



Families Report

Family Policy

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2019

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Indicator

Family Policy

Question

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

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

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

Estonia

Score 10

Estonia inherited a tradition of double-breadwinner families from Soviet times, when mothers typically worked full time. Despite huge social changes, this family pattern has continued, as evidenced by the high female employment rate. Family policy has persistently been high on the political agenda due to the country's low fertility rate and labor market needs. Estonia has one of the most generous parental benefit systems in the OECD, entitling parents to benefits equal to her/his previous salary for 435 days. This system, in place since 2004, has criticized due to its rigidity and negative impact on women's labor market participation, and was revised in 2018. The amendments have extended the period in which parents can take parental leave from one and a half years to three years, and parental leave can now be divided over several periods according to the parents' choice. Another important change was an effective increase in fathers' parental role, as the joint parental leave period was extended to two months.

France

Score 10

There is a long and consensual tradition of support for families, going back to the 1930s. The comprehensive policy mix which has developed since then has been successful in providing child care, financial support, parental leave and generous fiscal policies (income is not taxed individually but in each family unit, dividing up the total income by the number of people in a family). From 2019, nursery schooling will be mandatory from the age of 3, which strengthen the inclusion of immigrant children. In addition, families using the child care support at home benefit from rebates on the social costs involved. These policies have been effective. Not only is

the birth rate in France one of the highest in Europe (despite a slight fall from an average of 2.0 births per woman between 2006 and 2014 to 1.88 births per woman in 2017), but also the percentage of women integrated in the labor market compares favorably to the European leaders (Scandinavian countries) in this domain. However, faced with the need to reduce the budget deficit, the Hollande government has scuttled the French welfare state's "principle of universality" (i.e., social benefits for all, related to the number of children per family, without consideration of income and wealth), reducing the child allowance for families over an income ceiling. This highly contested measure has introduced a more realistic approach to policymaking, beyond the legalistic and formalistic principles which have prevailed since the Second World War.

Sweden

Score 10

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

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

Citation:

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

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

The great majority of children attend day care facilities in Denmark. In 2014, 66% of children aged two and under were in day care, the highest rate in the OECD. About 95% of children aged three to five attended some kind of preschool institution. There is a user payment (means tested) for day care, but it does not cover the full cost, and the system is thus tax subsidized. There has been a large increase in the number of preschools in recent years.

Danish family policy is continuously debated. A primary policy aim is to facilitate labor market participation for women. Many women want to be in work, not only for financial reasons, but also for career reasons. Recently, concerns have been raised on the quality and flexibility of day care due to strained finances in the municipalities.

Citation:

OECD, 2016, Enrolment in childcare and preschool, OECD – Social Policy Division – Directorate of Employment, Labor and Social Affairs, https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_2_Enrolment_childcare_preschool.pdf (accessed 7 December 2017).

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

Iceland

Score 9

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

However, as a consequence of the economic collapse, maximum state payments during parental leave were reduced from ISK 535,000 in 2008 to ISK 300,000 in 2010 per month and, despite increasing to ISK 370,000 in 2014 and 2015. In January 2018, the amount was almost restored in nominal terms (ISK 520,000) but not in real terms as prices rose significantly after the 2008 economic collapse. Furthermore, average wages for men are higher than for women. This discourages men from taking parental leave, especially since the 2008 economic collapse. Following the raise in 2018, however, this may be changing.

Citation:

Gender Equality in Iceland 2017. The Center for Gender Equality (Jafnréttisstofa). http://faedingarorlof.is/files/Upph%C3%A6%C3%B0ir%20f%C3%A6%C3%B0ingarorlofs%20og%20f%C3%A6%C3%B0ingarstyrks%202018_826789392.pdf. Accessed 22 December 2018.

Luxembourg

Score 9

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

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

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

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

Yet, despite a strong increase in recent years, the rate of women's workforce participation remains comparatively low at 65.1%, compared to an EU average of 65.3%, with Luxembourg ranked 16th out of 28 EU member states.

Luxembourg's public child care institutions include the "maisons relais," general daycare centers; the "éducation précoce," a third preschool year and "foyers de jour," after-school centers. Since August 2016, there will be one fixed allowance per child, regardless of the family composition. Child bonuses and child allowances will be paid in one sum, €265 per child with an increase from the ages of 6 to 12 years. Since 2017, as part of a new coherent family policy, the government offers free child care facilities (20 hours per week), early language support and intercultural education. These structures are now more strictly controlled by officials and must provide qualified staff for multilingual offerings.

Citation:

"Employment rate by sex." Eurostat, www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_10&language=en. Accessed 23 Oct. 2018.

"Women." Webseite Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. <http://luxembourg.public.lu/en/le-grand-duche-se-presente/population/femmes/index.html>. Accessed 23 Oct. 2018.

Norway

Score 9

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

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

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

Slovenia

Score 9

The employment rate among women in Slovenia is above the EU average, and the employment rate of mothers with children under six is among the highest in the EU. Reconciling parenting and employment is facilitated by the fact that Slovenia provides childcare facilities that exceed the EU average and meets the Barcelona targets both for children under three years of age and between three and five years of age. Over the past ten years the number of children enrolled at nursery schools has increased by about 50%. While the incidence of part-time work is growing slowly, most women work full time. The New Parental and Family Benefit Act that came into force in 2014 extended the right to part-time work when having two children from six years of age until the end of first grade of primary school. At 105 working days, the maximum duration of maternity leave is near the European average. In addition, parents can take up to 260 days of parental leave, part of which is paid. The 2014 act also included a gradual reform of the additional, non-transferable paternity leave which was completed in the course of 2017. On the one hand, the overall number of days of paternity leave was reduced from 90 to 30. On the other, the number of days with full salary compensation was doubled from 15 to 30, so as to

make taking paternity leave more attractive to men. In March 2017, a new Family Code replaced the old one from 1976. The amendment has aimed at improving legal certainty in decisions on marital and family disputes and at safeguarding the good of the child in standard as well as non-standard families.

