

SGI Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2009

Social Affairs

Families report



Indicator **Family policy**

Question **Do family support policies enable women to combine parenting and employment?**

30 OECD 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 = Women can effectively combine parenting with employment.*
- 8-6 = Some support exists for women combining parenting with employment.*
- 5-3 = Women have few opportunities to combine parenting with employment.*
- 2-1 = Most women are forced to opt for either parenting or employment.*

Iceland

value 10

Family policy promotes the participation of women in the labor market. In comparative perspective, Iceland has one of the world's highest rates of labor market participation by women. However, women are generally paid markedly lower wages than men for similar work. Some women also complain about the unavailability of part-time work opportunities that would make it easier to combine work at home with work outside the home. But these facts reflect decisions taken by employers in their dealings with wage earners, rather than government policy.

The country's family policy encourages men and women to share the burden of child rearing. In 2005, almost 90 percent of eligible fathers used their right to take a three-month parental leave. During this period, they receive 80 percent of their income, paid by the state. Child care is also very advanced in Iceland, and is normally available for all children six months or older, although availability can vary since this is a municipal responsibility. About 70 percent of children between three and five years old spend at least eight hours a day in child care of some kind.

Norway

value 10

Labor market participation by women is among the highest in the world, at 72 percent, and is only slightly lower than male participation, at 78 percent. 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. Day care services are widespread and heavily subsidized. One of the major achievements of the current government has been to lower the price of day care, and to provide day care services to all parents who want it. The fertility rate is about 1.8 percent; although this is below the replacement rate, it is nevertheless one of the highest in Europe.

Family policy is oriented towards promoting equal opportunity and equitable representation of women in leadership positions, such as in political and business settings. There is a 12-month maternal/paternal leave that provides parents with 80 percent of their salary. Six of the weeks are reserved for the father. These reforms have increased the involvement of the father in the first year of the baby (about 90 percent of fathers now take these six weeks).

Government policy treats married and non-married couples in a nondiscriminatory way. For instance, tax declarations for labor income are filed individually, irrespective of whether a citizen is married or not.

A majority of children in Norway, or 52 percent, are born to unmarried parents. However, this largely reflects the growing number of people choosing to cohabit without marrying. Although as much as 10.4 percent of children are born to single mothers, institutional support for these women (e.g., day care and cash transfers) is stronger than in most countries.

Sweden

value 10

Family policy is a very important policy field in Sweden, and gender equality has always been placed high on the political agenda. Since the 1960s, family policy in Sweden has been geared toward encouraging and enabling mothers to work. In addition to family allowances, the Swedish welfare state provides subsidized public day care to all families as well as parental leave schemes that allow both parents to take time off their jobs with almost complete income maintenance after a child has been born. More recently, the current government has launched an optional “care support” program, which allows parents to decide whether to stay at home or place their children in day care.

The vast majority of fathers in Sweden take some time off to be with their small children. Nevertheless, an analysis of the gender allocation of income compensation from the social insurance system for time spent at home reveals that women still account for more than 75 percent of this time. At the same time, although women are still mainly responsible for raising children, the rate of female participation in the labor force is still very high. Even if Sweden does not satisfy all the criteria of an ideal state, its family policy is in many respects a model for other countries.

Belgium

value 9

Belgian family support policies are quite extensive. Families with children receive significant tax benefits, which increase considerably for those with three or more children. There are also direct financial benefits, such as “family allocations.” The availability of nursery schools and child care facilities for children up to three years old is good. Public nursery schools are subsidized by the state, so the cost of attendance is proportionate to income. There are, however, complaints of insufficient

provisions.

Children above 2.5 years old can join the so-called *écoles maternelles*, which are preschool facilities that are integrated into a primary school. Children attend primary school from ages 6 to 12, followed by secondary school from ages 12 to 18. School attendance is compulsory (except for *écoles maternelles*) and essentially free. Although *écoles maternelles* are not compulsory, almost all children attend.

Some 74 percent of Belgian women with children between the ages of 0 and 6 work regularly. Pregnant women and mothers are well-protected against abusive dismissals at work. The mandatory health insurance fund provides seven days of free babysitting at home per year when children are sick.

