



Families Report

Family Policy

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2020

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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, was revised in 2018 and 2019. 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 and paid leave for fathers was extended by 30 days.

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 childcare, 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). Beginning in 2019, nursery schooling has been mandatory from the age of three, a policy that will strengthen the inclusion of immigrant children. In addition, families using the childcare support at home are given rebates on their social contributions. 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 1.92 births per woman in 2018), but the percentage of women integrated in the labor market also compares favorably to the European leaders (Scandinavian countries) in this domain. However, faced with the need to reduce the budget deficit, the Hollande government 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. The fact that income taxes are calculated by family unit and not individually is also very favorable to families, since spouses and children lower the amount of taxable income per head.

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 basic difference between the Social Democratic and Green parties, on the one hand, and the center-right 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, G. B./Rostgaard, T. (eds.) (2015): *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States. Comparing Care Policies and Practice* (Bristol: Policy Press).

Jochem, S. (2020), *Das politische System Schwedens* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS).

Pierre, J. (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 2017, about 70% 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.

A recent economic agreement between the government and municipalities will abolish the current modernization program for the municipalities and ease municipal budgets. Furthermore, the budget proposal for 2020 includes a temporary child support for families currently receiving little support because of existing ceilings. A commission will study the issue and recommend a more permanent solution.

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).

Ministry of Finance, “Velfærd først – tryghed, tillid og en grøn fremtid: Finansforslaget 2020, Oktober 2019,” <https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspjece-2020> (accessed 15 October 2019)

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. This amount is

still the same at the time of writing. Furthermore, average wages for men are higher than for women. This discourages men from taking parental leave, especially since the 2008 economic collapse. Due to 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. For example, the government has pushed for policies to offer a wide range of child allowances and childcare services, such as child benefits, maternity leave, parental leave, birth and post-birth allowances.

Indirect help is also offered, such as subsidized mortgage interest rates, with this depending on the number of children at home. In general, Luxembourg offers the highest level of child benefits within the European Union, and is one of the four leading EU member states in terms of family benefits overall. 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 childcare facilities, with the aim of making it easier for women to work.

Yet, despite a strong increase in recent years, the workforce participation rate among women remains comparatively low at 65.1%, compared to an EU average of 65.3%. Luxembourg ranks 16th out of the 28 EU member states on this measure.

Luxembourg's public childcare institutions include the "maisons relais," general day care centers; the "éducation précoce," a third preschool year; and "foyers de jour," or after-school centers. Since August 2016, there has been one fixed allowance per child, regardless of the family composition. Child bonuses and child allowances are paid in one sum of €65 per child, with an increase from the ages of six to 12 years. Since 2017, as part of a new coherent family policy, the government has offered free childcare facilities (20 hours per week), early language support and intercultural

education. These structures are now more strictly controlled by officials and are required to 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 19 Oct. 2019.

“Women.” Webseite Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. <http://luxembourg.public.lu/en/le-grand-duche-se-presente/population/femmes/index.html>. Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.

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 late 2018, the Šarec government eventually abandoned cuts to family benefits that had originally been introduced in 2012. It reintroduced the indexation of family benefits to inflation and reduced the income-testing of family benefits.

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. (2019): Slovenia abandons cuts to family benefits. ESPN, Flash Report 2019/07, Brussels.

Belgium

Score 8

Although childcare for children below the age of three is “rationed,” Belgium 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 childcare is available from 7.30am to 6pm on weekdays.

At the time of writing, the biggest change this year has been the reform of child benefits (allocations familiales/kinderbijslag) in each federated entity. Until 2018, they were low for the first two children and higher for the third child onward. Since 2019, this competence has been devolved to the federated entities. Effective from January 2019 in Flanders and January 2020 in Wallonia, the allowance has been substantially increased for the first child and the premium for large families has essentially been scrapped.

Additional child subsidies include personal income tax cuts and other in-kind benefits (e.g., a certain number of free garbage bags per year, reduced prices in some shops and lower public transportation fares), while parents of larger families (3 children or more) may also keep some of these advantages (reduced prices in some shops and lower public transportation fares) even when their children have grown up and are not entitled to child benefits anymore.

