



# Families Report

Family Policy

Sustainable Governance  
Indicators 2018

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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.

### Estonia

Score 10

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 female employment rate. 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. This system, in place since 2004, has come under attack due to its rigidity and negative impact on women's labor market participation. In Spring 2017, the government initiated revisions to the Parental Leave Act with three objectives: 1) increased maximum paid paternal leave, 2) increased flexibility (by extending up to three years the period when parents can use the entitled 435 days of leave), and 3) encourage employment during parental leave (the monthly wage that a parent can earn without losing parental benefits will increase from €70 to €1,544). These changes are expected to be enacted by the end of 2017.

### 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 despite a slight fall in 2016, 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 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.

## 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 parties in government and the non-socialist Alliance parties 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 2014, 66% of children aged two and under were in day care, the highest rate in the OECD – the second highest rate is about 40%. About 95% of children aged three to five attended some kind of preschool institution, the OECD average is about 85%. 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.

Danish family policy is continuously debated. A primary policy aim is to facilitate labor market participation for women. 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 some 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:

OECD, 2016, Enrolment in childcare and preschool, OECD – Social Policy Division – Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, [https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3\\_2\\_Enrolment\\_childcare\\_preschool.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_2_Enrolment_childcare_preschool.pdf) (accessed 7 Demceber 2017).

“Denmark: Combining work and family successfully,” [http://europa.eu/epic/countries/denmark/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epic/countries/denmark/index_en.htm) (accessed 17 October 2014).

## 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, in recent years, as parts of structural reform packages, the Sipilä government has implemented changes in the right to day care, with potentially far-reaching consequences. Limiting the right to day care to part-time coverage will likely increase 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 and, in particular, full-time employment rate among women is

among the highest in the EU, family policies have still not fully solved the challenge of combining parenting and employment. In the first half of 2017, the fertility rate fell to an all-time low, continuing a trend of last two years. In practice, although the number of fathers that take paternity leave has somewhat increased, child care responsibilities still fall predominately on women. Also, the home care allowance of up to three years encourages Finnish women to leave the labor market after having a child for a longer period than women in other countries. Comparative examinations of Nordic family policies suggest that family policies in Finland have not developed to fully match the more flexible family policy arrangements in, for example, Norway and Sweden. The Sipilä government plans a major family policy reform. This reform aims for a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women as well as advancing mothers' labor market participation. In general, evidence has shown that family-centered thinking is increasing among Finnish adults and within Finnish culture more generally. 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](http://www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt);  
Mia Hakovirta and Minna Rantalaaho, "Family Policy and Shared Parenting in Nordic Countries", *European Journal of Social Security*, Vol. 13 No 2, pp. 247-266, 2011.

## 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 per month 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 presented by the short-lived 2016-2017 cabinet, a raise was announced and since October 2016 payments have been ISK 500,000 per month.

Citation:

Gender Equality in Iceland 2017. The Center for Gender Equality (Jafnréttisstofa). [http://jafnretti.is/D10/\\_Files/Gender\\_Equality\\_in\\_Iceland\\_2017.pdf](http://jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/Gender_Equality_in_Iceland_2017.pdf)

## Luxembourg

### Score 9

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 a transfer and service system, with specific provisions for children and the elderly.

Luxembourg has positively responded to its changing demographics by adapting family policies. In this context, the government has pushed for policies to offer a wide range of child 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 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, the rate of women's workforce participation remains comparatively low at 65.1%, compared to an EU average of 65.3%, with Luxembourg ranked 16th out of 28 EU member states.

Luxembourg's public child care institutions include the "maisons relais," general daycare centers; the "éducation précoce," a third preschool year and "foyers de jour," 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, €265 per child with an increase from the ages of 6 to 12 years. Since 2017, as part of a new coherent family policy, the government offers free child care facilities (20 hours per week), early language support and intercultural education. The structures are now more strictly controlled by officials and must provide qualified staff for multilingual offerings.