There are several paid leave arrangements for parents in Belgium. Mothers receive 15 weeks of maternity leave directly after having given birth, while new fathers receive a 10-day paternity leave. These measures fall under the auspices of the health insurance system. Additionally, either men or women can take advantage of a general three-month parental leave, remunerated at €502 per month in Wallonia, with an additional €140 in Flanders. There are also different arrangements for the public and private sector to help reduce working hours.

In the public sector, it has become much easier for women to take longer-term leave or reduce working hours while resuming a prior work position after the leave is complete. Men have also begun to take advantage of leave opportunities, but this still represents a small minority. In the private sector, it is more difficult to take extended leave after childbirth, and the gender gap in business is still large. Many women, though able to reduce their working hours, often have to abandon prospects for a career to do so.

Annotation:

Stephanie Devisscher, (IDEA Consult), “Flexible work arrangements and female employment in Belgium: Statements and comments,” as part of the Peer Review Program, European Commission/DG Employment and Social Affairs, May 2005. http://pdf.mutual-learning-employment.net/pdf/norway%2005/BE_Devisscher.pdf (accessed February 18, 2008).

Denmark

value 9

Danish welfare policies quite effectively support women who desire to combine parenting and employment responsibilities. The day care network satisfies demand. In terms of parental leave, the state pays for 14 weeks of maternity leave and two weeks of paternity leave. In addition, parents are entitled to 32 weeks of parental leave, and both parents may apply for it. Schools provide children with many daily possibilities for leisure-time activities. Furthermore, the families receive financial support from the state, depending on the number of children. Once a child reaches 18, they receive a stipend if they are enrolled in higher education.

The general level of female employment is very high, and the profession of housewife is practically extinct (except for among some groups of immigrants).

Generous welfare state support might also explain why the fertility rates have increased from 1.4 births per women in 1983 to its current level of 1.8. Nevertheless, women continue to be underrepresented among the higher echelons of Danish business and administration. This might partially result from traditional mentalities and partially from the fact that it is still primarily women who take parental leave. The state could possibly reduce this problem by assigning at least a part of the parental leave specifically to men.

Finland

value 9

Family policy aims at providing a supportive framework for combining parenthood with employment, for both sexes. In addition to extended maternity leaves, fathers can opt for a state-subsidized paternity leave. Child rearing is supported by financial grants and child care services, and the decision between raising the child at home and combining employment with parenthood is left to individuals. However, intensifying labor market requirements and the erosion of traditional family structures pose a challenge, especially for single-parent households in which the mother or father works full time.

Prevailing societal attitudes support the combination of motherhood with employment, and fathers' parental leave is also widely accepted. Nevertheless, primary child care responsibility still tends to fall to women, and mothers opt for part-time employment more often than do fathers. Policies encouraging more men to opt for parental leave are needed, as are more flexible child care options for parents working full time.

France

value 9

Highly regarded throughout the world for its generous family support, France's family policy is used as a model by several states in formulating their own policies. In Germany for example, the French model is consistently held up as a standard. The roots of French family policy reach back to the 1930s and 1940s, and successive French governments, irrespective of their ideological orientation, have maintained the pro-family tenor of these policies. France's current high birthrate (relative to other European countries) is considered an indicator of the French system's success. Thanks to the system, French citizens have appropriate childcare facilities at their disposal, which accounts in part for parents' ability to combine work and family lives more effectively. It is also true, however, that French women are driven to work by financial necessity in supporting their families – a fact that also contributes to the success of French family policy. It should be noted that cultural background and the general concept of “family,” which includes grandparents and siblings, help make the financial resources provided by family policy in France appear so successful.

Netherlands

value 9

Women in the Netherlands are integrated into the labor market very well. More than 55 percent of women are employed outside the household, although many of them only hold part-time positions. In the Netherlands in general, 36 percent of all positions are part-time, entailing 12 to 34 hours of work per week.

In 2005, the government introduced a new regulation for child care entitling parents to share its cost with the government and their employers. However, employers are not obliged to contribute, although in practice most do. Their obligation is usually dependent upon collective wage agreements.

