget. The minister claimed that children aged three years and over will be able to access free child care until they enter primary school. Parental leave is to be extended to fathers for the first time.

Child benefits, which had been significantly reduced during the crisis, will rise to €135 per child per month in 2016 and €140 in 2017. This will still be significantly

below the level in 2009. Also, the benefit does not vary depending on whether the mother is employed outside the home.

Israel

Score 7

Israel has a mixed family policy that is pro-family while supporting the integration of mothers in the labor force. Its pro-family policy includes essentially free coverage of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedures for women under the age of 45 and child allowances for all Israeli families with children under the age of 17 (without limitations based on income). Its integration policy includes parental leave arrangements, robust child-care policies and protection of job and benefits during maternity leave.

Israeli women's share in the workforce increased substantially during the past 30 years. From just a third of the workforce, women currently make up 47% of all employees. A 2014 study shows that employment rates for women ages 25 to 44 are almost entirely unaffected by motherhood. The gap was even smaller for women with higher education, as education offers more access and financial reward for working mothers. This positive trend is more prevalent among Jewish working women, who are almost equal in share to Jewish working men. In 2014, Arab women still accounted for only 27.6% of the Israeli Arab workforce and ultra-Orthodox Jewish women also continued to lag behind, although both groups show gradual improvement and receive attention as part of a general economic policy that aims to expand social inclusion in the labor market.

Wage gaps are still salient between men and women. Since many women work part-time or hold temporary jobs in order to sustain their traditional role as the main caregivers in the household, the average monthly wage for women in 2014 was 67% of the average monthly wage of men. This gender gap is smaller for hourly wages but still prevalent with women making 83.7% that of men. Studies continue to point to ongoing discrimination against women in business and public sectors.

In 2010, a law was introduced to elongate maternity leave to 14 paid weeks and 26 weeks total. In 2016, a similar law was introduced to allow fathers to use an additional six days of paternity leave. The total weeks of leave at full pay that the average woman receives over her lifetime in Israel is similar to the OECD average. However, other OECD countries offer more flexibility in terms of using parental leave benefits and returning to work on a part-time basis.

In recent years the need for further subsidies for daycare and after school activities gained prominence as a middle-class issue. Consequently, a plan to introduce subsidized care for children 5 and younger was launched. Compulsory education has been expanded, introducing free early childhood education for ages 3 and 4. However, reports claim that this effort remains largely underfunded and does not offer sustainable relief for working mothers and young families.

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 29/1/2015, http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa_template.html?hodaa=201520024

Latvia

Score 7

Family-support policies enable women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market. In 2014, 70.1% of mothers with at least one child aged between 0 and 14 were employed, which is above the OECD-31 average of 66.2%. In 2015, 69.0% of mothers with children under six years of age were employed, above the EU average of 65.5%. The overall employment rate among women in 2015 was 66.4%, above the EU average of 60.4%.

A maximum of 112 calendar days of maternity leave can be taken, with mothers receiving 80% of their average wage. Paternity benefits are paid for a maximum 10 days at 80% of fathers' average wage, with paternity leave taken within two months of the child's birth. As of 2014, maternity and paternity benefit levels dropped to 60% of average wage, but are supplemented with a fixed monthly child-support payment.

Furthermore, parental leave of up to 18 months per child can be used by either parent prior to the child's eighth birthday. Parents with three or more children are entitled to three extra days of paid leave per year, as well as other social benefits such as reduced fares on public transport.

Labor law prohibits an employer from terminating an employment contract with a pregnant woman or a mother with a baby under one year old.

Local government support for private-sector involvement in child care should address the shortage of available kindergarten places, although this financial support is likely to be cut as local authorities' fiscal health declines further.