Citation:

"Employment rate by sex." Eurostat, [www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020\\_10&language=en](http://www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_10&language=en). Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

Les chiffres de la rentrée 2016/ 2017. Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, 2016. [www.gouvernement.lu/7338907/170912-chiffres-rentree.pdf](http://www.gouvernement.lu/7338907/170912-chiffres-rentree.pdf). Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

"Nei Perspektivë fir Lëtzebuerg." Le portal de l'actualité gouvernementale, 14 Oct. 2014,

[www.gouvernement.lu/4090822/14-bettel-declaration](http://www.gouvernement.lu/4090822/14-bettel-declaration). Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

“Prestations familiales.” Le portail gouvernementale, 2017. [www.luxembourg.public.lu/fr/vivre/famille/parents/prestations-familiales/index.html](http://www.luxembourg.public.lu/fr/vivre/famille/parents/prestations-familiales/index.html). Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

Rapport d’activité 2016. Ministre de l’Éducation nationale, 2017. [www.men.public.lu/catalogue-publications/themes-transversaux/rapport-activites-ministere/2016/fr.pdf](http://www.men.public.lu/catalogue-publications/themes-transversaux/rapport-activites-ministere/2016/fr.pdf). Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

Rapport d’activité 2016. Ministère de l’Égalité des Chances, 2017. [www.mega.public.lu/fr/publications/rapports-activites-ministere/annee-2016/rapport-2016.pdf](http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/publications/rapports-activites-ministere/annee-2016/rapport-2016.pdf). Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

## 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 still a 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.

## Slovenia

### Score 9

The employment rate among women in Slovenia is above the EU average, and the employment rate of mothers with children under six is among the highest in the EU. Reconciling parenting and employment is facilitated by the fact that Slovenia provides childcare facilities that exceed the EU average and meets the Barcelona targets both for children under three years of age and between three and five years of age. Over the past ten years the number of children enrolled at nursery schools has increased by about 50%. While the incidence of part-time work is growing slowly,

most women work full time. 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. At 105 working days, the maximum duration of maternity leave is near the European average. In addition, parents can take up to 260 days of parental leave, part of which is paid. The 2014 act also included a gradual reform of the additional, non-transferable paternity leave which was completed in the course of 2017. On the one hand, the overall number of days of paternity leave was reduced from 90 to 30. On the other, the number of days with full salary compensation was doubled from 15 to 30, so as to make taking paternity leave more attractive to men. In March 2017, a new Family Code replaced the old one from 1976. The amendment has aimed at improving legal certainty in decisions on marital and family disputes and at safeguarding the good of the child in standard as well as non-standard families.

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>).

Government of the Republic of Slovenia (2017): The family as an important foundation of education and well-being. Ljubljana, May 12, 2017 ([http://www.vlada.si/en/media\\_room/government\\_press\\_releases/press\\_release/article/the\\_family\\_as\\_an\\_important\\_foundation\\_of\\_education\\_and\\_well\\_being\\_59786/](http://www.vlada.si/en/media_room/government_press_releases/press_release/article/the_family_as_an_important_foundation_of_education_and_well_being_59786/)).

Stropnik, N. (2018): Thirty days of (fully) compensated paternity leave in Slovenia from January 2018. European Social Policy Network, Flash Report 2018/7, Brussels.

## 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 area 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.

Until recently, subsidies per child (allocations familiales/kinderbijslag), responsibility for which were recently devolved to the federated entities, were low for the first two children and higher for the third child onward. However, reforms of this subsidy system are being passed, at differing speeds, in the federated entities. When these reforms come into effect, there will be a more limited or even no differential between the subsidies paid for successive children in a given family. These subsidies are significant, amounting to about €700 per month for three teenage children and close to €1,000 per month for four teenage children. Moreover, significant personal-income-tax cuts offer additional support to households with children, with and other small benefits are offered to families with children by some local authorities (e.g., a certain number of free garbage bags per year), NGOs (e.g., a special card entitling the bearer to lower prices in some shops) and public transportation services (e.g., free use of trains up to the age of 12).