A household's earnings determine its level of governmental financial support, and single-parent families are eligible for extra support. In addition, there is a special financial arrangement for women returning to the labor market that helps them to balance the demands of work and child-rearing.

Since June 2005, it has been possible to take long-term period of leave so as to provide care to a relative suffering from a life-threatening illness. The period is limited to six times the individual's weekly working hours per year. Moreover, men and women can use a new savings arrangement called "life time arrangement" and introduced in 2006 to more easily combine work and care obligations without serious loss of income by saving money during periods of employment for extended leaves of absence, such as those involved in child-rearing.

New Zealand

value 9

The government has provided a range of financial support for families in recent years. Tax credits are offered to employed family members for each dependent child aged 18 or younger. A child care subsidy is available for low-income households. Since July 2007, the government has funded up to 20 hours of early childhood education for children aged three and four. This program is not income- or means-tested. A Domestic Purposes Benefit is also available to single parents, most of whom are expected to prepare for a return to work.

Women's labor market participation rates are relatively high. Many women return to work shortly after childbirth. The parental leave policy allows 14 weeks of job-protected leave for eligible parents, and although costly, it is not too difficult to find a place for babies, toddlers or young children in kindergartens. Children can enter primary school at the age of five, and primary schools are in session from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Many schools offer an afternoon session or work closely with other after-school programs. Furthermore, many holiday programs are available, in particular volunteer-run sports programs.

Canada

value 8

Canada has adopted a number of measures aimed at enabling women to better combine parenting with participation in the labor market. The female employment rate is high (69 percent in 2006) both from a historical perspective and an international perspective. In all Canadian jurisdictions, parents are entitled to unpaid parental leave ranging from 12 to 52 weeks. In 10 out of 12 jurisdictions, full parental leave is available to both parents. In Quebec, one of the most generous jurisdictions, the new Régime québécois d'assurance parentale (RQAP, or Quebec Parental Insurance Plan) came into effect on January 1, 2006. Under the RQAP's basic plan, both mothers and fathers benefit from non-transferable paid leave at a rate of 70 percent of average weekly income. The period for these benefits is 18 weeks for mothers and five weeks for fathers. An additional seven weeks at 70 percent pay and 25 weeks at 55 percent pay can also be shared between parents.

This system not only provides both parents with strong incentives to stay at home after the birth of a child, but it also gives women a choice regarding whether to return to work quickly by providing parental rather than only maternity leave. Child care is another issue that has received a fair amount of attention lately in Canada.

The current government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit, which provides families with CAD 100 each month for children under the age of six. However, despite repeated promises from previous governments, there is no system of universal day care. In fact, the current government is clearly against the introduction of government-supported day care programs.

In 1997, Quebec became the only province to have instituted a universal day care system. It now provides day care services for CAD 7 a day per child. Between 2002 and 2003, the proportion of children aged six months to five years who attended day care was 28 percent in Canada as a whole and 52 percent in Quebec.

Australia

value 7

The government's family policy appears torn between the encouragement of economic opportunity for women and the belief that they should be responsible for the home. While many women have entered paid employment over the last three decades, on average, women are still responsible for the bulk of parenting and unpaid domestic labor. The Household, Income and Labor Dynamics (HILDA) Survey for 2001 shows that in households in which both partners are in full-time paid work, women do an average of 14.3 hours per week of unpaid housework, compared to an average of only six hours done by men. Moreover, women in full-time paid work do more unpaid work at home than men even if their partners work part-time or are unemployed.

Family support policies to redress this imbalance are limited, and under the previous federal government were geared towards tax rebates upon the birth of a baby (the so-

called “baby bonus”). Australia has a very low incidence of paid maternity leave, with only about a third of Australian women able to access such leave in any form. The majority of these women work in the public sector or for large companies. Child care provision is inadequate and usually very costly, with many children on long waiting lists for child care places.