Citation:

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

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

Belgium

Score 8

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

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

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

Citation:

<https://kids.partena.be/content/default.asp?PageID=39>

https://finances.belgium.be/fr/particuliers/famille/personnes_a_charge/enfants#q3

Eurostat – EU-LFS microdata

Canada

Score 8

The labor-force participation rate for women with children all under six years of age in Canada is high by international standards. According to Statistics Canada, the number of two-income families nearly doubled over the past decades: in 2015, 69% of couples with a child under 16 years of age have two working parents. In recent years, one key policy has been the increase in the child tax credit, which has reduced the barriers associated with the so-called welfare wall. In the past, when single parents, mostly women, left welfare, they lost all income benefits for their children. With the integration of the welfare system with the universal, income-tested child benefits, there is now less disincentive to leave welfare and enter the labor market. In 2016, the federal government significantly increased the level of child benefits and in 2017 indexed benefits to inflation.

Canada does not have a universal childcare system, although some provinces have taken steps to implement their own, such as Nova Scotia's pre-primary education system and most notably Quebec's CAD \$7 per day daycare scheme. The absence of a universal childcare system may make it more difficult for some women to combine parenting and employment. The average net cost of childcare in Canada is among the OECD's highest, both as a share of the average wage and as a share of the average family income. Canada is below the OECD average in terms of participation rates in formal care and preschool participation rates for children under five years of age. When elected in 2015, the Trudeau government promised to develop a national strategy for childcare and early childhood education. However, the government has not delivered on this promise so far.

The 2018 federal budget emphasized gender equity with one of the central goals being to increase female participation in the labor force. The budget introduced a new Employment Insurance Parental Sharing Benefit, which will allow parents to add five weeks at up to 55% of their average weekly insurable earnings and a new parental leave option for non-birth parents on a "use-it-or-lose-it" basis to encourage mothers to remain in the workforce or rejoin the labor market earlier. Yet, many stakeholders noted the continued absence of a national childcare strategy: no additional funding was allocated to building a national child care system, which is widely seen as the most effective way to remove barriers to women's participation in the workforce.

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>

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

Federal budget 2018, *Equality + Growth: A Strong Middle Class*, retrieved from <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2018/docs/plan/budget-2018-en.pdf>

Finland

Score 8

Family policy in Finland adheres to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other international agreements. Finland's family-policy programs aim to create a secure environment for children and support parents' physical and mental resources. By and large, family policy has been successful. For example, child poverty has practically been eradicated. Support for families has three main elements: financial support for services and family leave, child benefits, and the provision of day care services. Access to public day care is guaranteed to all children under seven years of age, and allowances are paid for every child until they turn 17. However, in recent years, as parts of structural reform packages, the Sipilä government has implemented changes in the right to day care, with potentially far-reaching consequences. Limiting the right to day care to part-time coverage may increase inequalities in early-childhood education and weaken the position of children from socially marginalized backgrounds.

Family policy also remains somewhat problematic with regard to gender equality. Although the employment rate and, in particular, full-time employment rate among women is among the highest in the European Union, family policies have still not fully solved the challenge of combining parenting and employment. The fertility rate has fallen for seven years in a row, reaching an all-time low of 1.49 children per woman in 2017. Although the number of fathers that take paternity leave has somewhat increased, child care responsibilities still fall predominately on women. Also, the home care allowance of up to three years encourages Finnish women to leave the labor market after having a child for a longer period than women in many other countries. Comparative examinations of Nordic family policies suggest that family policies in Finland have not developed to fully match the more flexible family policy arrangements in, for example, Norway and Sweden. The Sipilä government's plans for a major family policy reform failed. The aim of the proposed reform had been to promote a more equal distribution of parental leave between fathers and mothers, and advance mothers' labor market participation. The proposed reform failed because the government could not achieve a consensus. In general, evidence has shown that family-centered thinking is increasing among Finnish adults and within Finnish culture more generally.

Citation:

Katja Repo, "The Contradiction of Finnish Childcare Policies", www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt;
Mia Hakovirta and Minna Rantalaaho, "Family Policy and Shared Parenting in Nordic Countries", *European Journal of Social Security*, Vol. 13 No 2, pp. 247-266, 2011.
https://www.stat.fi/til/synt/2017/synt_2017_2018-04-27_tie_001_en.html

Germany

Score 8

For decades, a broad consensus among political parties and major societal actors aligned the German system paradigmatically toward the male breadwinner model. Universal family benefits, incentives tailored to the needs of married couples and single-earner families, and a shortage of public childcare contributed to women's low rate of participation in the labor market.

Today, this traditional approach has been substantially corrected. Parental leave, previously short and lacking adequate compensation, has been extended. Paternity leave has been introduced and promoted. Today, a parent's net income while on leave is on average just 25% less than their net income prior to leave. Additionally, the number of public childcare places has increased. A legal right to childcare beginning at age one came into effect in August 2013. In March 2017, the proportion of children aged under three with access to a childcare institution was 33.1%, a small decrease of 0.4% in comparison to March 2016, although the absolute number increased. In June 2017, the German Bundestag voted to increase the number of daycare places by 110,000 by 2020 with a financial commitment of €1.13 billion.

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 2005 only 59.6% of 15- to 64-year-old women were employed, this has increased to about 70% by 2017 – 10 percentage points above the OECD average. In the European Union, only Sweden and Latvia have a higher female employment rate. However, 37% of women in Germany are working part-time, which is higher than the OECD average of 25%.

Citation:

Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2018):

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/familie/kita-und-hort-zahl-der-betreuten-kinder-waechst/126700>

Destatis (2018): Arbeitsmarkt auf einen Blick, Deutschland und Europa

https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Arbeitsmarkt/Erwerbstaetige/BroschuereArbeitsmarktBlick010022189004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

OECD 2018:

<https://www.oecd.org/germany/Gender2017-DEU-de.pdf>

New Zealand

Score 8

While the labor force participation rate for women is increasing, it remains below the OECD average. The gender wage gap is narrowing. Participation of women in the labor force, including business and politics, is still well below that of men. Family violence remains a problem in New Zealand. In September 2018, the so-called Family and Whānau Violence Legislation Bill passed its second reading in parliament with unanimous support, although the bill had not been passed and

enacted by the end of the review period. In July 2018, implementation of a new Families Package (signed into law in December 2017) began. Its provisions include: increasing the rate of paid parental leave from 22 to 26 weeks from July 2020; the introduction of a Winter Energy Payment for beneficiaries including pensioners; a NZD60-per-week payment to low and middle-income families with babies and toddlers; reinstating the Independent Earner Tax Credit; and increasing benefits for orphans, unsupported children and foster careers. When the package is fully implemented in 2020, it is estimated that 384,000 families will benefit.

