



Families Report

Family Policy

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2016

Indicator

Family Policy

Question

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

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

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

France

Score 10

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

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 structure of family policy remains in place, but some small changes have taken place. The former government launched a program which served to provide an alternative to the parental leave program. The program offers a subsidy ("vårdnadsbidrag") to parents who prefer to stay at home with children rather than place them in day care centers. The program empowered parents to decide for themselves how to best organize their family with pre-school age children. The current government is critical of the program, however, arguing that since men tend to have higher income than women it effectively confines the mother to stay at home and look after the children. Because local governments provide the program, an overall evaluation of it is difficult. Some data, however, suggest that only a small percentage of Swedish parents is using the subsidy. Hence, it appears the overall majority is still using the broad supply of public as well as private childcare facilities.

The red-green government is set to abolish the program. Overall, the basic difference between the Social Democratic and Green, on the one hand, and that of the non-socialist "Alliance" parties, on the other, is that the former emphasize gender equality whereas the latter emphasize freedom of choice. However, due to the stalemate in parliament since the 2014 elections, it remains to be seen if the red-green government is able to implement such a policy change.

Citation:

Eydal, Gudný 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 sufficient flexibility for both parents to work. Indeed, female employment in Denmark is among the highest in OECD countries. Comparative research also shows that men in Nordic

countries do more household work than men in many other countries. Danes regard day care and preschool facilities as an indispensable public service. The system of parental leave, in connection with childbirth, is relatively generous and men also have parental leave rights.

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

The great majority of children attend day care facilities in Denmark. In 2010, 78% of children two and under were in day care, putting Denmark on a clear first place among OECD countries, well ahead of Sweden with 51%. Ninety percent of children aged 3 to 5 attended some kind of preschool institution, which put Denmark in 11th place among OECD countries in this category. There is a user payment (means tested) for day care, but it does not cover the full cost, and the system is thus tax subsidized. There has been a large increase in the number of preschools in recent years.

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

Citation:

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

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

Estonia

Score 9

Estonia inherited a tradition of double-breadwinner families from Soviet times, when mothers typically worked full time. Despite huge social changes, this family pattern has continued, as evidenced by the high employment rate among women. Family policy has persistently been high on the political agenda due to the country's low fertility rate and labor-market needs. Estonia has one of the most generous parental benefit systems in the OECD, entitling parents to benefits equal to her/his previous salary for 435 days. The generosity of the benefit and shortage of day care facilities in some urban areas for children aged zero to two explain why child care density in this age group has been relatively low, although it has shown recent slight but continuous increases. Parents are allowed to work up to a certain limit without losing benefits, which facilitates a combination of professional and family life. In recent years, various part-time and flex-time work options have quickly expanded, providing greater opportunities for families to manage their everyday lives.

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. Family policy has been successful. For example, child poverty has practically been eradicated in Finland. Support for families has three main elements: financial support for services and family leave, child benefits, and the provision of day care services. Access to public day care is guaranteed to all children under seven years of age, and allowances are paid for every child until they turn 17. However, the Sipilä government is planning changes in the right to day care, with potentially far-reaching consequences; as of January 2016, the right to day care will be limited to part-time coverage (20 hours a week), if one of the parents is unemployed or on parental leave taking care of a younger sibling. This would increase inequalities in early-childhood education, and further weaken the position of children in socially marginalized families.

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

Citation:

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

Iceland

Score 9

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

However, as a consequence of the economic collapse, maximum state payments during parental leave were reduced from ISK 535,000 in 2008 to ISK 300,000 in

2010 and, despite increasing to ISK 370,000 in 2014 and 2015, remain 30% below the 2008 level not taking inflation into consideration. Furthermore, average wages for men are higher than for women. This discourages men from taking parental leave, especially since the 2008 economic collapse.

Citation:

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

Norway

Score 9

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

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

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

Belgium

Score 8

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

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

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

Germany

Score 8

For decades, family and work/care policies were largely uncontroversial in Germany. 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 child care contributed to women's low rate of participation in the labor market.

Today, Germany's family policy expenditure, about 2.2% of GDP in 2011, is around the OECD average (OECD Social Expenditure Database). 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 (OECD 2010; PF2.4 Parental leave replacement rates). Additionally, the number of public child-care places has increased. Particularly in the west of Germany, care services for young children had often been virtually nonexistent. In 2012, just 27.6% of children under the age of three had access to a child-care institution. However, a legal right to child care beginning at age one came into effect in August 2013. By March 2015, the ratio of children under three with access to a child-care institution had increased to 32.9% (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015a). The number of children per kindergarten teacher varies considerably between states with higher child-teacher ratios in eastern states. Increasingly, states claim that the provision of child-care services matches demand.

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

In November 2014, a new bill was passed stipulating further measures to facilitate both work and family. Parents who want to work part-time while on parental leave may apply for parental allowance Plus (ElterngeldPlus). The law is scheduled to come into effect in 2015.