Citation:

European Commission (2011), Employment Rates by Sex, Available at:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:Employment_rates_by_sex,_2011_%281%29_%28%25%29.png&filetimestamp=20121030182958, Last assessed: 21.05.2013

Lithuania

Score 7

Many Lithuanian families find it difficult to reconcile family and work commitments. The prevalence of poor relations, as well as frequent instances of domestic violence, divorces and single-parent families also present challenges to stable family life. The country's fertility rate is low, while the child poverty rate is relatively high. However, the employment rate among women aged 20 to 64 is relatively high, at 70.6% in 2014 as compared to 73.1% for men. Lithuania spent 1.1% of GDP on policies oriented toward families and children in 2014 (down from 2.8% in 2009).

Lithuanian family policy is based on a set of passive (financial support to families) and active (social services and infrastructure) policy measures. The government provides some support for women seeking to combine parenting and employment, including family and social-welfare legislation (e.g. special conditions of the Labor Code applicable to families), financial assistance to families raising children (child benefits and partial housing subsidies), and social services targeted at both children and parents (including the provision of preschool education and psychiatric help for parents or children). Although access to kindergartens and other child-care facilities is still insufficient and there is a shortage of both full-time and part-time flexible employment opportunities in the labor market, a number of new initiatives emerged after 2015 municipal elections. The Vilnius municipal government has been among the most active groups in facilitating the establishment of private child-care facilities. Overall, family policy is quite fragmented and focused on families facing particular social risks, while more attention should be paid to developing more universal family services (with NGO engagement). The program of the new coalition government gives substantial attention to family policy, and includes proposals to make labor relations more flexible to enable parents to combine parenting and work, and increase financial benefits for families with children.

Malta

Score 7

With a difference of approximately 30% between female and male employment rates, Malta has the widest gender employment gap in the EU and a female employment rate that is more than 10% lower than the EU average (53.6% vis-à-vis 64.3%). Nonetheless one should note that female participation in the informal economy (which accounts for almost 25% of GDP) may make this somewhat inaccurate.

A breakdown of activity rates by age showed that the number of women active in the labor market was comparable to that of men during the ages of 15-24, but the gap widens in subsequent age brackets. In recent years, new workplace policies were designed to try to ensure that employed women retain their jobs, and those wishing

to return to their former positions can do so. These include maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, reduced working hours, career breaks and in 2011, the introduction of financial incentives for mothers returning to work. These policies are traditionally more likely to be found in the public sector. However, the introduction of free child care centers, breakfast and after-school clubs in 2014 ensured that a number of measures were also accessible for individuals employed in the private sector. This is coupled with the introduction of the Maternity Leave Trust Fund in 2015. The 2017 budget included a consultation process on the proposal for a parent to use sick leave when a child is ill. Following the fund's establishment, employers became legally obliged to contribute the equivalent of 0.3% of each employee's salary, irrespective of the employee's gender. These measures are enabling more women to enter and remain in the labor market, with Malta experiencing the highest female activity rate increase in the EU since 2008.

Citation:

Eurostat News Release 80/2016

European Semester Thematic Fiche – Undeclared Work (Updated May 2016) p.11

NSO News Release 156/2016

<https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Pages/News%20items/2,700-Children-attending-free-childcare-as-government-facilitates-access-to-work-for-women.aspx>

Malta Today 02/09/2014 Primary schools to offer Breakfast Club during coming school year

Times of Malta 21/07/2015 New Maternity Leave Trust Fund launched in bid to end gender discrimination

Commission Staff Working Document - Country Report Malta 2016 SWD (2016) 86 final p. 5, p. 22

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_statistics

Malta Independent 23/01/2015 10,631 single parents living in Malta and Gozo - Minister Michael Farrugia says

Portugal

Score 7

The Programa do XXI Governo, 2015 to 2019 promises major improvements to family policy. Most of these pledges are yet to be adopted. However, those that have include the introduction of free primary school textbooks, and an increase in the amount and coverage of child support credit (“abono de família”). Both policies were approved in the 2017 government budget. In the 2016 government budget, the government changed income tax deductions for children, estimating that this change would improve the net income for 80% of households.