Citation:

Stuff. 2018. Govt's families package takes effect: 'Step in the right direction.' <https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/360801/govt-s-families-package-takes-effect-step-in-the-right-direction>
New Zealand Parliament. 2017. Record number of women MPs in New Zealand Parliament. <https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/features/record-number-of-women-in-new-zealand-parliament>.
New Zealand Herald. 2018. Amendments proposed to Family and Whānau Violence Bill. 12 September 2018. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12123619.

United Kingdom

Score 8

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

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

Cuts in welfare spending, associated with the central policy of reducing the budget deficit, have negatively affected some core family policy measures, especially for single mothers who rely disproportionately on social benefits. The difficulties around the introduction of Universal Credit have had negative effects on some families, not least by lowering support for larger families.

Citation:

National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme

<https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/universal-credit/>

Australia

Score 7

The high cost of child care for children not yet at school continues to be a problem for many families in Australia. However, in the 2015 budget, the government announced a plan to spend AUD 3.5 billion over five years on child care assistance, including a new child care subsidy (CCS) that commenced on 1 July 2018. Replacing several existing subsidy programs, the CCS is a single subsidy based on family income. Families earning AUD 66,958 or less receive a subsidy of 85% of their child care fees. The subsidy rate gradually declines as family income increases and is zero for families with incomes in excess of AUD 351,248. For families with incomes in excess of AUD 186,958, there is an annual cap on the subsidy of AUD 10,190 per child. Eligibility for the CCS is 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. Despite taxpayer-funded subsidies for child care, costs have risen for parents, growing by 48.7% in real terms (or 6.8% annually) from 2011 to 2017.

Following large increases in family payments over the early 2000s, in recent years these payments have been scaled back. In 2014, the “baby bonus,” a tax-free payment of up to AUD 5,000 payable on birth or adoption of a child, was abolished. In 2016, the government managed to pass some reductions to family payments through the Senate, including reducing payments to families where the youngest child is between the ages of 13 and 18, and to families with a household income over AUD 80,000 per year. Additional minor reductions in family payments were announced in the 2017 budget.

A government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011, providing 18 weeks of government-funded paid leave at the level of the full-time national minimum wage. 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.

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

Citation:

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

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

Eugenie Joseph: Why childcare is not affordable, The Centre for Independent Studies. August 2018. Available at <https://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2018/08/rr37.pdf>

Austria

Score 7

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

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

In fall 2017, the Austrian Constitutional Court decided that the institution of marriage (as it is understood in the Austrian legal system) cannot be limited to marriage between a woman and a man. This has been a breakthrough decision similar to developments in other countries. Despite highly emotional debates in the past, the more conservative side of the Austrian public (including the Roman Catholic Church) has accepted this decision without much of protest. Activists from different NGOs have welcomed this decision as an end to the legal discrimination of same-sex partnerships.

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

Besides some rhetoric (which can be called “neo-conservative”) the ÖVP-FPÖ government has not – at least not yet – changed the basic elements of the Austrian policy toward families.

Citation:

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

Ireland

Score 7

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

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

Child benefits, which had been significantly reduced during the crisis, will rise to €135 per child per month in 2016 and €140 in 2017. This will still be significantly below the level in 2009. Also, the benefit does not vary depending on whether the mother is employed outside the home.

Female labor force participation is still quite low and has not improved significantly in recent years. This is partly due to the relative lack of affordable pre-school nursery care.

Israel

Score 7

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

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

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

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

Wage gaps between men and women remain. Since many women work part-time or hold temporary jobs in order to sustain their traditional role as the main household caregivers, the average monthly wage for women in 2017 was between 32% to 47% lower than the average for men (depending on the method of calculation). The gender gap is smaller but still significant for hourly wages, with women earning an average hourly rate 15.1% lower than that of men. Taub Center’s research “Division of Labor: Wage Gaps between Women and Men in Israel” shows that the wage gap is mainly driven by the position and scope of women’s jobs, and differences in occupation, with a much smaller proportion of the gap attributable to direct discrimination.

In the beginning of 2017, the civil service commissioner issued a working regulation requiring all ministries to adopt a “family friendly” arrangement under which meetings would not be held in the afternoon twice a week in order to support

workers who wished to dedicate more time to their families. Moreover, the commission's strategic plan placed special emphasis on promoting a workplace ethic of gender equality.

Citation:

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Latvia

Score 7

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

A maximum of 112 calendar days of maternity leave can be taken, with mothers receiving 80% of their average wage. Paternity benefits are paid for a maximum 10 days at 80% of fathers' average wage, with paternity leave taken within two months of the child's birth.

Furthermore, parental leave of up to 18 months per child can be used by either parent prior to the child's eighth birthday. Parents with three or more children are entitled to three extra days of paid leave per year, as well as other social benefits such as reduced fares on public transport. As of 2017, 10 days of parental leave are available to parents of adopted children.

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:

1. European Commission (2016), Employment Rates by Sex, Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>, Last assessed: 02.01.2019

2. OECD (2016), Family Database, Available at: http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm#labour_market, Last assessed: 02.01.2019

Lithuania

Score 7

Many Lithuanian families find it difficult to reconcile family and work commitments. According to the Flash Eurobarometer 470 released in October 2018, 47% of Lithuanian respondents indicated that there are no flexible work arrangements available in their organizations, compared to a EU-28 average of 31%. Interestingly, the rate of those indicating that flexible work arrangements were widespread was the same for both men and women. Nearly half of respondents (47%) disagreed that it was easier for women than for men to make use of such flexible work arrangements. However, more Lithuanians were taking parental leave (34%) than the EU-28 average (26%); 73% of Lithuanian women indicated taking parental leave compared to 30% of men. Among the factors that would encourage them to take parental leave, 51% of Lithuanian respondents preferred receiving additional financial compensation during parental leave (against a EU-28 average of 41%).