The main hurdle to female labor force participation in recent years has been the high implicit tax rate on low-wage earners, which creates a substantial barrier to labor market entry for low-skilled second earners (who are typically women). Eurostat statistics show that the labor market activity rate is as low as 42% for women with low educational attainment (68% for women with intermediate educational

attainment), as opposed to 63% and 79% for men, respectively. Such gaps are substantially higher than in neighboring France and Germany.

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

<https://www.lalibre.be/economie/placements/allocations-familiales-tout-savoir-sur-la-reforme-5c0f96fdcd70e3d2f730358e>

https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20181212_04029342

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, jurisdiction over these matters lies largely with the provinces, and little progress has been made to date.

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 adoptive 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 that the government has been unable to create a national childcare 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. As parts of its structural-reform packages, the Sipilä government implemented changes limiting the right to day care for children whose parents were unemployed. The center-left Rinne government that took office in June 2019 pledged to revoke this reform. The Rinne government also said it would increase the size of the allowances paid to single-parent families and families with more than three children.

Family policy 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 eight years in a row, reaching an all-time low of 1.41 children per woman in 2018. Although the number of fathers that take paternity leave has somewhat increased, childcare 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. In general, evidence has shown that family-centered thinking is increasing among Finnish adults and within Finnish culture more generally.

The Rinne government indicated that it would develop a major family-policy reform aiming at a more equal distribution of care between mothers and fathers, a measure strongly supported by experts and academics. However, as was the case with the

previous government, the Center Party – one of the members of the governing coalition – opposed abolishing or even shortening the home-care allowance that allows a parent to stay home until the child’s third birthday (with 95% of all home-care allowance days being taken by mothers in 2018). This hampered the prospects for an effective reform aiming at greater equality.

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/2018/synt_2018_2019-04-26_tie_001_fi.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 early 2019, a total of 33.6% of the country’s children aged under three, or 790,000 individuals, had access to a childcare institution (BMFSFJ 2019). In June 2017, the German Bundestag voted to increase the number of daycare places by 110,000 by 2020, allocating €1.13 billion to this purpose. Moreover, new legislation was introduced to improve the quality of daycare services (Gute KiTa-Gesetz).

In summary, these measures, in combination with an increasing shortage of skilled labor, have led to a considerable increase in labor-market participation rates among women. While in 2005, only 59.6% of women between 15 and 64 years of age were employed, this figure had risen to about 74.3% by 2019. However, 37% of women are working part-time, which is well above the OECD average of about 25% (OECD 2019).

Citation:

Deutscher Bundestag (2018): Bericht über die Auswirkungen der Regelungen zum Elterngeld Plus
<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/121264/6bfce747d8a948b19ddbeb73e4bfdaef/bericht-elterngeldplus-data.pdf>

Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2019):

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/alle-meldungen/790-000-betreuungsplaetze-fuerkinder-unter-drei-jahren/138140>

OECD 2019:

https://www.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=LFS_SEXAG

New Zealand

Score 8

The 2019 Women in Work Index (published by consultancy firm PwC) rates New Zealand third in the OECD, behind Iceland and Sweden. Employment rates for women are well above the OECD average – even though mothers with young children have lower employment rates and women are also more likely to work part-time than in most OECD countries. The median gender labor earnings gap is significantly lower than the OECD average (7.2% vs. 13.9%). However, a research report commissioned by the Ministry for Women finds that the wage gap between men and women widens to 12.5% when they become parents. When women become mothers, they are less likely to be employed and, if they do work, they work fewer hours and have lower earnings – even 10 years later. Mothers earn 4.4% less on average than non-mothers, with the gap widening the longer they are off not in employment.

A number of family support policies have been passed under the current Labour-led government that are designed to enable mothers to decide freely whether they want to return to employment. Most importantly, a new Families Package has been rolled out since mid-2018. 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 weekly NZD 60 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 carers. When the package is fully implemented in 2020, it is estimated that 384,000 families will benefit.

In the government's 2019 “well-being” budget, measures to combat family violence received a record investment of NZD 320 million, in a bid to tackle the New Zealand's entrenched family and sexual violence statistics, which see the police respond to a domestic violence incident every four minutes. The budget also dedicates NZD 1.1 billion to child poverty measures, aiming to lift 70,000 children out of poverty in low-income households by 2020/21 and 120,000 by 2027/28.