During the period under review, the birth rate increased from slightly higher than 7.9 births per 1,000 persons in 2014 to 8.3 births per 1,000 persons in 2015. Though this remains below the rate of 9.6 births per 1,000 persons in 2010. Data for 2016 suggests this increase is likely to continue. However, these changes appear to be driven more by improving economic conditions than by changes to family policy.

Little has changed during the period under review with respect to the role of women in the labor market.

Citation:

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Expresso 27 November 2015

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“Portugal tem a segunda taxa de natalidade mais baixa da União Europeia”, Expresso, 8 July 2016. Available online at: <http://expresso.sapo.pt/sociedade/2016-07-08-Portugal-tem-a-segunda-taxa-de-natalidade-mais-baixa-da-Uniao-Europeia>

United States

Score 7

The United States ranks near the bottom of the developed world on many measures of direct governmental and regulatory support for working mothers. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 requires employers with at least 50 workers to allow 12 weeks of unpaid leave for child care. This measure has not proven highly effective, partly because of narrow eligibility criteria.

Nevertheless, the United States provides significant support for families with children, largely through tax benefits. The policies have the greatest effect for poor families, especially single mothers, partly because of low governmental tolerance for welfare dependency. The Obama administration increased support provided through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a block grant going to state governments, by \$2 billion. As of 2011, tax benefits for families with children included a dependent-related exemption, a child tax credit, an earned-income tax credit, and a child- and dependent-care tax credit, as well as two tuition-related tax benefits for post-secondary education. As a result, effective child-care costs as a percentage of income were lower in the United States than in most OECD countries, and for low-income single mothers, much lower.

From 2011 to 2015, the Obama administration has called for expanded family leave policies and more generous support for child care, but Republican opposition has effectively blocked legislative action. The United States has been slipping behind other advanced economies with regard to the percentage of women in the labor force, falling from seventh to 20th place in the OECD by 2015.

Bulgaria

Score 6

Family-policy debates in Bulgaria have focused on parental-leave benefits rather than on supporting mothers' ability to work. While the share of children aged three to six enrolled in kindergartens has increased by over ten percentage points in the

last decade, public child care facilities are still less developed than in most other OECD and EU countries. Labor-market discrimination against pregnant women and mothers of small children is common, undermining the objective of providing free choice for women. However, Bulgarian grandparents are traditionally very involved in caring for children, which for some parents is an effective social-network mechanism reducing the need for state involvement. Moreover, the parental-leave legislation favors mothers' labor-market integration by guaranteeing mothers a right to return to their job even after two years of parental leave, and by allowing fathers to take parental leave as well. There is an active child support payment policy that often attracts social and political commentary, but the actual disbursements comprise a very small proportion (even within the social policy budget) and the effect on parents' behavior of parents seems negligible.

Czech Republic

Score 6

The employment rate for women in the Czech Republic is the highest among the post-socialist member states of the OECD, but below the OECD average. The level of child-care provision declined significantly during the 1990s, and there has been only a slight improvement since, even though the growing number of single mothers - almost 48% of children are born outside of wedlock in the Czech Republic (2016) - has further increased the demand for child care. While the enrolment rate in formal child care for children three to five years of age is within the third quartile of OECD countries, child-care provision for children up to two years of age is the second lowest among OECD countries, and affordable after-hours care offered by pre-schools and schools is lacking. However, public support for alternative forms of child care, most notably so-called children's groups, has expanded.

Chile

Score 5

In recent years, there have been efforts to establish wide-ranging preschool-education coverage. These policies offer Chilean parents more opportunities to place their children in free or low-priced nurseries and kindergartens. As enacted, Michelle Bachelet's 2015 budget included an increase in public funding in both categories. The national social program "Chile crece contigo" (Chile grows with you), which supports expecting mothers and families during a child's early years, also includes support for adolescent mothers.