Annotation: Frank Stilwell and Kirrily Jordan, *Who Gets What: Analysing Economic Inequality in Australia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Czech Republic

value 7

A high level of employment for women – albeit not in jobs of equal status to those of men – was an important feature of the economic system in the communist period. This high level necessitated pre-primary-education child care facilities. While both traditions have continued, there have been problems reconciling parenting and work responsibilities. The center-left government substantially expanded family support policies. In 2005, for the first time after the collapse of communism, it formulated a national family-policy strategy. The adopted measures included a doubling of the parental leave benefit (to 40 percent of the average monthly salary in the non-business sphere), better access to part-time employment for parents assuming child care responsibilities, the introduction of a right to return to the previous job for up to three years after childbirth and cuts in preschool fees. The center-right government, which advocates cutting social benefits, has been reluctant to expand financial commitments to ease burdens for women wishing to work while raising children.

Germany

value 7

Family policy in Germany has been subject to radical reform. For many years, public policies in the old West German states were conceived in support of a traditional image of the family. Transfer and tax policies supported this model, for example by providing negative financial incentives for spouses’ labor market participation. Moreover, policies to promote women’s employment fell short, leading to a relatively low labor force participation rate by women, especially among those with children. This problem was heightened by insufficient child care infrastructure in the old Laender.

However, the grand coalition government has made extensive policy changes. In hopes of increasing Germany’s low birth rate, a new income-replacement scheme has been created. This has raised the share of households receiving child-rearing benefits, and provides incentives for mothers to return to work earlier.

In contrast to the traditional family model, the new system grants an additional benefit if the second parent takes two months of leave to care for the child. In addition, the government plans to triple the number of day care places up to 750,000

by 2013, although the means of financing of this reform remains a source of debate. Beginning in the year 2013, every one year old child will have a legal claim to child care. However, Germany's current child-care infrastructure still falls short of demand, and is seen as a major constraint on the combination of parenting and labor market participation.

Ireland

value 7

In Ireland, women are vastly underrepresented in politics, the civil service and the judiciary. This state of affairs is consistent with their general level of underrepresentation in societal positions of power. Nevertheless, there have been some significant family policy changes. Since 2000, for example, Irish family taxation policy has moved away from one of "aggregation" and toward one of "individualization." This new system provides incentives for married couples to bring in two incomes. Although the system has yet to be fully implemented, it does differentiate between one-income married couples and two-income married couples. One-income couples pay the higher tax rate on income over €43,000 and only receive one employee tax credit. Two-income couples, on the other hand, pay the higher tax rate on income over €63,000 and receive two employee tax credits. While the system does counterbalance these measures with a "home carers' tax credit," there remain strong incentives for families to bring in two, rather than one, incomes. Some have argued that this new system represents a reduction in the protections afforded to full-time parents. However, the period under review has witnessed significant increases in the Child Benefit (also known as Children's Allowance) payments the state makes to parents regardless of employment status.

Barriers to the full participation of parents of young children in the workforce include a poor level of public provision of child care (which is often costly in the private sector) and corresponding low levels of tax allowances for private expenditure on child care services. Ireland still ranks at bottom of the OECD in terms of the percent of income spent on pre-primary education. Nevertheless, the low level of public provision of preschool child care is offset somewhat by the early age at which children enter the formal elementary school system.

United Kingdom

value 7

Fifty-two percent of women in the United Kingdom with children under the age of five work; 65 percent of them work part-time. This statistic suggests that many British women prefer to work part-time while their children are young. Often unable to do so in their current jobs, many must move to a lower-paid, lower-skilled job, or leave the workforce altogether. While women's hourly pay increases steadily as their children grow up, it rarely returns to pre-childbearing levels. Targeting these problems, the Labour government made improving conditions for combining

parenting with labor market participation a key priority.

The Labour government also increased investments in services for young children (e.g., increases in the number of child care places and free provision of a part-time nursery place for all three- and four-year-olds), which enabled parents to take up work. Further family-friendly reforms include the introduction of a longer and more generous maternity leave (currently 9 months with a payment of 105 pounds a week) and the introduction of a paternity leave clause of two weeks with the same payment. Targeted programs such as “Sure Start” focus on the most economically disadvantaged areas and seek to provide home visiting, parenting support, good quality play, learning and child care experience, primary health care and advice, as well as support for children and parents with special needs. Introduced in 2003, the Child Tax Credit provides means-tested tax credits for children in households that are in and out of work to reduce the costs of child care for low income families by 70 percent. Though considerably lower than ten years ago, the level of worklessness among households with children remains high at 49 percent in 2002 among single parents and 6 percent among dual parents. According to a recent study, the tax credit reforms between 2000 and 2003 have shown positive employment effects for lone earners, but slightly negative effects for second earners, which are mainly women.