High implicit tax rates on low-wage earners, which effectively create a substantial labor-market-entry barrier for low-skilled 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% as compared to 53%) lower for women with lower levels of 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. In 2016, the federal government significantly increased the level of child benefits and in 2017 indexed benefits to inflation.

Canada does not have a universal childcare system, although some provinces have taken steps to implement their own, such as Nova Scotia's pre-primary education system and most notably Quebec's CAD 7 per day daycare scheme. The absence of a universal childcare system may make it more difficult for some women to combine parenting and employment. The average net cost of childcare in Canada is among the OECD's 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 childcare and early childhood education that incorporates the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as indigenous peoples will commence over the next few years.

Citation:

OECD Family database [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/data](http://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>

Statistics Canada. 2016. "The rise of the dual-earner family with children." *The Daily*. Statistics Canada catalogue no. 11-630-X. Accessed October 11, 2017 at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016005-eng.htm>

## 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 increased. A legal right to childcare beginning at age one came into effect in August 2013. In March 2016, the share of children aged under three with access to a childcare institution was at 32.7%; this is a small percentage decrease compared to March 2015, although the absolute number increased (BMFSFJ 2017a). Because demand for childcare (in 2016 about 46% for children aged under three) is not covered, Bundestag voted in June 2017 to increase the number of available places in daycare by 110,000 by 2020 (BMFSFJ 2017b). The number of children per kindergarten teacher varies considerably between states with higher child-teacher ratios in eastern states.

In summary, these measures, in combination with an increasing shortage of qualified labor, have led to both a considerable increase in women's labor market participation and fertility rates. While in 2005 only 59.6% of 15- to 64-year-old women were employed, this percentage had increased to 70.8% by 2016 (OECD 2017). In the European Union today, Germany ranks third behind Sweden and Denmark in terms of female labor market participation (OECD 2017). However, German women are particularly often in part-time work. Although low by international standards, Germany's fertility rate has started to increase. By 2015, after three successive year-on-year increases, Germany's fertility rate had reached 1.5 children per woman (Statistisches Bundesamt 2017).

#### Citation:

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

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Statistisches Bundesamt 2017:  
<https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/Geburten/Tabellen/GeburtenZiffer.html>

BMFSFJ 2017a: Kindertagesbetreuung Kompakt:  
<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/113848/bf9083e0e9ad752e9b4996381233b7fa/kindertagesbetreuung-kompakt-ausbau-und-bedarf-2016-ausgabe-2-data.pdf>

BMFSFJ 2017b: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/familie/kinderbetreuung/gesetzliche-grundlagen-fuer-den-ausbau-der-kinderbetreuung/86386>

## 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 2017, the gender pay gap in New Zealand was 9.4%. 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 was extended by the incoming Labour/NZ First government in November 2017 to cover loss of income for up to 26 weeks.

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 then prime minister, “the rate of family violence in New Zealand is unacceptable.” This will involve reforming civil and criminal law. The resulting Family and Whānau Violence Legislation Bill had its second reading in September 2017.

#### 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).

Family violence laws introduced to parliament. New Zealand Law Society. 16 March 2017 (<https://www.lawsociety.org.nz/news-and-communications/latest-news/news/family-violence-laws-introduced-to-parliament>).

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

## 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 high cost of child care for children not yet at school continues to be a problem for many families in Australia. However, in the 2015 budget, the government announced a plan to spend AUD 3.5 billion over five years on child care assistance, including a new child care subsidy (CCS). Initially intended to begin on 1 July 2017, it is now planned for 1 July 2018. Replacing several existing subsidy programs, the CCS is a single subsidy based on family income. Families earning around AUD 65,000 or less will receive a subsidy of 85% of their child care fees, with the subsidy gradually tapering to 50% for families earning around AUD 170,000 or more. Families earning more than AUD 185,000 per year will have an annual cap of AUD 10,000 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.