However, this system does not yet fulfill actual labor-market requirements, given that nursery opening times often do not coincide with parents' long working hours. The average annual working hours in Chile (1,988 hours per year and worker) far exceed the OECD average (about 1,766 hours per year and worker). Families' abilities to find day care for their children depends to a great degree on their

economic backgrounds, as wealthier families normally pay for private housekeepers and nannies. Aside from the issue of women's labor-market-participation opportunities, Chilean family policy does not fully respect fathers' concerns, as tuition for children is paid solely to mothers, for example. Chilean family policies still lack a holistic vision of modern families; for example, they are weak on issues such as single parents, adoption and same-sex unions.

Citation:

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<https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>

Croatia

Score 5

The employment rate among women in Croatia is 10 percentage points lower than among men and lower than in almost all other EU countries. In 2015, it was lower than it had been in 2009 by 2.2 percentage points. Maternity pay is relatively generous, while child-care facilities and extended-day programs at school are limited. Only 11% of children aged under three years receive any formal child care per week compared to 28% in the EU-28. From the age three up to the minimum school age, only 47% of children receive any formal child care, compared to 82% in the EU-28. Child-care coverage is especially poor in areas with low employment, which reflects the inability of local government to pay for services. Women with children face challenges within the labor market. Discrimination by employers in some segments of the private sector against younger women is widespread, because it is assumed that the women will eventually require maternity leave. This practice is technically forbidden by anti-discrimination legislation, but is weakly enforced due to weak unions and poor enforcement by government agencies. The new Family Law, originally adopted in June 2014, did not address these issues, focusing instead on expanding the legal rights of young people and clarifying child-custody issues. This law has generated much controversy. A decision by the constitutional court led the Milanović government to amend the law just before the parliamentary elections in 2015. Under the Orešković government, the minister of social policy sharply attacked the legislation for being poorly written, unreadable and difficult to implement.

Citation:

Dobrotić, I. (2015): Politike usklađivanja obiteljskih obaveza i plaćenog rada i položaj roditelja na tržištu rada (Work-Family Policies and the Position of Parents on the Labour Market), in: *Revija za socijalnu politiku* 22(3): 353-374.

Greece

Score 5

Family support policy in Greece is not oriented toward reconciling work and welfare in order to improve the position of women in the labor market. It is a policy limited to distributing cash benefits to families in need and rarely includes non-cash transfers to families. That Greece spends very little on preschool services for the age groups 0-

to 2-years old and 3- to 5-years old, attests to the reality that women suffer from a permanent social disadvantage. As soon as a woman bears children, she realizes that there is no family support policy to allow for her integration or re-integration into the labor market. However, if she is a public sector employee, she is treated in a far superior manner to any other employed woman (private sector employee or self-employed). Female public employees are guaranteed their jobs following maternity leave. They are also granted maternity leave without fear that upon returning to their job, they may be allocated to a subordinate job post or suffer wage or salary cuts, as is the case of women employed in the private sector.

Moreover, child poverty in Greece is quite extensive, surpassing 19% of children under 18-years old. Greece is facing acute problems with child poverty because traditionally the state paid little attention to this or for that matter any other type of poverty. In March 2015, the new Syriza-ANEL coalition passed a law on the “humanitarian crisis” which offered social assistance to poor households (in-kind and cash). However, the total amount which the government earmarked for this assistance (€200 million) was clearly incommensurate to the size of the problem. Overall, current policies reflect traditional patterns of reluctance or inability to sustain a family support policy.

Citation:

Data on child poverty and preschool services is provided by the SGI data base.

Japan

Score 5

According to OECD statistics, Japan has one of the group’s highest gender gaps in terms of median incomes earned by full-time employees. Japanese government figures show that only slightly more than 6% of women working in the private sector have made it to the level of section manager or above. While the female labor participation rate has increased to 66% in early 2016, surpassing the United States, the majority of them work in part-time, irregular jobs. Although several policy measures aimed at addressing these issues have been implemented since the 1990s, many challenges remain.

The LDP-led government claims to support women in the labor force, promoting the slogan “womenomics”. It has made some effort to improve child care provision in order to improve the conditions of working mothers. It has introduced several measures in this area. In 2016, child care and nursing care were made an important pillar of the cabinet’s Plan for Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens discussed earlier. Since April 2016, the Female Employment Promotion Legislation stipulates that larger enterprises have to disclose gender diversity targets and specific action plans.