In summary, these measures, in combination with an increasing shortage of qualified labor, have led to a considerable increase in women's labor market participation. While in 2000 only 57.7% of 15 to 64 year old women were employed, this measure has increased to 67.8% (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014). In the EU today, Germany (together with Denmark) ranks second only behind Sweden in terms of female labor market participation (Eurostat). However, German women are particularly often in part-time work. Although low by international standards, Germany's fertility rate has started to increase. By 2014, after three successive year-on-year increases, Germany's fertility rate had reached 1.47 children per woman (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015b).

Citation:

Bundesverfassungsgericht

(2015):

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

Eurostat:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_10&language=en

Statistisches Bundesamt (2014): Statistisches Jahrbuch, Wiesbaden.

Statistisches Bundesamt (2015a): 32,9 % der unter 3-jährigen am 1. März 2015 in Kindertagesbetreuung, Pressemitteilung vom 1. Oktober 2015.

Statistisches Bundesamt (2015b): Anstieg der Geburtenziffer 2014 auf 1,47 Kinder je Frau, Pressemitteilung vom 16. Dezember 2015.

Luxembourg

Score 8

Luxembourg's corporatist welfare regime has gradually evolved over the years to a more universal system with a high degree of defamilialization. One indicator is the shift from a predominant transfer system to transfer and service system, with specific provisions for children and the elderly. Luxembourg has positively responded to its changing demographics by adapting family policy measures. In this context, the government has pushed for policy to offer a wide range of child-rearing allowances and child-care services, such as child benefits, maternity leave, parental leave, birth and post-birth allowances. Furthermore, indirect help is also offered, such as subsidized mortgage interest rates depending on the number of children per home. In general, Luxembourg offers the highest level of child benefits within the European Union. It is today one of the four leading EU member states in terms of family benefits. It has made sustainable improvements in terms of family-friendly workplace arrangements, while gender-based job segmentation and the gender pay gap, while still existing, have decreased.

When compared internationally, Luxembourg's tax policy is family-friendly. Women's labor-market participation has increased considerably since the launch of the European Employment Strategy. In parallel, the government has invested heavily in child-care facilities, with the aim of making it easier for women to work. Yet despite a strong increase in recent years, women's workforce participation rate is still comparatively low, ranking only 15th in the EU-28 at 65.5%.

Luxembourg's public child-care institutions include the "Maisons Relais" or general daycare centers; the "éducation précoce," a third preschool year and "foyers de jour" or after-school centers. As of 2014, a total of 49,208 public child-care places were available (2009: 24,648; 2013: 46,377) for children aged three months to 12 years (or 52.2% of children aged 0 to 14 years), compared to just 7,712 places in 2009 (or 8.7% of children aged 0 to 14 years). Thus European employment policies have given Luxembourg a significant push toward broadening its child-care provisions. The 2015 budget introduced a reform of family policies aimed at administrative simplification. Furthermore, in 2016, there will be one fixed subsidy per child regardless of the family composition. Child bonuses and child allowances will be paid in one sum, €265 per child. The government also plans to cut education and maternity allowances as part of this new coherent family policy. The Chamber of Labor (CSL) has criticized this new policy, noting that a family with two children would lose 19% of its annual benefits through the 2016 reform. To compensate for this decline in financial support, the government introduced a 0.5% supplementary tax earmarked for providing free child-care facilities for one- to three-year-olds, early language support, and intercultural education for migrants.

Citation:

Bousselin, A./ Ray, J.-C. (2011), Participation des mères au marché du travail et disponibilité locale des services collectifs au Luxembourg, Esch/Alzette

Bradshaw, J./ Finch, N. (no year), A Comparison of Child Benefit Packages in 22 Countries, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report no. 174

<http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/publications/references-etudes-externes/2015/etude-tns-ilres/Etude-MEGA-2014—Rapport.pdf>

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=101>

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_10&language=en

<http://www.gouvernement.lu/4090822/14-bettel-declaration>

<http://www.guichet.public.lu/citoyens/de/actualites/2014/10/14-budget-2015/index.html>

<http://www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/regards/2014/PDF-03-2014.pdf>

<http://www.men.public.lu/catalogue-publications/systeme-educatif/rapport-activites-ministere/2014/fr.pdf>

<http://www.csl.lu/component/rubberdoc/doc/2894/raw>

Netherlands

Score 8

Family policy in the Netherlands is formally characterized by the need to recognize a child's best interests and to provide support for the family and the development of parenting skills. In practice, however, child support for families is an instrument designed to improve parents' labor-market participation. Enabling a work-family balance is less of a guiding policy principle. All Dutch families receive child allowance depending on the number of children. In 2013, child allowances were not indexed for inflation. In 2015, one in 10 Dutch children lived in poverty, leading to social exclusion due to the lack of money for items such as sports-club memberships, musical education or scouting events. According to EU-28 data, the Dutch spend approximately 32% of GDP on social protections (health care, old age, housing, unemployment, family), just 4% of which spent on family costs (compared to an EU-28 average of 8%). Day care centers for young children are not directly subsidized, but parents face steeply increasing transaction costs based on higher contributions for