A Pay Equity Working group has been established to find a mechanism to reduce the gender pay gap which sits stubbornly at 9% but is considerably wider for some groups of women. In the public service, the gender pay gap for Pacific women is 21%. The Ministry for Women has introduced an online tool to assist policy makers attend to gender differences in their policy design and budget bids (titled Bringing Gender In).

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>
Ministry for Women, Empirical evidence of the gender pay gap in New Zealand

(<https://women.govt.nz/documents/empirical-evidence-gender-pay-gap-new-zealand>)

PwC, Women in Work Index 2019 (<https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/WIWI/pwc-women-in-work-2019-final-web.pdf>)

The Treasury, Budget 2019 (<https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/budgets/budget-2019>)

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. A 2016 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. However, an internal evaluation by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2019 found much more positive results, paving the way for the program to be renewed.

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/>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786889/National_evaluation_of_the_Troubled_Families_Programme_2015_to_2020_evaluation_overview_policy_report.pdf

Australia

Score 7

The high cost of childcare 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 childcare assistance, including a new childcare 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 childcare 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. The CCS has reduced real hourly costs of childcare for parents by approximately 10%, but costs are still more than 40% higher in real terms than at the start of the decade (2010).

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. The latest program, Parents Next, addresses the risk of long-term dependency on welfare payments.

Citation:

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

Data on childcare prices:

<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/0/938DA570A34A8EDACA2568A900139350?OpenDocument>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/06/single-parents-forced-to-attend-story-time-or-lose-centrelink-payments>

Austria

Score 7

In general, the situation of families in Austria is not significantly different from the situation of families across much of the European Union. Following generally accepted aims, the government must improve pre-school education with the intention

of giving parents (especially women) better opportunities to balance work and family responsibilities – and to give very young children (especially children from non-German speaking migrants) greater opportunities to integrate into the education system.

Both the Austrian government and mainstream public opinion accept 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 childcare centers exist, but despite some recent improvements, fail to satisfy demand. Childcare 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 changed the basic elements of the Austrian policy toward families.

Citation:

For data on childcare 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 childcare expenses. This, combined with the high cost of childcare 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 childcare 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 also supporting the integration of mothers into the labor force. 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 implemented to allow fathers to use an additional six days of paternity leave. The total number of weeks of maternity leave at full pay received by the average mother in Israel is similar to the average across 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.

The need for further subsidies for daycare and after-school activities has gained prominence as a middle-class issue, and a plan to subsidize care for children up to the age of five was announced. Compulsory education has been expanded, introducing free education for children aged three to four. However, reports claim that this program is still largely underfunded, and does not offer sustainable relief for working mothers and young families.

The share of women in Israel's workforce has increased substantially over the past 30 years. Previously comprising just one third of the workforce, women currently make up 47% of employees. A 2016 study indicates that becoming a mother has almost no effect on the employment rate of women aged between 25 and 44. 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 working Jewish women, who have an employment rate nearly equal to that of Jewish men. In relation to the employment rate of Arab Israeli women, it seems that there is a steady increase in Arab Israeli women participating in the workforce. In 2015, the employment rate among Arab Israeli women was 31.5%. At the end of 2018, about 40% of all Arab Israeli women able to work were employed. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women also lag behind, although there has been a gradual closing of this gap. In fact, these two populations have been the focus of a general economic policy that aims to promote social inclusion and expand labor market participation.

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, their average monthly wage is lower than the average for men. The gender gap is smaller but still significant for hourly wages, with women earning an average hourly rate of 15.8% 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.

Citation:

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Latvia

Score 7

Family-support policies enable women to combine parenting with participation in the labor market. In 2018, 72.7% of mothers with at least one child aged six and under were employed, which is above the EU average (63.1%). In addition, labor law prohibits an employer from terminating an employment contract with a pregnant woman or a mother with a baby under one year old.

A maximum of 112 calendar days of paid 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.

Finally, access to kindergartens remains a problem, with families often waiting years for a place. Local government support for private sector involvement in childcare should address the shortage of available kindergarten places.

Citation:

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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 an 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 (as compared to an 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.

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 childcare 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 childcare facilities.