The birth rate has stabilized at a low level of around 1.4 births per woman. There is doubt whether the government can achieve the level of 1.8, which it considers desirable.

Questions remain as to whether the government is conscious of and willing to overcome the tension between having more women at work and in managerial positions on the one hand, and its intention to raise the country's birth rate on the other. In terms of experimenting with new ideas more generally, it is a positive sign that under the deregulation zone scheme, two prefectures are now able to invite more housekeepers from abroad to support working Japanese mothers. However, this policy too is associated with numerous unanswered questions.

Citation:

Kathy Matsui, 'Womonomics' continues as a work in progress, The Japan Times, 25 May 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/25/business/economy-business/womonomics-continues-work-progress/>

Poland

Score 5

Poland's employment rate among women falls below the OECD and EU averages, and its child-care infrastructure is weak. While the PO-PSL government put an emphasis on improving women's labor market integration and on fostering a more balanced division of labor among the sexes, the PiS government has followed a more traditional approach. The cornerstone of its family policy, which featured prominently in the 2015 election campaign and has been highly popular, has been the 'Family 500' program, in effect since 1 April 2016. It increased family allowance for parents with two or more children to PLN 500 (116€) for each child irrespective of the parents' income. Departing from the original campaign pledges, only poor families are eligible to the PLN 500 already for the first child. The estimated costs amount to PLN 22.9 billion (about 5.3 billion euro) or 1.3% of Poland's GDP. Critics fear that the Family 500 program will reduce female labor market participation without having positive effects on the birth rate.

Citation:

Druciarek, M. (2016): Die Familienpolitik der Regierung und ihre möglichen Folgen aus der Perspektive der Geschlechtergleichheit. Polen-Analysen Nr. 186, Bremen (<http://www.laenderanalysen.de/polen/pdf/PolenAnalysen186.pdf>).

Romania

Score 5

Romanian parental-leave benefits have been relatively generous and were further increased in the period under review. Parents can claim parental leave for up to two years, and during the period of parental leave— and for six months afterwards – they have job security and cannot be dismissed. However, overall spending on children and families has remained low. One of the consequences of this low spending is that child-care density has been low. Combined with the shortage of part-time work, the shortage of affordable child care (especially full-time day care) creates a significant obstacle for women attempting to combine parenting and employment. As a result, the total fertility rate has stagnated at 1.4. The problems with combining parenting

with participation in the labor market might even be visible in emigration trends. Unlike in the 2000s, women now represent the majority of out-going Romanians.

Citation:

Pop, L. (2016): Child-rearing leave in Romania: an effective instrument for increasing the birth rate and improving child care? European Social Policy Network, Flash Report No. 2016/29.

South Korea

Score 5

Along with Japan, South Korea has the lowest fertility rate in the OECD. The government has not been very effective in enabling women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market, which helps explain the low labor-market participation rate. The traditional Confucian family values that view women as mothers and housewives remain influential. High housing prices, high child-care and education costs, and precarious job and wage conditions are the most important factors in young couples' decisions not to have children. Cultural and socioeconomic factors such as a gender pay gap of 36.6%, the highest among OECD countries, as well as pervasive social immobility, discourage women from entering or reentering the workforce. As a result, while college graduates are split fairly evenly between men and women, the employment rate for female graduates is lower than for male graduates. Furthermore, South Korea is the only country in the OECD where the employment rate of female college graduates is lower than that of women with no more than compulsory education.

In recent years, the government has been alarmed by the dramatic drop in fertility, and has introduced or considered various policies seeking to help women combine work and parenting. However, most policies adopted have to date proven to be inadequate or ineffective. There have also been more controversial reactions to the low fertility rate. For example, the government has started cracking down on abortions, which are illegal in South Korea but had been tolerated since the 1970s as a means of reducing the birth rate.