higher taxable income. The government has established an extensive system of child protection through its policy of municipally based “close to home” youth and family centers (almost all of which had commenced operation by 2012), which are tasked with establishing a system of digital information related to parenting, education and health for every child. Nevertheless, parents complain about lack of access and lack of information to youth and family centers. Local governments have in some cases violated decision-making privacy rules in the allocation of youth-care assistance. In recent years, there were several scandals involving the death of very young children due to parental abuse undetected as a result of uncoordinated and/or belated interventions by youth-care organizations. Beginning in January 2009, parental leave for mothers was extended from 13 to 16 weeks. Parental leave for fathers is two days, the lowest such benefit in Europe after Ireland and Albania. In the case of divorce, parents are obliged to submit a parenting plan to the court with agreements on the division of child care tasks. This appears to have raised the share of acrimonious divorces. According to the OECD, around two-thirds of Dutch working women (including many with high levels of education attainment) choose part-time jobs, which brought down the country’s average working time to one of the lowest such levels in the OECD. Full-time female labor-force participation is hindered mainly by a high marginal effective tax burden on second earners, reflecting the withdrawal of social benefits according to family income.

Citation:

Netherlands Youth Institute (2012), Youth Policy in the Netherlands. Family and parenting support (www.youthpolicy/yp/Youth-Policy)

Nederlands Jeugd Instituut. Kennis over jeugd en opvoeding, nji.nl (consulted 22 October 2015)

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

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/vrouwenemancipatie/arbeidsparticipatie-van-vrouwen>

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2013/03/05/arbeidsparticipatie-ouders-met-jonge-kinderen-redelijk-stabiel-in-2012.html>

<http://www.elsevier.nl/Carriere/blogs/2013/5/Minister-Bussemaker-heeft-gelijk-eigen-carriere-is-goed-voor-een-vrouw-1252837W/>

<http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/arbeid-sociale-zekerheid/publicaties/arbeidsmarkt-vogelvlucht/structuur-arbeidsmarkt/2006-arbeidsmarkt-vv-participatie-art.htm>

<http://www.cpb.nl/publicatie/ex-post-analyse-effect-kinderopvangtoeslag-op-arbeidsparticipatie>

New Zealand

Score 8

The labor-market participation rate among women is comparatively high. However, women have been more susceptible to unemployment than men following the world financial crisis. At the same time, New Zealand’s fertility rate is one of the highest in the OECD area. The government’s generous family policy has contributed to this, with a number of measures enacted over recent years. However, this should not mask

the fact that the participation of women in arenas beyond the workplace, including politics (e.g., women make up only a third of all members of parliament), is still well below that of men. Paid parental leave is funded by the government and covers loss of income for up to 16 weeks, with an extension to 18 weeks from 2016 onward. In 2015, the gender pay gap in New Zealand was 11.8%, a 2% increase from the previous year.

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.

Citation:

Household Labour Force Survey: June 2014 Quarter, http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/income-and-work/employment_and_unemployment/HouseholdLabourForceSurvey_HOTPJun14qtr.aspx (accessed October 13, 2014).

New Zealand Census of Women's Participation 2012 (Auckland: Human Rights Commission 2012).

S. Collins, Number of Kiwi kids in poverty jumps by 60,000, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 2014.

UNICEF New Zealand, 2014. UNICEF Cautions Child Poverty Rates are "Stagnating" in New Zealand, <https://www.unicef.org.nz/UNICEF-cautions-child-poverty-rates-are-stagnating-in-New-Zealand> (accessed 3 November 2014).

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

Slovenia

Score 8

In Slovenia, the employment rate among women is high, and above the EU average. Part-time work is rare among women, but its incidence is growing slowly. At 75.5%, the employment rate among mothers with children under six years of age was the highest in the European Union in 2012. Reconciling parenting and employment is facilitated by a provision of child-care facilities that exceeds the EU average, and meets the Barcelona targets both for children under three years of age and between three and five years of age. At 105 working days, the maximum duration of maternity leave is near the European average. Fathers have a right to 90 calendar days of paternity leave, of which only 30 are paid. These paid days must be taken during the first six months of the child's life, while the remaining 60 unpaid days can be taken before the child is three years old. After maternity leave expires, one parent exclusively or both parents alternately have the right to take up to 260 days of unpaid leave for the care and protection of the child.

Citation:

European Union. 2015. Slovenia: A dynamic family policy to improve work-life balance. http://europa.eu/epic/countries/slovenia/index_en.htm

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 Conservative government has pledged to emphasize 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. The government has also promised to provide 38 hours of free childcare per week for every child between 3 and 4 years old.

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.

Australia

Score 7

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

The low level of child care density for the three-to-five-year age group continues to be a problem for many families in Australia. At the same time, fertility rates are much higher than in other OECD countries, with much better child care on offer. However, in the 2015 budget, the government announced a plan to spend AUD 3.5 billion over five years on child care assistance, including a new Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Replacing several existing subsidy programs, the CCS will be implemented beginning on 1 July 2017 as 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. There will be no annual cap for families earning around AUD 185,000 or less, while families earning more than this amount 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. In October 2015, the government announced a plan to reduce family-tax benefit payments to help fund the CCS.