Austria

value 6

While Austria ranks among the leading countries when it comes to public spending on families, its very traditional approach to family policy does not enable women to effectively combine parenting with employment. There is a significant need for additional child-care facilities. Unlike most family-benefit regimes, the law lengthening paid maternity leave for mothers does not provide an incentive for them to participate in the labor market.

The ruling grand coalition attempts to balance the traditional approach in family policy with a stronger focus on gender equality, which aims to provide woman with a free choice between child care and full- or part-time employment. This attempt manifests itself in the coexistence of a both a Ministry for Health, Family and Youth and a Ministry for Women, Media and Regional Policy.

Luxembourg

value 6

The employment rate of women in Luxembourg is lower than the EU average. This is due in part to the high salaries and generous family allowances that permit a couple with children to live comfortably on a single salary. Traditional roles for men and women also remain important in this predominantly Catholic society. Nevertheless, this model is slowly changing. This can be seen in the fact that the number of fathers taking the six month (or 12 month, for part-time) parental leave after the birth of a child is on the rise, although the overall rate is still lower than 20

percent. Day care facilities are running short of space, another indication of social change. The Ministry for Family and Integration estimates that 34,000 new spaces are needed to cover current needs. To address this, a new law established the concept of “intermediary housing for children” in 2005. These structures combine day-care centers, homework assistance, temporary stay and holiday activities in a single facility. They complement regular schools and are largely subsidized by the state. In 2006, 92 such houses existed. The ministry also wants to encourage education of children at home through the “Daagesmammen” program. Daagesmammen are small, private day-care centers serving four to seven children.

United States

value 6

Public policy in the United States has not reflected a direct goal of promoting employment on the part of women with families except for that of low-income single mothers, who would otherwise file claims for welfare benefits. The absence of such a goal is apparent in the very limited amount of spending on family-support programs, which is the second-lowest in the OECD as a proportion of total social expenditure. It can be argued that the principle policy promoting two-career families is the federal income tax code’s Child and Dependent Care Credit, which is currently capped at \$3,000 per year per child under 13 years of age (with a maximum of \$6,000 for two or more children).

On the other hand, the United States has been relatively supportive of women’s right to work and has enforced laws and regulations barring sex discrimination in the workplace. In fact, the United States ranks 10th in the OECD in terms of its rate of female employment. Despite what are in comparative terms very low public expenditure for families, the United States numbered among the leading OECD country in terms of its 2004 fertility rate, behind Turkey and Mexico.

Hungary

value 5

Until recently, Hungarian family policy was rather conservative, putting strong emphasis on enabling women to stay at home during child rearing. The number of day care institutions fell drastically after the end of communism, and relatively generous parental leave provisions have further lured many women from the labor market. As a result, the employment rate among mothers has been rather low. The Gyurcsány government has tried to reverse this trend, largely by promoting part-time employment, which has been extremely rare in Hungary. One major measure has involved introducing a new employment subsidy supporting the part-time employment of parents with children under the age of 14. However, the government’s family policy has focused primarily on reducing child poverty by targeting improvements to the existing system of family allowances. The effect these measures have on the employment of mothers remains unclear.

Japan

value 5

In recent years, Japanese family policy has shifted from policies that reinforce traditional gender roles to policies enabling women to balance work and family. However, the labor force participation rate among Japanese woman is low compared with other developed countries. Many women in full-time employment quit working after having a child, because of the difficulty in making working life compatible with child rearing. Japan has no regulations providing for paternal leave, and recent OECD data shows that Japan ranked only 23rd in 2005 – 2006 among all OECD nations in terms of child-related leave periods, measured by duration of unpaid leave (OECD 2007). When women re-enter the labor market, they usually take part-time jobs, with full-time jobs seldom available to them. This situation will become particularly damaging in the future as societal aging results in a lack of highly qualified middle-aged employees. Given that Japan has one of the lowest fertility rates in the world, it is clear that the government has been unable either to support the participation of well-qualified women in the labor market, or to encourage them to have children.