Citation:

New York Times, 5 January 2010

Kim Sangmook, 2008, Women and family-friendly policies in the Korean government, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. 74, No. 3, 463-476

The Global Gender Gap Report 2013, The World Economic Forum, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf

South Korea's Failure to Support Working Women, *The Diplomat*, Aug 20, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/south-koreas-failure-to-support-working-women/>

OECD, Gender wage gap data. <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/genderwagegap.htm>

Spain

Score 5

Public spending on social services designed to support women in combining parenting with employment, never ambitious in Spain to start with, were cut back considerably further as a result of the economic crisis and the associated budgetary

constraints. The country's very low fertility rate is one partial outcome of the timidity of Spanish family-support policies.

Traditional family patterns (in which mothers focus on household work and child care duties) have changed in Spain, but this has resulted more from slow sociological developments than from any explicit family-support policy. Moreover, traditional gender roles that remain deeply rooted among Spaniards keep women in an unequal position. Although the Ministry of Employment has sought to force employers to comply with non-discrimination legislation, there is still a wage and pension-value gap of close to 20% between men and women. Women's labor-market participation rate is also much lower than that of men. In 2016, the employment rate among women was approximately 40%, as compared to 50% among men. The moratorium in implementing the National System of Dependency (governing care for dependent people) has made it more difficult for women to remove themselves from the burden of family care. Further measures are needed to facilitate a culture of shared responsibility for child care. A corporate culture of "presenteeism" within the workplace does not help. Subsidies to families have also been significantly cut back. However, in 2016 was implemented a tax reform decided in 2015 to benefit large families (i.e., three or more children), in parallel with taxpayer deductions amounting to €100 or €200 per month depending on the number of children. The government also approved a Comprehensive Plan to Support Families for the 2015 – 2017 period and the parliament passed in October 2016 equal parental leave for fathers.

Citation:

October 2016, The Local: "Spain approves equal parental leave for fathers"

<http://www.thelocal.es/20161019/spain-approves-equal-parental-leave-for-fathers>

Eurobarómetro especial 428, on Gender Equality

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf

Cyprus

Score 4

A lack of adequate family support policies leads to, among other things, a low rate of enrollment in nurseries and child care centers. Combining motherhood with employment is difficult in Cyprus, which may also account for the country's low birth rates (1.09% in 2014). However, the rate of employment among women between 25 and 54 is high (72.7% in 2015). Families seek care for children five years old and under primarily in the private sector, and in a small number of community centers under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor.

Solutions sought to compensate for the lack of adequate state policies and facilities for mothers with dependent children include help from the extended family. Child care provided by family members, in particular grandparents, has brought about beneficial effects, including a reduced child-poverty rate. Kindergartens, in which more than 80% of children are enrolled, represent additional family expenses. Parents and especially young mothers need also to provide transportation for their

children, as the public-transportation infrastructure remains largely insufficient despite recent improvements. The establishment of full-day pre- and primary school in many communities is useful to some families, but more is needed to resolve problems.

Special allowances for multi-member families and the guaranteed minimum income may alleviate difficulties posed by the economic crisis. However, state coverage of nursery fees and the resolution of other problems are needed to prevent young mothers from having to choose between employment and providing young children care.

Citation:

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2. Annual Report 2014 Ministry of Education (in Greek), http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/pdf/annual_report_2014_gr.pdf

Hungary

Score 4

Family policy has been a rhetorical focus for the Orbán governments, but it has been understood in a very traditional manner. It has aimed at stabilizing traditional family models and at improving the financial situation of parents via state transfers rather than promoting opportunities for women to combine parenting and employment. As a result, the gender employment gap has been high and rising. In 2016, the Orbán government made some timid steps towards promoting the expansion of childcare options for children under the age of three.