A government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011. Under the scheme, a primary caregiver parent who was employed at least ten of the 13 months prior to the birth of the child is entitled to 18 weeks leave, paid at the rate of the national minimum wage (6.90 per week as of the end of the review period). However, individuals with an annual income of more than AUD 150,000 are ineligible. 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. In the 2015 budget, the Abbott government tightened 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.

Austria

Score 7

Both the Austrian government and mainstream public opinion accepts that the model of a traditional nuclear family, defined by stable and clearly divided gender roles, cannot be seen as the reality for all families in the second decade of the 21st century. Access for married women to the labor market is not seriously disputed. Nevertheless, the provision of child care is still overwhelmingly left to families themselves, which de facto means that primary responsibility is left to mothers. Public child care centers exist, but despite some recent improvements, fail to satisfy demand. Child care facilities for children aged zero to two are almost completely lacking outside the capital Vienna, while facilities for children aged three to five do not always manage to serve working parents' needs. Thus, the disproportionate burden borne by women within Austrian families is seen as an aspect of de facto gender discrimination. Also, Austrian welfare transfers for mothers are designed in a way that keep mothers out of the labor market, an outcome that stands in stark contrast to those associated with policies promoting allowances in kind.

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

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

Canada

Score 7

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. 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 tax credit, there is now less disincentive to leave welfare and enter the labor market.

Canada does not have a universal child-care system, and the absence of such a system may make it more difficult for some women to combine parenting and employment. As a substitute for such a child-care system, the Conservative government introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit, which currently provides families with CAD 160 per month per child under 6 years, and CAD 60 for older children, on a non-income-tested basis. As this level financial support would normally cover only a small proportion of child-care expenses, its effect on fostering female labor force participation likely is minimal. Indeed, the average net cost of child care in Canada is among the OECD’s five highest, both as a share of the average wage and as a share of the average family income. Canada is below the OECD average in terms of participation rates in formal care and preschool participation rates for children under five years of age.

In October 2014, the federal government under Conservative Prime Minister Harper implemented a parental income-splitting measure, the “Family Tax Cut.” The measure drew extensive criticism on both equity and efficiency grounds, as it primarily benefits traditional families in which one spouse is the sole income earner, and raises the marginal tax rate of the secondary earner (the lower-earning of the two spouses in a family unit) at a projected cost of CAD 2.2 billion. As the latter are

predominantly women, this measure may lead to a drop in female labor-force participation rates, as women either reduce the numbers of hours worked or drop out of the labor force entirely.

The newly (October 2015) elected Liberal government has promised to cancel the Family Tax Cut and develop a national strategy for universal early childhood education and care. The government also has indicated its intention to eliminate the Universal Child Care Benefit and considerably enrich the child tax credit.

Citation:

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

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

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.

Latvia

Score 7

Family-support policies enable women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market. In 2011, 63.9% of mothers with children under six years of age were employed, above the EU average of 58.9%. The overall employment rate among women in 2011 was 60.8%, above the EU average of 58.5%.

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

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

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

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

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

Lithuania

Score 7

Many Lithuanian families find it difficult to reconcile family and work commitments. The prevalence of poor relations, as well as frequent instances of domestic violence, divorces and single-parent families also present challenges to stable family life. The country's fertility rate is low, while the child poverty rate is relatively high. However, the employment rate among women aged 20 to 64 is relatively high, at 70.5% in 2014 as compared to 72.9% for men. Lithuania spent 1.4% of GDP on policies oriented toward families and children in 2012 (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).

Poland

Score 7

Poland's employment rate among women falls below the OECD and EU averages, and its child-care infrastructure is weak. However, the PO-PSL government put a heavy emphasis on improving women's labor-market integration, and on fostering a more balanced division of labor among the sexes. In his state-of-the-nation address at the opening of his second term, Prime Minister Tusk announced the introduction of a package of five pro-family reforms, including an extension of parental leave from three months to one year, increased public spending for the construction and maintenance of crèches, and a cap on kindergarten fees. Prime Minister Kopacz has stuck to this course, and has announced plans to further expand public spending for child care in 2015, additionally making all parents, including students, farmers and the unemployed, eligible for support. A debate on how to combine parenthood and work emerged again when the opposition called for a referendum on increasing the school entry age from six to seven to be in October 2015. However, the referendum was not held because Prime Minister Kopacz and her majority in parliament did not support that motion.

Portugal

Score 7

The review period featured a modest expansion in paternity and maternity rights through changes to the Labor Law (Código do Trabalho) approved in September 2015, the most significant being the extension of paternity leave from 10 to 15 working days in the first month after birth. These changes also seek to increase parental flexibility (e.g., through teleworking), although the actual impact of these measures will depend largely on how they are implemented.