The government has tried to improve this situation, although measures have been too weak to make a major impact, with family-related program spending well below 1 percent of GDP in the early 2000s. Among Prime Minister Abe's "second-chance measures" in late 2006 were policies supporting the employment of women. The government also planned to make workloads for female government employees more flexible in the future. Nevertheless, for financial and career reasons, Japanese women and their families have been reluctant to make use of existing family support programs. For example, Japanese companies were mandated more than 10 years ago to provide workers with a child-care leave system. According to a survey conducted in 2005, more than 60 percent of companies have actually introduced such a system. Yet, while the percentage of female workers who take child care leave is increasing, it still remains only around 10 percent (Takeishi 2007).

Annotation:

OECD, "OECD Family Database," (2007a),

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/26/37864482.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2008)

Emiko Takeishi, "Support of Work-Family Balance and Women's Careers," Japan Labor Review 4, no 4 (2007): 79-96.

Portugal

value 5

There has been little innovation in Portugal's family policy since 2005. The two main measures that have contributed to family support are extensions of social-cohesion and educational policies. On the one hand, revising the "guaranteed

minimum income” (now called “social income for inclusion”) has entailed the establishment of partnerships between the state and third-sector providers aimed at supporting families in need. On the other hand, investment in primary education has increased, and the opening times of public schools have been lengthened so as to help working families. However, although levels of employment for women in Portugal are quite high in comparative terms (particularly when compared with their counterparts in the other countries in Portugal’s geo-cultural area, e.g., Spain, Italy or Greece), it comes as a result of low wages and strong social networks rather than of social policies favoring the employment of women. Indeed, such policies are significantly underdeveloped in Portugal.

The realities of the economy and the labor market prevent women from combining parenting with successful participation in the labor market. Due to the rigidity of the labor market, potential employers are unwilling to hire women who are likely to become pregnant. If and when potential employers do hire women, they do so with only short-term contracts so that they can let them go in the event of pregnancy. Officially, however, there is a policy of six months’ maternity leave. Moreover, despite the fact that their levels of educational attainment have been increasing, women still suffer higher rates of unemployment, especially when they have children.

Slovakia

value 5

Slovakia’s female employment rate is relatively low, particularly for women aged 25 to 34, the most important age cohort in the context of family policy. Reasons include a low incidence of part-time employment (only 2.6 percent of all employees), tax disincentives associated with tax splitting, and limited child care facilities, especially for children under the age of three. Moreover, generous parental leave provisions have given mothers few incentives to return to the labor market quickly, but have put a premium on staying at home. Both the Dzurinda and the Fico governments have done little to address these problems and to facilitate the combination of parenting and employment.

South Korea

value 5

To date, Korea has been unable to address discrimination against women in the workplace, or to enable them to combine children and work effectively. Spending on family benefits such as maternity care, early care and education support is the lowest among OECD countries.

Nonetheless, the share of women in the workforce has greatly increased in past years, reaching 53 percent in 2006. In addition, some family support policies have been introduced. The government has created public nurseries, but the facilities do not yet provide enough space to meet demand. Some companies set up their own

nursery facilities, in return for some tax relief. The government also provides tax refunds for the cost of preschool child caring.

However, family policy enabling parenting to be combined with employment is still young, as traditional “Confucian family values” identifying women’s roles as mothers and housewives remain strong. As a result, Korea’s fertility rate is the lowest in the OECD. Further, there are very few women in leading positions in Korea, giving few career role models for girls.

The country’s work culture, which includes long hours and after-work drinking, is not particularly family-friendly. In contrast to most other OECD countries, the priority of family policies in Korea is to increase fertility, rather than to increase women’s labor market participation or social equality. In 2006, the Korean government introduced a “master plan” aimed at increasing fertility, expanding childcare support eligibility to families earning below 130 percent of the average urban worker household income in 2009. This would cover about 80 percent of all children up to five years old. Out-of-school care is planned for all elementary schools by 2010, up from 20 percent in 2006.