The frequent instances of domestic violence, divorce and single-parent families also present challenges. The country's fertility rate is low, while the child poverty rate is relatively high. Notwithstanding, the employment rate among women aged 20 to 64 is relatively high: 74.3% compared to 76.2% for men in 2016. Lithuania spent 1.1% of GDP on policies oriented toward families and children in 2015 (down from 1.4% in 2012).

Lithuanian family policy is based on a set of passive (financial support to families) and active (social services and infrastructure) policy measures. The government provides some support for women seeking to combine parenting and employment, including family and social-welfare legislation (e.g., special conditions of the Labor Code applicable to families), financial assistance to families raising children (child benefits and partial housing subsidies), and social services targeted at both children and parents (including the provision of preschool education and psychiatric help for parents or children). Although access to kindergartens and other child-care facilities is still insufficient and there is a shortage of both full-time and part-time flexible employment opportunities in the labor market, a number of new initiatives emerged after 2015 municipal elections. The Vilnius municipal government has been among the most active groups in facilitating the establishment of private child-care facilities.

Overall, family policy is quite fragmented and focused on families facing particular social risks, while more attention should be paid to developing more universal family services (with NGO engagement). The program of the new coalition government gives substantial attention to family policy and includes proposals to enable parents to combine parenting and work as well as increases financial benefits for families with children. In April 2017, the cabinet approved the government's proposed development of financial incentives and services for young families and those having children. In November 2017, President Dalia Grybauskaitė signed the controversial Law on the Strengthening of the Family. Although supporters argued that the law is needed to coordinate family policies and provide basic family support services, opponents dismissed it as a selection of declarations and criticized its allegedly discriminatory nature in terms of gender. Also, a new strategy on demographic, migration and integration policy for 2018 to 2030 prioritizes the development of a family-friendly environment (through financial support to families and various public services) to increase the country's birth rate to 1.9 by 2030 (from a projected rate of 1.68 in 2017).

Citation:

European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 470 Report on Work-Life Balance, October 2018: <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/flash/surveyky/2185>

Malta

Score 7

With a difference of approximately 20% between the employment rates for women and men (80.3% for males vis-à-vis 60.2% for females), Malta has the widest gender-based employment gap in the European Union. However, women's participation in the informal economy (which accounts for almost 25% of GDP) may make this figure somewhat inaccurate. Figures released by the European Commission show that women in Malta earn about 11% less than their male counterparts. The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 ranks Malta at 93rd place out of 144 countries, and Malta's score on the EU's Gender Equality Index 2017 is below the EU-28 average. According to data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in 2018, women live longer than men, and more women than men graduate from universities, but they earn less and are at greater risk of poverty.

Labor-market participation rates are high for women aged 30 or less, but this figure decreases for subsequent age brackets. In recent years, new workplace policies were designed to ensure that employed parents retain or are able to return to their jobs. This has included parental leave (both maternity and paternity leave), reduced working hours, career breaks, the introduction of financial incentives for mothers returning to work, free child-care centers, school breakfasts, and after-school clubs. These measures are enabling more women to enter and remain in the labor market. Indeed, the parents of more than 6,000 children are benefitting from free child-care

facilities. These measures are enabling more women to enter and remain in the labor market, with Malta experiencing the EU's highest increase in labor-market participation rates among women since 2008. Indeed, this rate increased from 48.8% in 2012 to 60.2% in 2017. Data published by the National Statistics Office in 2017 indicate that a total of 13,306 children aged five or younger are enrolled in some form of non-compulsory early childhood education. A European Commission report shows that since 2011, the percentage of Maltese under three years of age in such education shot up from 11% to 31%, in 2016 putting Malta close to the Barcelona target of 33%. The government has pledged to increase the provision of child care for parents that work at night. Discussions are currently ongoing as to whether parents should be able to utilize their sick leave for instances when their children are unwell. Since 2015, the Maternity Leave Trust Fund has legally obliged employers to contribute the equivalent of 0.3% of each employee's salary, irrespective of the employee's gender. Notwithstanding, family/child benefits as a share of total social benefit remains low, at just over 6%. The 2019 budget is introducing tax rebates for parents whose children attend private schools, an increase in child allowances for households earning less than €20,000 a year and the removal of MATSEC exam fees.

Citation:

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 European Semester Thematic Factsheet - Women in the Labor Market p. 2
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 Eurostat News Release 38/2018
 The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 p. 230
 Gender Equality Index 2017: Malta
 Commission Staff Working Document - Country Report Malta 2018 SWD (2018) 216 final p.2
<https://www.gov.mt/en/Services-And-Information/Business-Areas/Education%20and%20Learning/Pages/Early-Years.aspx>
 National Reform Programme 2018 Malta p. 27
 The Malta Independent 18/11/2018 Over 6,000 children are using free child care scheme
 National Statistics Office (NSO) News Release 165/2018
 Times of Malta 21/07/2015 New Maternity Leave Trust Fund launched in bid to end gender discrimination
 Times of Malta 22/10/2018 Budget 2019 at a glance
 The Malta Independent 08/10/2018 Unions propose leave for parents with ill children, VAT exemption on services for pensioners
 The Independent 09/03/18 women live more, graduate more but earn less

Netherlands

Score 7

Family policy in the Netherlands is formally characterized by the need to recognize a child's best interest and to provide support for the family and the development of parenting skills. According to EU-28 data, the Dutch spend approximately 32% of GDP on social protections (health care, old age, housing, unemployment, family), but just 4% of this is spent on family costs (compared to an EU-28 average of 8%). Day care centers for young children are becoming a luxury item, as they are not directly subsidized and parents face a steep increase in costs based on higher contributions for higher taxable income. This situation was somewhat alleviated at the beginning of 2018, when community and commercial providers of child care

were subjected to the same quality criteria and the same financial regime. From 2019, the child care subsidy will be significantly increased. Nevertheless, the cost and availability of day-care provisions varies substantially, depending on local municipal policies.