The review period also saw stabilization in the birth rate after a significant decline in 2011 – 2013. The birth rate in 2014 was identical to 2013, and there was even a slight increase (2.8%) in the number of births in the first six months of 2015. However, these changes appear to be driven more by the recent economic recovery than by changes to family policy. Moreover, they do not yet ameliorate the difficulties presented by Portugal's aging population, as the country still showed the EU's lowest birth rate in 2014, at 7.9 births per 1,000 persons.

Citation:

See Diário da República I, série-No 170 - 1 September 2015, Lei No 120/2015.

Eurostat, "Crude birth rate per 1 000 persons," available online from: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/births-fertility-data/main-tables#>

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 postsecondary education. As a result, effective child-care costs as a percentage of income were lower in the United States than in most OECD countries, and for low-income single mothers, much lower.

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

Bulgaria

Score 6

Family-policy debates in Bulgaria have focused on parental-leave benefits rather than on supporting mothers' ability to work. While the share of children aged three to six enrolled in kindergartens has increased by over ten percentage points in the last decade, public child care facilities are still less developed than in most other OECD and EU countries. Labor-market discrimination against pregnant women and mothers of small children is common, undermining the objective of providing free choice for women. However, Bulgarian grandparents are traditionally very involved in caring for children, which for some parents is an effective social-network mechanism reducing the need for state involvement. Moreover, the parental-leave

legislation favors mothers' labor-market integration by guaranteeing mothers a right to return to their job even after two years of parental leave, and by allowing fathers to take parental leave as well.

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 does not exceed the OECD average. The level of child-care provision declined significantly during the 1990s, and there has been no significant improvement since, even though the growing number of single mothers – more than 45% of children are now born outside of wedlock in the Czech Republic – has further increased the demand for child care. Child-care provision for children up to two years of age is the second lowest among OECD countries. The enrollment rate in formal child care for children three to five years of age is within the third quartile of OECD countries. The measures adopted in September 2014 to promote the establishment of so-called children's groups, special child-care arrangements for which lower standards apply, have remained controversial and have not shown much effect.

Israel

Score 6

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

Israeli women's share in the workforce increased substantially during the past 30 years. From just a third of the workforce, women currently make up 47% of all employees. A 2014 study shows that employment rates for women ages 25 to 44 are almost unaffected by motherhood. The gap was even smaller for women with higher education, as education offers more access and financial reward for working mothers. This positive trend is more prevalent among Jewish working women, who are almost equal in share to Jewish working men. Arab women still account for only 29% of the Israeli Arab workforce and ultra-orthodox Jewish women also lag behind, although both sectors show gradual improvement and receive attention as part of a general economic policy that aims to expand social inclusion in the labor market.

Wage gaps are still salient between men and women. Since many women work part-time or hold temporary jobs in order to sustain their traditional role as the main caregivers in the household, the average monthly wage for women in 2006 was 66%

of the average monthly wage of men. This gender gap is smaller for hourly wages but still prevalent, with women making 84% that of men. Studies continue to point to ongoing discrimination against women in the business and public sectors. A pioneering report published in 2013 showed that working mothers in Israel lose 5% of their income for each childbirth, while the men's income increases. Several studies have also pointed to the lack of minority-oriented social-policy tools, which are needed to address the unique problems of ultra-orthodox and Arab women.

In 2010, a law was introduced to elongate maternity leave to 14 paid weeks and 26 weeks total. However, it was not expanded to include working fathers, thus reinforcing traditional gender roles. In recent years, the need for further subsidies for daycare and after school activities gained prominence as a middle class issue, and a plan to introduce subsidized care for children 0-5 was launched. However, reports claim that it is still largely underfunded and does not offer sustainable relief for working mothers and young families.

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http://www.ruach-nashit.org.il/docs/%D7%94%D7%AA%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%AA_%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%9E%D7%93%D7%9F_%D7%A9%D7%9C_%D7%A0%D7%A9%D7%99%D7%9D_%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C.pdf (Hebrew).

Malta

Score 6

With a difference of approximately 30% between female and male employment rates, Malta has the lowest rate of women in employment in the European Union. Although female participation in the informal economy (which accounts for 25% of GDP) may render this inaccurate. A breakdown of activity rates by age showed that the number of women active in the labor market was comparable to that of men aged

between 15 and 24. The gap widens in subsequent age brackets. In recent years, new workplace policies have been designed to try and ensure that women already employed retain their jobs, and those wishing to return to their former positions can do so. These include maternity leave; parental leave; paternity leave; responsibility leave; adoption leave; leave to foster children; work on a reduced time-table; five-year unpaid leave; and in 2011, the introduction of financial incentives for mothers returning to work. In 2014, these provisions were strengthened by the introduction of free child-care centers, breakfast and after-school clubs. The last census shows that 9% of families are single parent families. Despite recent government measures, a large proportion of single parent families are living in poverty, while only of single parents are in full employment. At the end of 2014, the government launched a consultation process to develop a parenting policy targeting struggling families.