Since 2006, the unemployment insurance system has paid for a maternity leave of 90 days. From 2008 on, parents will be entitled to leave of one year for children up to three years old, and their leave payment will increase by 20 percent.

Spain

value 5

Spain has a long way to go in increasing funds earmarked to assist families. Spain dedicates a mere 0.8 percent of its GDP, while the average European percentage is 2.2 percent. Moreover, most of these funds are not universal but help only those families with limited economic resources. According to a research report published by the Institute for Family Policy (IPF, 2007), a Spanish family would need to have 12 children to receive the same amount of money as a family with two children does in Germany. Spain has long rested on the traditional roles of women, who have historically been responsible for child and elderly care within the family.

Only very recently have a number of governmental decisions been made to guarantee gender equality (the organic law, passed March 2007), to raise the employment rate for women and to eliminate labor discrimination. Family support measures have also been introduced to favor the reconciliation of professional and personal life. At the time of writing, Spanish women enjoy a paid maternity leave of up to 16 weeks; there is a monthly subsidy of €100 for children under 3, and a €2,500 payment for each child born has been approved by the government, to be enacted at the end of 2007. But these measures are insufficient and do not really allow mothers to freely decide if and when they want to remain full-time mothers or to return to full- or part-time employment. The possibility of working part-time is covered under Spanish law but is only applied in public administration or in very large companies. A proposal yet to be approved could extend the current 16 weeks of maternity leave.

Women’s participation in the labor market in Spain is low, about 10 percentage points under EU average. Estimates show that only 5 percent of Spanish companies

offer nursery services, and the percentage of available public-funded child care slots for children up to three years of age 3 is not keeping pace with birth rates. The budgetary earmark for family policies is just 0.78 percent of GDP – approximately half of the EU average, and therefore insufficient.

Italy

value 4

Increased labor flexibility over the last few years has somewhat improved the position of women, who are now more easily able to find part-time jobs. Italy still lacks an effective family policy that would guarantee affordable child care, at the least for young children. At present, public child care for children ages 0 to 1 is extremely limited; only mothers who earn an above-average salary and can afford private child care find it convenient to return to work. Private, employer-sponsored day care seems to be one good solution, but no government has so far acted to further this idea. State aid for families is not sufficient for a country which must bring more people, let alone more women, back to work. Italy's population claims the oldest average age among European countries.

More and more, Italian couples are deciding to have just one child or no children at all. There is a strong need across the country for day care facilities for children and infants. Italian politics and politicians however are absolute latecomers to this issue. One should not really discuss family policy in Italy as, substantially, there is no such thing.

Mexico

value 4

Policies directed at augmenting opportunities for women to combine parenting and employment have until now only shown modest results. According to OECD figures, Mexico has the second-lowest level of female participation in the work force among OECD states. Only 35 percent of women are economically active, and their salaries are on average one-fourth lower than men's. This figure is evidence both of the prevalence of traditional family values and of the lack of family support systems beyond the limits of relatives and neighbors.

On the other hand, female workforce participation among middle- or upper-class Mexicans is quite high. Social attitudes have changed almost completely among wealthier, educated Mexicans, and it is quite normal for women to seek highly paid employment. For example, a significant proportion of Mexican university professors are women. Women of this socioeconomic status are able to access private sources of nursery education or to hire the services of maids. The federal government is undertaking important improvements in this realm, such as creating more child-care centers and improving support for single mothers.

However, traditional social attitudes are common in poorer Mexican families, in which birth rates remain high and female education receives less emphasis.

Estimates of female employment in the informal sector are considerably higher than rates of employment in the formal sector. Still, increasing foreign direct investment and world market integration has also increased women's labor market integration – most explicitly in blue collar segments, such as the “maquiladora” industry.