The government has established an extensive child protection system through its policy of municipal “close to home” youth and family centers, which are tasked with establishing a system of digital information related to parenting, education and health care. Nevertheless, parents complain of a lack of information about and access to youth and family centers. Local governments have in some cases violated decision-making privacy rules in the allocation of youth-care assistance. In recent years, there were several scandals involving the death of very young children due to parental abuse as a result of uncoordinated and/or belated interventions by youth-care organizations.

The devolution of powers in youth health care to local governments in 2016 resulted in cases where necessary psychiatric care was withheld or significantly delayed due to a lack of financing. Vulnerable children were particularly hard hit by the decentralization and fragmentation of services, which led to longer waiting times. Other issues included travel to health care facilities and coordination between services. For the first time since decentralization in 2015, the number of children and young adults in youth care declined significantly, by 11,000. Notwithstanding, the total number of children in youth care remains high, and stands at approximately one in ten children. Against the backdrop of a permanent shortage of financing at the municipal level, it is not clear whether preventive efforts are effective or parents are simply opting out of the system, choosing private providers instead.

In practice, child support for families also is an instrument designed to improve parents’ labor market participation. Enabling a work-family balance is less of a guiding policy principle. The gap between professional women working longer hours and less educated women not participating in the labor market is growing. Almost two-thirds of mid-career women experience the combination of childcare tasks and work as difficult. Full-time female labor-force participation is hindered mainly by a high marginal effective tax burden on second earners, reflecting the withdrawal of social benefits according to family income. Consequently, in the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index 2017, the Netherlands ranked 32 out of 144 countries, having ranked 16 in 2016 and 9 out of 130 countries in 2008. The drop was largely due to the inclusion of top incomes in the calculations, which revealed a glaring absence of women in highly paid positions in the country. Other factors include unfavorable school times, a childcare system geared toward part-time work, and the volatility of financing for and poor access to care policies, particularly at the municipal level. Recently, the government announced plans to increase parental leave significantly, including paternal leave, in an effort to address these difficulties.

Citation:

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Roeters, A., F Bucx, Kijk op kinderopvang, SCP, Den Haag, 28 augustus 2018

Portugal

Score 7

In 2017, the birth rate was 8.4 births per 1,000 persons, the same as in 2016, though an improvement from 7.9 births per 1,000 persons during the bailout years of 2013 and 2014. However, these changes appear to be driven more by improving economic conditions than by changes to family policy. The birth rate remains well below the pre-bailout rate of 9.6 births per 1,000 persons in 2010. Moreover, the current birth rate falls well short of mitigating Portugal's looming demographic crisis, with the low birth rate aggravated by a high emigration rate. The United Nation's median projection forecasts that Portugal's population will decline from 10.5 million in 2010 to 9 million in 2050.

Policy changes in 2018 have reinforced several of the measures mentioned in the previous report, such as an extension of free primary-school textbooks, and further increases in the amount and coverage of child-support credit (“abono de família”) in the 2018 budget.

However, these measures fall well short of providing a legal and substantial support framework that would enable women to freely decide whether and when they want to enter full- or part-time employment. In a country with low wages, female participation in the workforce – which is one of the highest in the OECD – reflects the income needs of households as much as it does the actual choices of women and families.

Citation:

Eurostat, “Live births and crude birth rate” Available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00204&language=en>

UN, “World Population Prospects 2017 – Portugal,” available online at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/Probabilistic/POP/TOT/>

Spain

Score 7

Spain has a very low fertility rate, which is one partial outcome of the timidity of family-support policies and the instability of the labor market. Traditional family patterns (in which mothers focus on household work and child care duties) have changed rapidly in contemporary Spain, but without any explicit family-support policy, traditional gender roles still keep women in unequal positions. There is a wage and pension-value gap of close to 20% between men and women, and unemployment are disproportionately high among women. The slow implementation of programs providing care for dependents has made it difficult for women to free themselves of the burden of family care. However, men can benefit from a statutory paternity leave ranging from 13 days to four weeks. Since 2018, fathers have been eligible for an additional week of paid paternity leave, and the failed 2019 budget included a further increase in this time.

Following a significant rise in the incidence of gender-based violence, and after numerous public protests and demonstrations, Spain’s political parties approved in 2017 a five-year action plan intended to tackle gender-based violence. In 2018, a nationwide strike demanding an end to unfair wages and domestic violence was held on the occasion of International Women’s Day.

Citation:

July 2018, BNA: Paternity Leave Extended
<https://www.bna.com/spain-paternity-leave-n73014477429/>

EC (2018), Report on equality

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/950dce57-6222-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

United States

Score 7

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

Nevertheless, the United States provides significant support for families with children, largely through tax benefits. The policies have the greatest effect for poor

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

The Trump administration has discussed enhanced family leave programs, but its main actions affecting low-income families have been to strengthen work requirements in cash assistance, food stamps and low-income health care programs.

Bulgaria

Score 6

Family policies have focused on financing parents during a child's early years and on guaranteeing their job for an extended period of time. While the share of children aged three to six enrolled in kindergartens has increased substantially over the last decade, public child care facilities are still less developed than in most other OECD and EU member states. The lack of well-developed opportunities for flexible working time and workplace solutions in the Bulgarian labor market creates another obstacle for combining parenting with active economic participation. De facto labor-market discrimination against pregnant women and mothers of small children is common.

An important source of help that enables parents to be more economically active are family networks, specifically the traditional involvement of grandparents in caring for children. There is an active child support payment policy that often attracts social and political commentary, but the actual disbursements comprise a very small proportion (even within the social policy budget) and the effect on parents' behavior seems negligible. This support is not means tested, and covers both rich and poor families regardless of their different labor market prospects.