Following large increases in family payments over the early 2000s, in recent years there has been some dialing back of these payments. In 2014, the “baby bonus,” a tax-free payment of up to AUD 5,000 payable on birth or adoption of a child, was abolished. In 2016, the government managed to pass some reductions in family payments through the senate, 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 AUD 80,000 per year. Additional minor reductions in family payments were announced in the 2017 budget.

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 childcare 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 often 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 keeps 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.

In some regional states, such as Upper Austria, there has been a backward trend, introducing fees for childcare centers, which had previously been free of charge.

In fall 2017, the Austrian Constitutional Court decided that the institution of marriage (as it is understood in the Austrian legal system) cannot be limited to marriage between a woman and a man. This has been a breakthrough decision similar to developments in other countries. Despite highly emotional debates in the

past, the more conservative side of the Austrian public (including the Roman Catholic Church) has accepted this decision without much of protest. Activists from different NGOs have welcomed this decision as an end to the legal discrimination of same-sex partnerships.

“Family” is still a highly ideological term in Austria. But despite contradicting positions (conservative insistence on a traditional mother-father-child family and progressive ideas of deconstructing gender barriers), the Austrian political system remains able to implement compromises which are flexible enough to adapt to new social developments and challenges. “Patch-work” families have become more socially (and politically) accepted.

Citation:

For data on child-care supply in Austrian regional states see Agenda Austria, Das Angebot ganztägiger Kinderbetreuung unterscheidet sich je nach Bundesland deutlich: <https://www.agenda-austria.at/grafik-der-woche-kinderbetreuung-und-vollzeitarbeit/>

## 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.

In 2010 a law was introduced to extend maternity leave to 14 paid weeks, and 26 weeks in 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 received by the average woman over her lifetime in Israel is similar to the average level within the OECD. However, other OECD countries offer more flexibility in terms of using parental-leave benefits or returning to work on a part-time basis.

In recent years, the need for further subsidies for day care and after-school activities has gained prominence as a middle-class issue, and a plan to introduce subsidized care for children up to the age of five was launched. Compulsory education has been expanded, introducing free early childhood education between ages three and four. However, reports claim that this program is still largely underfunded and does not offer sustainable relief for working mothers and young families. Recently, Finance minister Moshe Kahlon announced a series of intended tax cuts called the “Net Family Plan.” The program includes benefits such as subsidies for after-school activities, extra tax points for men and women with children up to six years old, an expansion of work grants and reduced taxes on baby clothes, all with the aim of assisting families and working mothers.

The share of women in Israel’s workforce has increased substantially over the past 30 years. Once accounting for just a third of the workforce, women currently make up 47% of employees. A 2016 study indicates that employment rates are almost unaffected during for women aged between 25 and 44 who become mothers. The gap was even smaller for highly educated women, since education offers greater access to prestigious jobs and financial rewards for working mothers. This positive trend is more prevalent among Jewish working women, who have an employment rate nearly equal to that of Jewish men. However, in 2015, the employment rate among Arab women remained at only 31.5%, with ultra-orthodox Jewish women also lagging behind, although both populations have shown gradual improvement, and have been the focus of a general economic policy aiming to expand social inclusion in the labor market.

Wage gaps between men and women remain. Since many women work part-time or hold temporary jobs in order to sustain their traditional role as the main household caregivers, the average monthly wage for women in 2015 was just 68.3% of the average monthly wage among men. The gender gap is smaller but still significant for hourly wages, with women making an average hourly rate 84.9% that of men’s average rate. Studies continue to point to ongoing discrimination against women in the business and public sectors.

In the beginning of 2017, the civil service commissioner issued a working regulation

requiring all ministries to adopt a “family friendly” arrangement under which meetings would not be held in the afternoon twice a week in order to support workers who wished to dedicate more time to their families. Moreover, the commission’s strategic plan placed special emphasis on promoting a workplace ethic of gender equality.

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## Latvia

Score 7

Family-support policies enable women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market. In 2016, 74.5% of mothers with at least one child aged between 0 and 6 were employed, which is above the OECD-31 average of 67.7%.

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.

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. As of 2017, 10 days of parental leave are available for adoptive parents.