These policies, however, are more likely to be found within the public sector than in the private sector. In Malta, 70% of businesses are family owned with only 4% to 5% of enterprises employing 100 or more people. Nonetheless, recent government endeavors aim to address this shortcoming. For instance, the government has recently set up the Maternity Leave Trust Fund to which all employers shall be contributing 0.3% of each employee's salary. These measures are enabling more women to enter the job market with the female participate rate increasing from 36.4% in 2005 to 52.1% in 2014.

Citation:

Labor Force Survey, fourth Quarter 2012, National Office of Statistics, Malta.

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European Semester Thematic Fiche – Labour Market Participation of Women p.9

European Semester Thematic Fiche – Undeclared Work p.9

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National Statistics Office, Key Indicators on the Labour Market: 2005-2014, News Release 124/2015

Malta Today 23/1/2015 majority of unemployed single parents wary of childcare services

Malta Today 28/10/2014 positive parenting policy launched for consultation

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 fulfil actual labor-market requirements, given that nursery opening times often do not coincide with parents' long working hours. Families' abilities to find day care for their children depends to a great degree on their economic backgrounds, as wealthier families normally pay for private

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

Citation:

http://www.dipres.gob.cl/594/articles-121592_Ley_de_Presupuestos_2015.pdf

Croatia

Score 5

The employment rate among women is 10 percentage points lower than the employment rate among men, and lower than in almost all other EU countries. In 2014, the female employment rate was 50% compared to 59.6% in the EU-27. Moreover, the female employment rate in Croatia was lower than it had been in 2009 by 3.7 percentage points. Maternity pay is relatively generous, while child-care facilities and extended-day programs at school are limited. Only 11% of children aged under three years receive any formal child care per week compared to 28% in the EU-27. From the age three up to the minimum school age, only 47% of children receive any formal child care, compared to 82% in the EU-27. Child-care coverage is especially poor in areas with low employment, which reflects the inability of local government to pay for services. Women with children face challenges within the labor market. Discrimination by employers in some segments of the private sector against younger women is widespread, because it is assumed that the women will eventually require maternity leave. This practice is technically forbidden by anti-discrimination legislation, but is weakly enforced due to weak unions and poor enforcement by government agencies. The new Family Law adopted in June 2014 did not address these issues, focusing instead on expanding the legal rights of young people and on clarifying child-custody issues.

Greece

Score 5

Family policy is associated with the position of women in the labor market – a position which puts women at a disadvantage. The law says that private employers should grant women maternity leave and hire them back nine months after giving birth. The situation is completely different for women employed in the public sector. Female public employees are guaranteed their jobs following maternity leave. They are also granted maternity leave without fear that upon returning to their job they may be allocated to a subordinate job post or suffer wage or salary cuts, as is the case of women employed in the private sector.

Because of the crisis, since 2011 there have been cuts in government social expenditure which have taken their toll on allowances for maternity leave.

Nowadays, for the last six out of the nine months of maternity leave, women in the private sector must survive on the minimum wage (€80 gross per month).

Moreover, family allowances in Greece are small: they amount to €40-€50 per child per month. As Eurostat data shows, the risk of poverty or social exclusion for children under 18 has increased from 28.7% in 2010 to 35.4% in 2012. In 2011, government expenditure on child and family benefits amounted to only 1.8% (EU-27: 2.2%). State-owned child care facilities managed by municipalities remain underfunded. As such, it is unsurprising that Greece continues to belong to the group of advanced economies in which child poverty is quite pronounced.

Some improvement has nonetheless been achieved in family and child policy even as the economic crisis was evolving. First, the logic in the distribution of child allowances has changed. In the past, the bulk of family-related allowances were channeled to families with three or more children, regardless of family income level. A new law passed in 2013 provided a yearly allowance of €500 per child (income-tested allowance) to families with three or more children.

However, in the meantime, the entire logic of family and child policy had changed. Based on a law passed in 2012, a new policy imposed income-tested thresholds for families receiving child allowances. The new policy has expanded the pool of potential recipients of child allowances, as it does not exclusively favor families with three or more children, but instead families with children in need.

Second, since August 2013, programs designed to fight unemployment have prioritized jobless households, unemployed, long-term unemployed and young people. An example is the government's "short-term public work program." In March 2015, the new Syriza-ANEL coalition passed a law on the "humanitarian crisis" which offered social assistance in kind and in cash to poor households. However, the total amount which the government earmarked for this assistance (€200 million) was clearly incommensurate to the size of the problem. Overall, current policies reflect an improvement over pre-crisis policies and the lack of policies when the crisis first erupted.

Citation:

The new child allowance was instituted in 2012 by Law 4093/2012. The special allowance for families with three or more children was reformed in 2013 by Law 4141/2013. Information provided by Manos Matsaganis, Athens University of Economics and Business.(18.05.2013). Additional statistical data provided by the European Commission in the website http://europa.eu/epic/countries/greece/index_en.htm. The Syriza-ANEL government's law on the "humanitarian crisis" was law 4320/2105.

Japan

Score 5

According to OECD statistics, Japan has the group's second-highest gender gap 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 beyond. Although several policy measures aimed at addressing these issues have been implemented since the 1990s, many challenges remain.