Czechia

Score 6

The reconciliation of parenting and labor force participation is addressed by Committee on the Reconciliation of Working, Private and Family Life, an advisory body of the Government Council for Gender Equality, but is limited in practice. The employment rate for women in Czechia is below the OECD average. This especially applies to women with children under three years of age. The main problem is the level of childcare provision which declined significantly during the 1990s and has improved only recently. While the enrollment rate in formal childcare for children

three to five years of age is within the third quartile of OECD countries, childcare provision for children up to two years of age is the third lowest among OECD countries, and affordable after-hours care offered by pre-schools and schools is insufficient. The growing number of single mothers – in the first quarter of 2018, 49.6% of all children were born out of wedlock – has further increased the demand for childcare. However, public support for alternative forms of child care, most notably so-called children’s groups, has expanded. Since 2017, attending kindergarten in the last pre-school year is mandatory. Differences in the regional availability of kindergartens persist. The main legal change in the period under review has been the introduction of a right to one week of paternity leave within within six weeks of a child’s birth.

Japan

Score 6

According to OECD statistics, Japan has one of the group’s highest gender gaps in terms of median incomes earned by full-time employees. While the labor-participation rate among women aged 15 to 64 increased to 69% in 2017, a level higher than in the United States, the majority of employed women work in part-time, non-regular jobs. Although several policy measures aimed at addressing these issues have been implemented since the 1990s, many challenges remain.

The LDP-led government has sought to provide support for women in the labor force, referring to its policy efforts in this area as “womenomics.” For example, it has made efforts to improve child care provision in order to improve the conditions of working mothers. Kindergartens began accepting two-year-olds in April 2018. Based on new legislation, parents can now enroll their children at nursery schools outside their municipality. Abolishing kindergarten waiting lists was one goal of the government’s 2018 policy package. And indeed, during the 2017/18 fiscal year, the waiting list fell below 20,000 for the first time in 10 years.

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

Questions remain as to whether the government willing to overcome the tension between having more women at work and in managerial positions on the one hand, and its intention to raise the country’s birth rate on the other.

Citation:

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

Tatsuya Goto: Japan’s moms stay in work in record numbers, 27 February 2018, Nikkei Asian Review, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Japan-s-moms-stay-in-work-in-record-numbers>

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, former President Michelle Bachelet's 2015 budget included a significant increase in public funding in both categories.

Under the current government of President Sebastián Piñera, the respective budgets remained stable, although it is disputable whether the former government's goal to create 70,000 new nursery places by the end of 2018 will be continued and finally achieved. (By the end of former President Bachelet's government in March 2018, 45,000 new nursery places had been established).

The national social program "Chile crece contigo" (Chile grows with you), which supports expecting mothers and families during a child's early years, also includes support for adolescent mothers.

However, this system does not yet fulfill actual labor-market requirements, given that nursery opening times often do not coincide with parents' long working hours. The average annual working hours in Chile (1,954 hours per year and worker) far exceed the OECD average (about 1,759 hours per year and worker). Families' abilities to find day care for their children depends to a great degree on their economic backgrounds, as wealthier families normally pay for private housekeepers and nannies. Aside from the issue of women's labor-market-participation opportunities, Chilean family policy does not fully respect fathers' concerns, as tuition for children is paid solely to mothers, for example. Chilean family policies still lack a holistic vision of modern families; for example, they are weak on issues such as single parents and adoption.

Citation:

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

http://www.dipres.gob.cl/597/articles-167693_doc_pdf.pdf

<https://www.latercera.com/pulso/noticia/educacion-estudiantes-gratuidad-llegarian-414-mil-fuerte-alza-tecnicos/335159/>

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

<https://data.oecd.org/emp/hours-worked.htm>

Croatia

Score 5

The gender gap in the employment rate has fallen from 10.5 percentage points in 2016 (third quarter) to 8.6 percentage points in 2018 (third quarter) and is now well below the EU average of 10.8, indicating an improvement in women's access to the

labor market. However, maternity pay is relatively limited (in 1993, the government abolished the right to a full salary over the one-year period after birth of a child, as the only former Yugoslav country to do so), and child care facilities and extended-day programs at school are meager. Child care coverage is especially poor in less developed rural and semi-rural areas with low employment, reflecting the inability of local governments to pay for services. According to UNESCO reports, only 22% of the children from the poorest families (the lowest 20% by disposable income) attend kindergartens. While the share for the wealthiest 20% of the families is higher, it is still one of the lowest in the EU. Furthermore, work-life balance is unfavorable. According to the 2016 European Quality of Life Survey, only 62% of respondents in Croatia report that their working hours fit well with their family commitments, the lowest proportion of respondents reporting this imbalance in any EU country apart from Bulgaria. Women with children face challenges within the labor market. Discrimination by employers in some segments of the private sector against younger women is widespread, because it is assumed that women will eventually require maternity leave. The 2014 Family Act did not address these issues, focusing instead on expanding the legal rights of young people and clarifying child-custody issues. Due to numerous objections made after it was passed, the Constitutional Court suspended the entire Family Act in January 2015. Because of bitter conflicts between the conservative and the liberal camp in Croatia, three successive governments have refrained from submitting amended versions of the bill.

Citation:

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

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Greece

Score 5

Greece has one of the strongest traditions of family ties in Europe. In both urban and rural areas, grandparents often look after preschool children while mothers work, families care for their elderly or disabled at home, parents help around the house and feed the younger generation sometimes even into middle age. As a result, child care density is among the lowest in the OECD. If a family is poor, this condition also negatively affects child poverty. Indeed, Greece in the wake of the economic crisis is one of the OECD countries with the largest child poverty challenge.

Instead of focusing on the poor and children, the bulk of social attention is focused on pensioners, often regardless of their income level. However, in early 2017, after a very long preparation period, the government began distributing a benefit called Social Solidarity Income (see Social Inclusion).

Women provide child care at home and do not enter the labor market on an equal basis with men. This pattern has not changed significantly over time, even though between 2011 and 2017 there was an increase in female labor force participation. This slight change was owed to a drop in living conditions because of the crisis and the consequent drive of spouses and daughters to help with their families' finances, particularly if male breadwinners had lost their jobs.

The best option for a woman entering the labor market would be to become a public employee. Notably, a young mother employed in the public sector receives much better support than a new mother employed in the private sector or self-employed. Female public employees are guaranteed their jobs following maternity leave. They are also granted maternity leave without fear that, on returning to work, they may be allocated to a subordinate job or suffer a wage cut, as is the case for women employed in the private sector.