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:

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## 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. In April 2017, the cabinet approved the government's proposed development of financial incentives and services for young families and those having children. In November 2017, President Dalia Grybauskaitė signed the controversial Law on the Strengthening of the Family. Although supporters argued that the law is needed to coordinate family policies and provide basic family support services, opponents dismissed it as a selection of declarations and criticized its allegedly discriminatory nature in terms of gender.

## Malta

### Score 7

With a difference of approximately 25% between female and male employment rates, Malta has the widest gender employment gap in the EU (78.9% for males vis-à-vis 54.4% for females). Nonetheless, one should note that female participation in the informal economy (which accounts for almost 25% of GDP) may make this figure somewhat inaccurate. Figures released by the European Commission show that women in Malta earn about half of what men earn, constituting the second highest pay gap in the EU.

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 ensure that employed parents retain or are able to return to their jobs. This has included parental leave (both maternity and paternity leave), reduced working hours, career breaks, the introduction of financial incentives for mothers returning to work, free child-care centers, school breakfasts, and after-school clubs. 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. Data published by the National Statistics Office in 2017 indicate that a total of 13,306 children aged five or younger are enrolled in some form of non-compulsory early childhood education. The figures for children under three remain at a low 18% compared to a high of 77% in Denmark. Since 2015, the Maternity Leave Trust Fund legally obliges employers to contribute the equivalent of 0.3% of each employee's salary, irrespective of the employee's gender. Notwithstanding, the share of family/child benefits as a share of total social benefits remains low at just over 6%. Discussions are currently ongoing as to whether parents should be able to utilize their sick leave for instances when their children are unwell.

#### Citation:

Eurostat News Release 80/2016

European Semester Thematic Factsheet – Undeclared Work (Updated 2016) p. 3

National Statistics Office (NSO) News Release 155/2017

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National Statistics Office (NSO) News Release 147/2017

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

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Television Malta 18/11/2016 PM: Parents with sick children should have right to sick leave

Times of Malta 4/11/17 Women in Malta earn almost half of what men get

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## Netherlands

### Score 7

Family policy in the Netherlands is formally characterized by the need to recognize a child's best interest and to provide support for the family and the development of parenting skills. According to EU-28 data, the Dutch spend approximately 32% of GDP on social protections (health care, old age, housing, unemployment, family), but just 4% of this is 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 of a lack of information about and access 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 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. Particularly vulnerable children are hit by the decentralization and fragmentation of services.

In practice, 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. The gap between professional women working longer hours and less educated women not participating in the labor market is growing. Almost two-thirds of mid-career women experience the combination of childcare tasks and work as difficult. 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 2017, the Netherlands ranked 32 out of 144 countries, having ranked 16 in 2016 and 9 out of 130 countries in 2008. The drop was largely due to the inclusion of top incomes in the calculations, which revealed a glaring absence of women in highly paid positions in the country. Other factors include unfavorable school times, a childcare system geared toward part-time work, and the volatility of financing for and poor access to care policies, particularly at the municipal level.

#### Citation:

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## Portugal

### Score 7

The Programa do XXI Governo 2015 – 2019 promises major improvements to family policy. Most of these pledges have 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 net income for 80% of households.

During the period under review, the birth rate increased to an estimated 8.4 births per 1,000 persons in 2016, as compared to an estimated 7.9 births per 1,000 persons in 2014 and 8.3 births per 1,000 persons in 2015. 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 any changes to family policy.

A very extensive study released in 2017 highlighted the need for family-policy reforms, and the government shows substantial political will with regard to implementing such reforms.

Citation:

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## 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 called for expanded family leave policies and more generous support for child care, but Republicans 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. The Trump administration and Republican-controlled Congress will not increase and may cut federal support for working mothers.

Trump’s first budget proposal includes the creation and funding of a program to provide all mother and fathers with six weeks paid time off after the birth or adoption of a child.