Italy

Score 4

Italian society has traditionally relied very much upon its very strong family institutions. The family (often in its extended version) remains even today a major provider of welfare for its weakest components – children, young couples with precarious jobs and elders. Within the family, significant amounts of economic redistribution take place, and important services are provided, such as the care of preschool age children by grandparents. Partly because of this reliance, state support for families has generally been weak. Apart from relatively generous rules on maternity leave (paid for by social insurance) and limited tax deductions for children, the state has not offered much. Public day care facilities for preschool children are available on a limited scale and vary significantly across regions. Private firms and public offices have only recently started offering similar services, with some support from the state.

The lack of more significant policies has contributed to the limited participation of women in the workforce and a low overall employment rate, while also contributing to a very low birth rate (except in the immigrant population).

Proposals recurrently advanced to introduce important changes to tax policies with respect to families have never materialized, including the “*quoziante familiare*,” which would have divided taxable income by the number of family members. The crisis has left little space for such initiatives, which would strain the state’s budget. As a result, only limited subsidies for families with children in the lowest income brackets have been introduced. Because of the economic crisis, the levels of children living in poverty are above average.

New and innovative Scandinavian-style concepts (such as parental leave) that go beyond maternity allowance are not widely implemented. The whole child-care sector, and indeed the state of the public debate over the ability of women to combine work and children, lags behind that in the wealthier and more progressive European countries. The decreasing transfers of financial resources to regions and municipalities during previous and Renzi governments mean that many institutions and projects working in family support have run out of money and may have to cut back services significantly.

Mexico

Score 4

As in most other areas of Mexican social policy, social divisions are pronounced in the area of family policy. On the one hand, educated and urban Mexicans are broadly supportive of women’s rights, as is the political class. Recent political reforms require registered political parties to have a quota of women included as a part of their election slates. In addition, educated women are increasingly participating in the labor market and quite a large number of professional people are women. However, women are strongly underrepresented in top business positions. Less than 10% of seats on boards are held by women, a low level compared to other OECD countries, providing a strong argument in favor of at least temporary gender quotas.

With regard to the poorer segments of the population, gender equality is progressing even slower. Poorer Mexicans tend to have larger families and face fewer opportunities for women in the labor market. Also, old-fashioned “*macho*” and conservative Catholic attitudes from the past make it harder for lower-class women to progress. In addition, many labor-based institutions tend to be based for traditional reasons around the concept of the workingman. Moreover, lower-class women are more active in family businesses and in the informal economy, where incomes tend to be lower, and where it is hard for them to access state benefits. The main problems facing working class women have to do with dysfunctions in public services including health, education and transportation. There is a huge demand for expanding early childcare and pre-school coverage and extending the length of paternity and maternity leaves. In 2014, Congress approved a bill reforming the Federal Law of State Workers, giving state employees a 5-day paternity leave. While this reform aimed to promote gender equality, it has not been welcomed by Mexican

feminist organizations, as it is far from the number of days currently afforded for maternity leave (60 days). Moreover, paternity leave policies are more an exception than a rule in Mexico and still regarded as unnecessary by most businesses and organizations. This reinforces a gender bias in child rearing and discrimination of women in the workplace. Overall, the government needs to improve the enforcement of constitutional provisions against gender discrimination, particularly in the workplace, in boardrooms and credit markets.

According to official records, more than 60% of women 15 years and older have experienced some type of violence in their lifetime. On average, 7 women were killed in Mexico every day between 2013 and 2015. This is almost twice the average seen between 2001 and 2006. The exceptionally high number of disappeared women in the northern state of Chihuahua and the central state of Estado de Mexico, many of whom are presumed to have been murdered, has led to the international use of the term “femicide” to describe this form of disappearance. Many of these disappeared women were likely the victims of sex crimes, but many more have been victims of family honor killings.