The Greek state does not have a streamlined policy to reconcile work and family life but rather heavily depends on the European Union. Around the country, many low-income families benefit from European Social Fund (ESF) projects, which finance many municipal nurseries. During the period under review, ESF-funded municipal nursery places were in high demand, as these places enabled parents to seek work.

In summary, the Greek state does not have a streamlined policy to reconcile work and family life but rather heavily depends on the traditional behavior and structure of the Greek family and on the European Union.

Citation:

Data on child poverty, enrollment in preschool services for children up to 5 years old and fertility rate is provided by the SGI data base on this platform.

Hungary

Score 5

Family policy has always been a rhetorical focus for the Orbán governments. In the context of the government's campaign against refugees, it has attached even greater importance to family policy. The government has repeatedly stressed its view that the ongoing decline in population must be tackled not by immigration, but by increasing birth rates in the country and has declared this to be a major political goal. In institutional terms, family policy has been strengthened by the creation of a cabinet committee on family affairs that is chaired by the minister of human capacities (EMMI). After the April 2018 elections, the government further intensified its pro-family rhetoric. Prime Minister Orbán, having referred to a "demographic focus" of the fourth Orbán government, announced a "deal with the Hungarian women" that is intended to stop the declining numbers of Hungarians. In November 2018, the eighth "national consultation" dealt with support for families. The first of the ten questions posed reveals the essence of the government's propaganda campaign. It asked whether the problem of the decreasing population

should be solved by immigration or by supporting families that have more children. Since 2016, the Orbán government's family policy has gone beyond measures to raise family assistance and other social benefits for families. However, the expansion of childcare facilities announced by the government several times has progressed slowly.

Poland

Score 5

Poland's employment rate among women falls below the OECD and EU averages, and its childcare infrastructure is weak. The PiS government has followed a more traditional approach, with the cornerstone of its family policy, which featured prominently in the 2015 election campaign, being the "Family 500" program, which has been in effect since 1 April 2016. This increased family allowances for parents with two or more children to PLN 500 (€116) for each child irrespective of the parents' income. Departing from the original campaign pledges, only poor families are eligible to the PLN 500 already for the first child. The estimated costs amount to PLN 22.9 billion (about €5.3 billion) or 1.3% of Poland's GDP. While the measures have improved the financial situation of Polish families, critics fear that the Family 500 program will reduce labor-market participation rates among women without having positive effects on the birth rate. In its second year in office, the PiS government adopted a new program, For Life Plus, which includes support for families in difficult situations or with disabled children. This is expected to cost another PLN 3.7 billion. The government has also promised to provide more childcare facilities. Currently, however, only 7.9% of children below the age of three have access to child care, the third-lowest such rate in the European Union, while 61% of Polish kids in the three-and-up cohort attend child care, the fourth-lowest such rate in the EU.

Citation:

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

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

Romania

Score 5

Generous parental-leave benefits have been the main instrument of family policy in Romania. Parents can claim parental leave for up to two years, and during the period of parental leave – and for six months afterwards – they have job security and cannot be dismissed. Benefits are set at 85% of the net average income earned during the previous months, up to a cap of RON 8,500 per month, as a measure that was reintroduced by the Tudose government in 2017 as part of efforts to control

spending. By contrast, public spending on child care has been low. Combined with the shortage of part-time work, the low child care density (especially full-time day care) creates a significant obstacle for women attempting to combine parenting and employment. As a result, female activity and employment rates have been among the lowest in the EU. The problems with combining parenting with participation in the labor market might even be visible in emigration trends. In contrast to the 2000s, women now represent the majority of out-going Romanians. The new National Strategy on Promoting Gender Equality and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for 2018-2021, presented by the government in May 2018, aims to improve the labor market situation of women, but has remained rather vague.

Citation:

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

South Korea

Score 5

With woman having an average of 1.2 children, South Korea has the lowest fertility rate in the OECD. The government has not been very effective in enabling women (or men) to combine parenting with participation in the labor market, which helps explain the low labor-market participation rate among women. The traditional Confucian family values that view women as mothers and housewives remain influential. High housing prices, high child-care and education costs, and precarious job and wage conditions are the most important factors in young couples' decisions not to have children. President Moon has promised to strengthen family and child care policies by building and expanding child care centers and kindergartens. Since 2008, the government has paid a cash allowance of KRW 100,000 per child, exempting families in the top 10% of the income bracket.

Cultural and socioeconomic factors such as a gender-based pay gap and a pervasive lack of social mobility discourage women from entering or reentering the workforce. As a result, while college graduates are split fairly evenly between men and women, the employment rate for female graduates is lower than for male graduates. Furthermore, South Korea is the only country in the OECD where the employment rate among female college graduates is lower than that among women with no more than compulsory education.

Citation:

New York Times, 5 January 2010

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

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

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

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

Cyprus

Score 4

Family-support policies remain a challenge as they result, among others, in a low rate of children in formal childcare (20.8%, compared to a 30.3% EU average). Combining motherhood with employment is difficult, which may be one of the reasons for low birth rates (1.37% in 2016). However, the rate of employment among women between 25 and 54 is high (73.5% in 2017). Families seek care for children under five years old primarily in the private sector, and in a number of community centers under the supervision of the labor ministry.

Childcare commonly provided by family members, in particular grandparents, partly compensates for the lack of adequate state policies and facilities for families. Despite reducing the rate of child poverty, the EU notes a strong increase in children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Parents with children attending kindergarten face additional expenses and need to provide transportation, because public-transportation infrastructure remains insufficient. The establishment of full-day pre- and primary schools in many communities clearly benefits families and its expansion would improve the overall situation.

Special allowances for multi-member families and the guaranteed minimum income may alleviate difficulties posed by the economic crisis. A 2017 law allows for 15 days of paternity leave, but the need requires the adoption of comprehensive policies. The real challenge is to remove the dilemma of choosing between employment and childcare.

Citation:

1. European Commission: Semester report, Cyprus, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-cyprus-en.pdf>

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 but growing 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) which continues to decline.

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

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

In this field, the new Conte government has made only vague proposals.