## 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 substantially over 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. 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 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 childcare provision declined significantly during the 1990s, and there has been only a slight improvement since, even though the growing number of single mothers – 49% of children were born outside of wedlock in 2017 – has further increased the demand for childcare. While the enrollment rate in formal child care for children three to five years of age is within the third quartile of OECD countries, childcare provision for children up to two years of age is the third lowest among OECD countries, and affordable after-hours care offered by pre-schools and schools is insufficient. However, public support for alternative forms of child care, most notably so-called children's groups, has expanded, with a financial contribution to these alternative forms of childcare from the state. Since 2017, attending kindergarten in the last pre-school year is mandatory.

## Spain

**Score 6** Spain has a very low fertility rate, which is one partial outcome of the timidity of Spanish family-support policies and the instability of the labor market. Public spending on social services designed to support women in combining parenting with employment were cut back considerably further as a result of the economic crisis and associated budgetary constraints.

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, which remain deeply rooted among Spaniards, keep women in an unequal position; there is 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 slow implementation of the National System of Dependency (governing care for dependents) 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. Men can now benefit from an increase in statutory paternity leave from 13 days to four weeks. In 2016, a tax reform decided in 2015 was implemented 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 Comprehensive Plan to Support Families for the 2015 – 2017 period, will finish at the end of the year. According to first evaluations by international organizations, the plan was insufficient to address the high percentage of vulnerable families and improve the protection of children in Spain.

Citation:

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[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual\\_reports/2017\\_report\\_annual\\_gender\\_equality.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/2017_report_annual_gender_equality.pdf)

## 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 (1,974 hours per year and worker) far exceed the OECD average (about 1,763 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 and adoption.

Citation:

[http://www.dipres.gob.cl/594/articles-121592\\_Ley\\_de\\_Presupuestos\\_2015.pdf](http://www.dipres.gob.cl/594/articles-121592_Ley_de_Presupuestos_2015.pdf)

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## Croatia

Score 5

The employment rate among women in Croatia is 10 percentage points lower than that among men and lower than that observed in almost all other EU countries. Maternity pay is relatively generous, while child-care facilities and extended-day programs at school are rather limited. 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 women will eventually require maternity leave. Technically speaking, this form of discrimination is illegal, but weak labor unions and weak government enforcement mean that discrimination continues. The 2014 Family Law did not address these issues, focusing instead on expanding the legal rights of young people and clarifying child-custody issues. Prime Minister Plenković and President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović have stressed the demographic challenges and the need to increase birth rates. This led to the creation of a new ministry of demography, family, youth and social policy in October 2016 and the creation of a Council for Demographic Revival, an expert council, in April 2017. In November 2017, the government announced it was increasing child allowances and introducing measures to increase childcare facilities and extend afternoon childcare.

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

Greece has one of the strongest traditions of family ties in Europe. In both urban and rural areas, grandparents often look after preschool children while mothers work, families care for their elderly or disabled at home, parents help around the house and feed the younger generation sometimes even into middle age.

Family policy in Greece is not oriented toward reconciling work and welfare in order to improve the position of women in the labor market. Greece spends very little on preschool services for the age groups 0 to 2 years old and 3 to 5 years old. Consequently, women suffer from a permanent social disadvantage. The Greek state does not have a streamlined policy to reconcile work and family life but heavily depends on the European Union. Around the country, many low-income families benefit from European Social Fund (ESF) projects, which finance many municipal nurseries. During the period under review, ESF-funded municipal nursery places were in high demand, as these places enabled parents to seek work.

The crisis has strengthened age-old cultural patterns. Typically, when a woman has children, she exits the labor market and seeks support from her family in order to raise her children, with some help from her husband. Notably, a new mother employed in the public sector receives much better support than a new mother employed in the private sector or self-employed. Female public employees are guaranteed their jobs following maternity leave. They are also granted maternity leave without fear that, on returning to work, they may be allocated to a subordinate job or suffer a wage cut, as is the case for 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 related to child poverty because traditionally the state paid little attention to poverty as a social problem. The bulk of social attention focused on pensioners, often regardless of their income level. However, in early 2017, after a very long preparation period, the government started distributing a benefit called Social Income of Solidarity. This benefit is targeted at low-income groups and resembles a minimum income guarantee found in other EU welfare systems. So there has been some improvement in recent years.