Citation:

http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2016/violencia2016_0.pdf

<http://www.animalpolitico.com/2014/03/permiso-de-paternidad-en-mexico-unas-mini-vacaciones-pagadas-de-5-dias/>

Slovakia

Score 4

In Slovakia, traditional notions of the family are still fairly strong. Mothers of children under two years of age rarely work, the employment rate for women (25-49) with children below six years of age reaches a mere 40%, and the gender employment gap for young women (20-29) is among the highest in the EU. Working women face an enormous double burden of both professional and domestic responsibilities. This situation is reinforced by the low incidence of part-time employment, income tax splitting and the relatively long duration of parental leave. Child-care facilities are limited and have not kept up with the increase in birth rates. Child care for children under three years of age in particular continues to be virtually unavailable. Larger towns have insufficient kindergarten slots. Public spending for families is slightly below the OECD average, with a high share devoted to cash benefits, and low shares for children’s services and tax-related benefits. The Fico government has failed to address these problems. Instead of expanding child-care facilities with a view to facilitating women’s labor-market participation, it has focused on increasing cash benefits for families. The new government’s manifesto does not refer to these problems at all.

Switzerland

Score 4

In international comparison, Swiss family policy has done relatively little to enable women to enter the workforce. Policies to reconcile work and family lag very much

behind other comparable modern societies. Overall spending for family benefits is low in international comparison and Switzerland ranks very low with regard to length of paid maternity and parental leave as well as enrollment of children between 3 and 5 in formal pre-primary education. One major exception is the strong increase in enrollment of children 0 to 2 years of age: from 16% in 2008 to 38% in 2015.

A January 2009 federal law providing subsidy payments to families has done little to change the country's ranking in international comparison nor has it changed the substantial variation between cantons, one of the most salient characteristics of Swiss family policy. The new federal law defines minimum child and education benefits, but cantons may add a variable amount to this basic federal benefit level.

In general, Swiss family policy has a clearly conservative outlook with a strong liberal undertone. It is mildly supportive of the traditional family: there are some tax deductions and a period of parental leave offered to mothers (but not to fathers) as well as a very limited number of childcare facilities. There are substantial variations on the cantonal and municipal level. The canton of Ticino has a very generous family policy aimed at helping mothers reconcile work and family; other cantons (and their municipalities) frequently fail to offer any substantial help (e.g., childcare facilities) on a broad scale. Differences and reform dynamics are particularly pronounced between municipalities with regard to external childcare. Local communities with minimalistic family policies co-exist with municipalities which strongly facilitate the reconciliation of work and family for young mothers.

Likewise, tax policies providing incentives either to stay at home or reenter the labor market vary from canton to canton. However, taking the median canton and municipality, the portrait of a liberal-conservative family policy applies. Policies tend to create incentives for young mothers to stay at home during the first years of their children's lives. Afterward, mothers are provided with reasonable opportunity to find employment; however, these are in most cases part-time jobs. This allows mothers to care for their children, while also having some limited employment. Taking part-time jobs usually reduces the ability to have a sustained career as compared to the opportunities offered by full-time employment. Hence, the system works in the sense that it mobilizes women within the labor market, but without giving them opportunities for income and career advancement equal to those afforded to men – with considerable regional variation.

Turkey

Score 4

In July 2016, female population has amounted to 39.7 million, and of this population 9.8 million women formed the labor force. Since 8.4 million women were employed, the unemployed amounted to 1.4 million. While the labor force-participation rate for women amounted to 33%, the employment rate for women was 28.4%, and the unemployment rate amounted to 14%. Women's rate of participation in the labor

market thus remains low, far below the EU average.

Among women in the labor force, 53.3% are employed in services, 31.3% in agriculture, 14.4% in industry, and 1% in construction sector. 45.7% of working women are not registered with any social security institution. In this respect, there are both sectoral and regional disparities. Paid maternity leave is 16 weeks.

Several national and local-level initiatives in recent years have ostensibly been aimed at helping women become more employable, helping them find more and higher-quality jobs, and in general helping to remove obstacles to their participation in the workforce. However, there have been many shortcomings in the implementation and proper monitoring of these policies.

In general, the government's conservative stance on women and family affairs (e.g. concerning the number of children, or women's roles) has provoked ongoing public debate on gender equality in the labor market and public life more generally.

Citation:

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