Citation:

[government contract download.repubblica.it/pdf/2018/politica/contratto_governo.pdf](https://www.repubblica.it/pdf/2018/politica/contratto_governo.pdf)

Mexico

Score 4

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

With regard to the poorer segments of the population, gender equality is progressing even slower. Poorer Mexicans tend to have larger families and face fewer opportunities for women in the labor market. Also, old-fashioned “macho” and conservative Catholic attitudes from the past make it harder for lower-class women to progress. Moreover, lower-class women are more active in family businesses and in the informal economy, where incomes tend to be lower, and where it is hard for them to access state benefits. The main problems facing working class women have

to do with dysfunctions in public services including health, education and transportation. There is a huge demand for expanding early child care and preschool coverage and extending the length of paternity and maternity leaves. In 2014, Congress approved a bill reforming the Federal Law of State Workers, giving state employees a five-day paternity leave. While this reform aimed to promote gender equality, it has not been welcomed by Mexican feminist organizations, as it is far from the number of days currently afforded for maternity leave (60 days). Moreover, paternity leave policies are more an exception than a rule in Mexico and still regarded as unnecessary by most businesses and organizations. This reinforces a gender bias in child rearing and discrimination of women in the workplace.

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

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

Citation:

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

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

https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1665114616301617/1-s2.0-S1665114616301617-main.pdf?_tid=be22bb40-e2cf-11e7-ae06-0000aab0f27&acdnat=1513476933_1b3cb11d76a482e57d9c4f638c2232f8

<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/english/six-states-account-for-40-femicides-mexico>

Slovakia

Score 4

In Slovakia, traditional notions of the family are still fairly strong. Mothers of children under two years of age rarely work, the employment rate for women (25-49) with children below six years of age reaches a mere 40%, and the gender employment gap for young women (20-29) is among the highest in the European Union. Working women face an enormous double burden of both professional and domestic responsibilities. This situation is reinforced by the low incidence of part-

time employment, income tax splitting and the relatively long duration of parental leave. Slovakia is among the countries with the highest level of discouraging impact as a result of motherhood and care on employment. Childcare facilities have remained limited since the late 1990s' and have not kept up with the increase in birth rates. Childcare for children under three years of age in particular continues to be virtually unavailable. Larger towns have insufficient kindergarten slots.

Compared to its predecessors, the Fico and the Pellegrini governments have paid more attention to the expansion of childcare facilities and have begun to shift the focus of family policy away from cash benefits. Since January 2018, the Social Services Act has expanded access to childcare to unemployed parents, on the condition that their child does not take the place of a child whose parents are employed or in education. In December 2018, the Pellegrini government reintroduced compulsory nursery school for 5-year-old children as of September 2020.

Citation:

European Commission (2018): Education and Training Monitor 2018: Slovakia. Luxembourg (https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/education-and-training-monitor-2018-slovakia-report_en).

Switzerland

Score 4

In international comparison, Swiss family policy has done relatively little to enable women to enter the workforce. Policies to reconcile work and family lag very much behind other comparable modern societies. Overall spending for family benefits is low in international comparison and Switzerland ranks very low with regard to length of paid maternity and parental leave as well as enrollment of children between 3 and 5 in formal pre-primary education. One major exception is the strong increase in enrollment of children 0 to 2 years of age: from 16% in 2008 to 38% in 2015.

A January 2009 federal law providing subsidy payments to families – amounting to 4% of all social policy spending in 2015 – has done little to change the country's ranking in international comparison nor has it changed the substantial variation between cantons, one of the most salient characteristics of Swiss family policy. The new federal law defines minimum child and education benefits, but cantons may add a variable amount to this basic federal benefit level.

In general, Swiss family policy has a clearly conservative outlook with a strong liberal undertone. It is mildly supportive of the traditional family: there are some tax deductions and a period of parental leave offered to mothers (but not to fathers) as well as a very limited number of childcare facilities. Sufficient signatures have been collected for a vote on parental leave for fathers. However, at the time of writing, it is doubtful whether the initiative will gain the necessary majority in a popular vote. In summer 2018, commissions of both houses of parliament developed a

counterproposal to the initiative, suggesting a parental leave for fathers of two weeks.

There are substantial variations of family policy on the cantonal and municipal level. The canton of Ticino has a very generous family policy aimed at helping mothers reconcile work and family; other cantons (and their municipalities) frequently fail to offer any substantial help (e.g., childcare facilities) on a broad scale. Differences and reform dynamics are particularly pronounced between municipalities with regard to external childcare. Local communities with minimalistic family policies co-exist with municipalities, which strongly facilitate the reconciliation of work and family for young mothers. It has been argued that the interplay of local, cantonal, and federal family policies makes the policy process and power distribution very disparate.

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

Citation:

Bundesrat 2017: Familienbericht 2017, Bern: Bundesrat.

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

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Stadelmann-Steffen, Isabelle; Oehrli, Dominique 2017. Perceiving Reconciliation: Child Care Policies and Gendered Time Conflicts. *Gender & society*, 31(5), pp. 597-623

Häusermann, Silja. 2013. The Politics of Old and New Social Policies. In: Bonoli, Giuliano. & Natali, David (eds.) *The Politics of the New Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Turkey

Score 4

In 2017, there were 40.3 million women in Turkey, with 30.2 million women aged 15 and over. While the female labor force consisted of 10.2 million women, only 8.7 million of these women were employed and 1.4 million women were unemployed. In

2017, the female labor force participation rate was 33.6%, the female employment rate was 28.9% and the female unemployment rate was 14.1%. The labor force participation rate of women in Turkey remains low, far below the EU average.

In 2018, while the female labor force amounted to 10.6 million, 9.2 million were employed. Of this total, 28% were employed in the agricultural sector, 15% in industry and 57% were employed in the service sector. Of these working women, 43.4% were not registered with any social security institution.

According to the World Bank (2018), Turkey has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates among countries with similar income levels. Women are under-represented in entrepreneurship, and business ownership and management. Furthermore, the gap in financial inclusion between men and women remains comparatively large.

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:

World Bank (2018) 'Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Turkey for the Period FY 18- FY21', Report No. 11096-TR, Washington D.C.: The World Bank.

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