As a result of the crisis, more and more Greek families are relying on their elderly relatives' pensions. In many cases, relatives cannot afford the expense of a nursing home and decide to take care of their elderly relatives at home. This has led to the mass "emptying" of nursing homes across the country.

Citation:

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

## Hungary

Score 5

Family policy has always been a rhetorical focus for the Orbán governments. In the context of the government's campaign against refugees, it has attached even greater importance to family policy. The government has repeatedly stressed its view that the ongoing decline in population must be tackled not by immigration, but by increasing birth rates in the country and has declared this to be a major political goal. Unlike in the past, the government has gone beyond measures to raise family assistance and other social benefits for families. Since 2016, it has paid more

attention to expanding child care facilities. In 2017, it also established a network of 67 local counseling centers tasked with helping women find employment and combine parenting and employment. In institutional terms, family policy has been strengthened by the announced creation of a cabinet committee on family affairs that is scheduled to meet at least once a month and is chaired by the minister of human capacities.

## 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 labor-participation rate among women increased to 66% in 2016, surpassing the United States, the majority of employed women work in part-time, nonregular jobs. Although several policy measures aimed at addressing these issues have been implemented since the 1990s, many challenges remain.

The LDP-led government has sought to provide support for women in the labor force, referring to its policy efforts in this area as “womenomics.” For example, it has made some effort to improve child care provision in order to improve the conditions of working mothers. In October 2017, changes to the Child Care Leave System were introduced, enabling leave to be extended from one to two years under certain circumstances. Moreover, kindergartens will accept two-year-olds beginning in April 2018.

The birth rate has stabilized at a low level of around 1.4 births per woman. The government's target rate of 1.8 remains as yet out of reach.

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.

#### Citation:

Kathy Matsui, ‘Womenomics’ continues as a work in progress, *The Japan Times*, 25 May 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/25/business/economy-business/womenomics-continues-work-progress/>

## Poland

### Score 5

Poland's employment rate among women falls below the OECD and EU averages, and its childcare 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) 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. In its second year in office, the PiS government adopted a new program, “for life plus,” which includes support for families in difficult situations and with disabled children, and is expected to cost another PLN 3.7 billion. It has also promised to engage in providing more childcare facilities. As a result of all these measures, Poland has caught up with France, Hungary and Austria, and is one of the most “family-oriented” countries in the European Union, as measured by mean support for “children and families” relative to income.

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>).

CBOS (2017): Opinions about the “Family 500+” programme one year after introduction. Warsaw ([http://www.cbos.pl/EN/publications/reports/2017/036\\_17.pdf](http://www.cbos.pl/EN/publications/reports/2017/036_17.pdf)).

## Romania

### Score 5

Generous parental-leave benefits have been the main instrument of family policy in Romania. 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. Benefits are set at 85% of the net average income earned during the previous months, up to a cap of 8,500 lei per month reintroduced by the Tudose government in 2017 with a view to reigning in spending. By contrast, public spending on child care has been low. Combined with the shortage of part-time work, the low child care density (especially full-time day care) creates a significant obstacle for women attempting to combine parenting and employment. As a result, female activity and employment rates have been among the lowest in the EU. The problems with combining parenting with participation in the labor market might even be visible in emigration trends. In contrast to the 2000s, women now represent the majority of out-going Romanians.

Citation:

Pop, L. (2017): Child-rearing indemnity in Romania: between social justice and financial feasibility European Social Policy Network, Flash Report No. 2017/44.

## South Korea

### Score 5

South Korea has the second-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.

#### 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](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>

## 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 be one of the reasons for low birth rates (1.32% in 2015). However, the rate of employment among women between 25 and 54 is high (74% in 2017 Q2). Families seek care for children under five years old primarily in the private sector, and in a small number of community centers under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor.