The LDP-led government claims to support women in the labor force, and has made some effort to improve child-care provision in order to improve the conditions of working mothers. It has introduced several measures in this area, including one intended to improve child-care facilities, and in 2015 a governmental Children and Childrearing Headquarters began work. Prime Minister Abe has set a goal of having 30% of all company managers in the country be women; however, this statement lacks a clear time horizon or specific measures that would enable it to be achieved. Large enterprises are required to produce plans for achieving the goal, but the policy lacks clear rules or sanction mechanisms.

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

Citation:

Atsushi Kodera, Housekeeper import plan still dusty, Japan Times, 27 October 2015, p. 3

Mexico

Score 5

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. The National Action Party presidential candidate in the 2012 presidential elections was a female professional. In addition, educated women are increasingly participating in the labor market and quite a large number of professional people are women. Abortion is now legal in several Mexican states.

On the other hand, gender equality is progressing much slower among Mexico's poor, disadvantaged groups. 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 the dysfunction in public services like

health, education and transportation.

The exceptionally high number of disappeared women in the northern state of Chihuahua, many of whom are presumed to have been murdered, has led to the international use of “femicide” to describe this form of disappearance. Many of these disappeared women would have been the victims of sex crimes, but many more are likely to have been victims of family honor killings.

Romania

Score 5 Romanian parental-leave benefits are relatively generous. Parents can claim parental leave for up to two years, and during the period of parental leave— and for six months afterwards – they have job security and cannot be dismissed. However, overall spending on children and families has remained low. One of the consequences of this low spending is that child-care density has been low. Combined with the shortage of part-time work, the shortage of affordable child care (especially full-time day care) creates a significant obstacle for women attempting to combine parenting and employment. As a result, the total fertility rate has stagnated at 1.4. The problems with combining parenting with participation in the labor market might even be visible in emigration trends. Unlike in the 2000s, women now represent the majority of out-going Romanians.

Slovakia

Score 5 In Slovakia, traditional notions of the family are still fairly strong. Mothers of children under two years of age rarely work, the employment rate for women (25-49) with children below six years of age reaches a mere 40%, and the gender employment gap for young women (20-29) is among the highest in the EU. Working women face an enormous double burden of both professional and domestic responsibilities. This situation is reinforced by the low incidence of part-time employment, income tax splitting and the relatively long duration of parental leave. Child-care facilities are limited and have not kept up with the increase in birth rates. Child care for children under three years of age in particular continues to be virtually unavailable. Larger towns have insufficient kindergarten slots. Public spending for families is slightly below the OECD average, with a high share devoted to cash benefits, and low shares for children’s services and tax-related benefits. The Fico government has failed to address these problems. Instead of expanding child-care facilities with a view to facilitating women’s labor-market participation, it has focused on increasing cash benefits for families.

South Korea

Score 5

South Korea has the lowest fertility rate in the OECD. The government has not been very effective in enabling women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market, which helps explain the low labor-market participation rate. The traditional Confucian family values that view women as mothers and housewives remain influential. High housing prices and high costs of nursing and education are the most important factors in young couples' decision not to have children. In recent years, the government has been alarmed by the dramatic drop in fertility, and has introduced or considered various policies such as free child care services and flexible work hours for working women. Policies seeking to help women combine work and parenting have been a priority for President Park. However, most policies adopted so far have proven to be inadequate in helping women combine employment and parenthood. Recent conflicts between central and local government regarding fiscal responsibility for a free public kindergarten system have suspended kindergarten services in many local areas.

Cultural and socioeconomic factors, such as a gender pay gap that is the highest among OECD countries as well as pervasive social immobility, discourage women from entering and reentering into the workforce. As a result, the employment rate for female graduates is lower than for male graduates, despite similar numbers of male and female college 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 only compulsory education. The 2013 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum – which measures the gender gap with respect to economic, political, educational, and health-based criteria – ranked South Korea 117 out of 142 countries, a decrease from rank 111 (out of 136) in 2013 and 92 (out of 115) in 2006.

There have also been more controversial reactions to the low fertility rate. For example, the government has started cracking down on abortions, which are illegal in South Korea but had been tolerated since the 1970s as a means of reducing the birth rate.

Citation:

New York Times, 5 January 2010

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

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

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

Spain

Score 5 Public spending on social services designed to support women in combining parenting with employment, never ambitious in Spain to start with, were cut back considerably further as a result of the economic crisis and the associated budgetary constraints. The country's very low fertility rate is one partial outcome of the timidity of Spanish family-support policies.

Traditional family patterns (in which mothers focus on household work and child care duties) have changed in Spain, but this has resulted more from slow sociological developments than from any explicit family-support policy. Moreover, traditional gender roles that remain deeply rooted among Spaniards keep women in an unequal position. Although the Ministry of Employment has sought to force employers to comply with non-discrimination legislation, there is still a wage and pension-value gap of close to 20% between men and women. Women's labor-market participation rate is also much lower than that of men. In late 2015, the employment rate among women was approximately 40%, as compared to 50% among men.