Poland

value 4

Combining work and family has been made difficult by a poor network of child care facilities, especially outside big cities, and a low number of part-time jobs. Parental leave provisions have included some guarantees for mothers, but have provided only weak incentives for women with children to seek employment. The PiS government subscribed to the traditional “male breadwinner” model and reintroduced the 19th century myth of the Polish mother who sacrifices herself for both her children and her country (*matka Polska*). To increase the birth rate, the government introduced a so-called birth premium for parents. The PiS government's role model, however, was not in line with the preferences of the population at large. According to surveys, the share of citizens who prefer a traditional marriage model dropped from 42 percent to 32 percent from 2000 to 2006, while 41 percent now supports a model where roles are shared equally (CBOS 2006).

Annotation: Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (CBOS), “Reproductive needs and preferred family model,” in Polish Public Opinion, March 2006, 2-3, http://www.cbos.pl/PL/Opinia/2006/03_2006.pdf (accessed June 24, 2007).

Switzerland

value 4

Family policy in Switzerland is rather conservative, with large differences evident between individual cantons. In general, a traditional family model is supported by tax breaks and the availability of parental leave for mothers. This creates incentives for mothers to stay at home during the first years of their children's lives, a situation exacerbated by the high costs of day care. Women have a good chance of finding employment after they have had children. However, they mostly wind up with part-time jobs, meaning that a career after having children is not an option for many mothers. Women thus find combining family and a successful career to be difficult.

Turkey

value 4

Although certain policies do exist to provide infant and child care for working mothers, the Turkish system is still largely dependent on care provided by family members, especially grandmothers. The government opposition has accused the ruling party of enacting policies that encourage women to stay at home rather than

seek employment, an accusation that is denied by the government.

To strengthen the position of women in society, the government passed a new civil code and a new penal code, removing the remaining vestiges of legal discrimination against women and applying a modern perspective on gender issues. Both laws were drafted under strong pressure from secular women's NGOs. At the same time, conversations over women's rights began also among conservative Muslim groups, and the Government Board of Religious Affairs arrived at a relatively liberal reading of the religious law, that is in legal terms insignificant in Turkey. National and international women's NGOs carried out campaigns in the eastern provinces to strengthen equality and the concept of "women's leadership." Successful businesswomen are presented as role models for the younger generations.

Many main issues, however, remained unresolved. The "same work, same wage" principle is still not followed in Turkey, where a wage difference between the sexes of 64 percent was reported as part of the 2005 UNDP Human Development Report. There is now legislation to further the establishment of part-time work, which is considered an important first step for mothers in gaining effective full-time work. Preschool education and extra-family child care is still in its infancy. In 2002, there were only 352 preschools, which accounted for a preschool education level of 9 percent. In 2007, the number of preschools rose to 713, which satisfies 19 percent of the age group under consideration. One of the reasons for the low number of preschools is tied up with the country's legal statutes, which forbids the running of preschools by municipalities, primarily to prevent illegal religious education.

Despite the widespread rhetoric of gender equality, thus, government labor policy has not focused on this goal. Another fact to support this statement is the low number of women in leading public-sector positions; while 28 percent of overall employees are women, only 10 percent of the higher echelons in companies are staffed by women.

Greece

value 3

Greece's system of family support is suboptimal. There is a lack of child care services, and employment opportunities for women are few. Women are not easily hired and are the first to be fired. Greece society is family-centered in the sense that the wider family is still the focus of social life. Even in the urban centers, women continue to play traditional roles associated with motherhood and the life of a housewife. Younger women have entered higher education in large numbers over the last three decades, but they have not taken the additional step of entering the labor market and staying in it. National labor force participation in Greece is a little over 50 percent, with female labor force participation rates even lower. Greece has one of the lowest rates of employment for women among the pre-2008 European Union's 25 member states: 45.2 percent as opposed to an EU mean of 55.7 percent (only Malta had a lower rate).

Family policy is understood by state officials as a tool to deal with the country's demographic problems of low overall fertility rates and decreasing life expectancy

over time. Family policy measures offer tax exemptions and benefits to families with four or more children. For example, the state offers allowances to families with four or more children until each child reaches the age of six. Yet while social transfers are distributed to families with many children, the overall economic support they enjoy is meager.

This report is part of the Sustainable Governance Indicators 2009 project, which assesses and compares the reform capacities of the OECD member states.

More on the SGI 2009 at www.sgi-network.org

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