To compensate for the lack of adequate state policies and facilities for mothers, child care is commonly provided by family members, in particular grandparents; this has beneficial effects, including a reduced child-poverty rate. Parents with children attending kindergarten face additional expenses and need to provide transportation for their children, as the public-transportation infrastructure remains insufficient. The establishment of full-day pre- and primary school in many communities benefit only some families.

Special allowances for multi-member families and the guaranteed minimum income may alleviate difficulties posed by the economic crisis. Beyond a 2017 law advancing paternity leave, more policy actions are needed to remove the dilemma for young mothers' of having to choose between employment and the care of their young children.

Citation:

1. Demographic report 2014, [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/6C25304C1E70C304C2257833003432B3/\\$file/DEMOGRAPHIC\\_REPORT-2015-301116.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/6C25304C1E70C304C2257833003432B3/$file/DEMOGRAPHIC_REPORT-2015-301116.pdf)
2. Government Opposed Paternity Leave for Unmarried Fathers, Cyprus Mail, 12 September 2017, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/09/12/government-opposed-paternity-leave-unmarried-fathers/>

## 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 wealthier and more progressive European countries. The decreasing transfers of financial resources to regions and municipalities during previous 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 professionals 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 preschool 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.

In the early 2000s, SEDESOL created a program aimed at early childhood development that provide child care for children of men and women in poverty five days a week. Though the program is not universal, there is some evidence that it provides advantages to children enrolled. This has become the closest to a child care policy for families without a formal job or a formal enrollment in one of the different social protection systems in Mexico providing child care services. Overall, the government needs to improve the enforcement of constitutional provisions against gender discrimination.

According to official records, more than 60% of women 15 years and older have experienced some type of violence in their lifetime. On average, seven 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.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2016/violencia2016_0.pdf)

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[https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1665114616301617/1-s2.0-S1665114616301617-main.pdf?\\_tid=be22bb40-e2cf-11e7-ae06-00000aab0f27&acdnat=1513476933\\_1b3cb11d76a482e57d9c4f638c2232f8](https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1665114616301617/1-s2.0-S1665114616301617-main.pdf?_tid=be22bb40-e2cf-11e7-ae06-00000aab0f27&acdnat=1513476933_1b3cb11d76a482e57d9c4f638c2232f8)

## 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 European Union. 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. Compared to its predecessors, the third Fico government has paid more attention to the expansion of child care facilities and has begun to shift the focus of family policy away from cash benefits. However, a legal framework for child care services is still missing.

## 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. Sufficient signatures have been collected for a vote on parental leave for fathers. However, at the time of writing, it is doubtful whether the initiative will gain the necessary majority in a popular vote to succeed. There are substantial variations on the cantonal and municipal level (see Stutz et al., 2017). 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 (Bundesrat 2017, BfS 2017). 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.

Citation:

Bundesrat der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft 2017: Familienbericht 2017, Bern: Bundesrat.

Bundesamt für Statistik 2017: Familien in der Schweiz. Statistischer Bericht 2017, Neuenburg: BfS

Stutz, Heid; Livia Bannwart, Victor Legler 2017: Familienberichte, Familienleitbilder und Familienkonzepte der Kantone. Forschungsbericht Nr. 1/2017, Bern: Bundesamt für Sozialversicherungen

These reports are accessible via: <https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/dokumentation/medienmitteilungen.msg-id-66484.html>

## Turkey

Score 4

In July 2016, there were 39.8 million women in Turkey. Furthermore, there were 10.4 million women in the labor force (women 15 years and older), including 8.9 million employed women and 1.5 million unemployed women. The labor force participation rate for women was 34.3%, the employment rate for women was 29.3%

and the unemployment rate was 14.6%. The labor force participation rate of women in Turkey remains low, far below the EU average.

In July 2017, of women in the labor force, 53.4% were employed in the service sector, 31.5% in agriculture, 14% in industry and 1% in construction sector. Of working women, 47% were not registered with any social security institution, with significant sectoral and regional disparities.

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.

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