The moratorium in implementing the National System of Dependency (governing care for dependent people) has made it more difficult for women to remove themselves from the burden of family care. The paternity-leave program introduced in the mid-2000s is not widely used, and further measures are needed to facilitate a culture of shared responsibility for child care. A corporate culture of "presenteeism" within the workplace does not help.

Subsidies to families have also been significantly cut back. However, the government implemented a tax reform in 2015 to benefit large families (i.e., three or more children), in parallel with taxpayer deductions amounting to €100 or €200 per month depending on the number of children. The government also approved a Comprehensive Plan to Support Families for the 2015 – 2017 period. Announcing the policy, Minister for Social Services and Equality José Antonio Alonso emphasized that "the family is an issue that affects everyone and hence it is a primary policy and a priority for the government, and this must pervade all our actions in a cross-cutting manner."

Citation:

Government approves Comprehensive Plan to Support Families 2015-2017
www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/councilministers/Paginas/2015/20150514-councilministers.aspx

Eurobarómetro especial 428, on Gender Equality http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf

Cyprus

Score 4

A lack of adequate family support policies leads to, among other things, a low rate of enrollment in nurseries and child-care centers. Combining motherhood with employment is difficult in Cyprus, which may also account for the country's low birth rates (1.144%, 2014 estimated). However, the rate of employment among women between 25 and 54 is high (74% in Q2 2014). Families seek care for children five years old and under primarily in the private sector, and in a small number of community centers under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor.

Solutions sought to compensate for the lack of adequate state policies and facilities for mothers with dependent children include help from the extended family. Child care provided by family members, in particular grandparents, has brought about beneficial effects, including a reduced child-poverty rate. Kindergartens, in which more than 80% of children are enrolled, represent additional family expenses. Further difficulties for parents and especially young mothers relate to the need to provide transportation for their children, as the public-transportation infrastructure remains largely insufficient despite recent improvements. The establishment of full-day primary schooling in many communities has helped some families, but more is needed to resolve problems.

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

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1. Demographic report 2013,
<http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/D1D141B22F756140C2257DB3003B1A44?OpenDocument&sub=1&sel=1&e=&print>

Hungary

Score 4

Family policy has been a rhetorical focus for the Orbán governments, but has been understood in a very traditional manner. It has aimed at stabilizing traditional family models rather than at improving opportunities for women to combine parenting and employment. The second Orbán government introduced a new family-based tax allowance and extended the maximum period for parental leave from two to three years, thereby luring women away from the labor market. In 2014, the family tax allowance was changed to a so-called family contribution allowance, making it possible for families to use any remainder of the family tax allowance not utilized for decreasing the personal income tax to decrease their health or pension insurance contributions. Despite its pro-family rhetoric, the Orbán government cut family allowances by 4% in the budget for 2015. In the period under review, child

starvation has become a major issue. Initially, all parliamentary parties agreed to establish September 26 as the day of the fight against child starvation and introduce the adoption of a new income support program. In November 2015, however, Fidesz eventually turned against the new program, arguing that the government had already done everything to prevent child starvation.

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 “*quoziente familiare*,” which would have divided taxable income by the number of family members. The crisis has left little space for such initiatives, which would strain the state’s budget. As a result, only limited subsidies for families with children in the lowest income brackets have been introduced. Because of the economic crisis, the levels of children living in poverty are above average.

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

Men would also benefit from an extension of state support for families, as they would be better able to assist in their children’s development.

Switzerland

Score 4 In international comparison, Swiss family policy does relatively little to enable women to enter the workforce. In a recent analysis examining the ability to reconcile work and family, looking at data from 2005, Switzerland scored lowest among 21 OECD nations. The new federal law providing subsidy payments to families, which took effect in January 2009, has done little to change the country's ranking in international comparison; nor has it changed the fact of substantial cantonal variation, 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 to 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 amount of child-care facilities. As is virtually always true in Switzerland, there are substantial cantonal variations. The canton of Ticino has a very generous family policy aimed at helping mothers to reconcile work and family; other cantons (and their municipalities) fail to offer any substantial help such as child-care facilities on a broad scale. 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 jobs. 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.

In March 2013, Swiss citizens rejected a proposal that would have added an article on balancing work and family life to the constitution. The proposal would have obliged the federal government and cantons to provide child-care facilities in sufficient quantity to enable mothers to continue working if they desired to do so.

Turkey

Score 4 In July 2015, female population has amounted to 29.3 million, and of this population 9.5 million women formed the labor force. Since 8.3 million women were employed, the unemployed amounted to 1.2 million. While the labor force-participation rate for

women amounted to 32.4%, the employment rate for women was 28.3%, and the unemployment rate amounted to 12.5%. Women's rate of participation in the labor market thus remains low, far below the EU average.

Among women in the labor force, 34% are employed in agriculture, 14.6% in industry and 51.4% in services. About 48% of working women are not registered with any social security institution. In this respect, there are both sectoral and regional disparities. Paid maternity leave is 16 weeks.

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

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

Citation:

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