Overall, family policy is quite fragmented and focused on families facing particular social risks (especially through the provision of financial support to families with children). More attention should be paid to developing 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. Election cycles affect the policy significantly, with the coalition partners competing to propose the most generous benefits in advance of the 2020 elections. Ultimately, the government proposed and passed an increase in monthly child benefits from €50 to €60, to be paid after a child is born through the age of 18.

Additional monthly benefits for families with disabilities and poor families will increase from €20 to €40. Payments to pregnant women who cannot get support from the state social-insurance fund due to insufficient length of employment will be increased from €76 to €250.

In April 2017, the government approved a proposal to increase financial incentives and services for young families and those having children. In November 2017, the controversial Law on the Strengthening of the Family was signed. 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 24% between the employment rates for women and men, 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. In the Global Gender Gap Index for 2018, Malta was ranked at 91st place. Women score very low in terms of formal political engagement; however, in the context of education Malta is one of 25 countries to have reached parity between the sexes. Women matriculate at low rates in the subjects related to engineering, manufacturing, construction, and information and communication technologies. Malta ranks 15th within the EU on the 2019 Gender Equality Index, with 62.5 out of 100 points. The country has moved toward gender equality at a faster rate than the EU average. Malta's score in the domain of work is 73.3, indicating progress of 12.5 points since 2005. Around 25% of women work part-time, compared to 7% of men. Mean monthly earnings almost tripled for women and men between 2006 and 2014, but the gender gap persists, with women earning an average of 15% less than men. The gender gap is even wider among couples with children (among whom women earn an average of 27% less) and among people aged 50 – 64 (among whom women earn an average of 30% less). The gender gap in earnings is also much bigger among people with high level of education (30%). The biggest gap on the index was in the power domain, which produced Malta's lowest score.

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 and tax incentives for mothers returning to work, free child-care centers, school breakfasts, after-school clubs, and lifelong learning programs. These measures are enabling more women to enter and remain in the labor market.

The parents of more than 15,800 children are benefiting from free child-care facilities. As a result, Malta is experiencing one of the highest rates of increase in labor-market participation rates in the EU, but is still lagging behind the EU average (60.6% compared to 66.4% in 2017). Since 2015, employers have been legally obliged to contribute the equivalent of 0.3% of each employee's salary, irrespective of the employee's gender, to the Maternity Leave Trust Fund. The 2020 budget continued to consolidate or introduce more measures that benefit families, such as the introduction of a €300 allowance for every newborn or adopted child, free school transport for all primary and secondary school children, and an allowance for widowed parents.

Citation:

The Malta Independent Malta's gender employment gap continues to decrease, but still the highest in Europe – Eurostat

European Semester Thematic Factsheet – Women in the Labor Market p. 2

European Semester Thematic Factsheet – Undeclared Work p. 3

Times of Malta 15/10/2019 Women in Malta earn 12% less than men

Commission Staff Working Document – Country Report Malta 2018 SWD (2018) 216 final p.2

Malta Today 30/01/2019 More than 15,800 children benefiting from free child care services

Commission Staff Working Document - Country Report Malta 2019 SWD (2019) 1017 final p.27

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

The Budget Speech 2020 (Maltese) p.19, p. 23, p. 61

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 (healthcare, 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 childcare were subjected to the same quality criteria and the same financial regime. The childcare subsidy was significantly increased in 2019, with an additional increase slated for 2020. Nevertheless, the cost and availability of day care 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 healthcare. 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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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 10 children. Against the backdrop of a permanent shortage of funding at the municipal level, it is not clear whether preventive efforts are effective or parents are simply opting out of the system and choosing private providers instead. In 2019, a wave of care-provider bankruptcies gave further fuel to critics of the decentralization effort, particularly as it was combined with severe financial cuts. The government now instead recommends regional cooperation and some centralization.

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 for fathers, in an effort to address these difficulties. A pilot project with flexible school times was prolonged, and expanded to include more schools.

Citation:

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

Gesprekken met gemeenten gaan alleen nog over geld, NRC Next, 13 mei 2019

Portugal

Score 7

The birth rate has improved in recent years, increasing from 7.9 per 1,000 persons in 2013 and 2014 to 8.5 births per 1,000 persons in 2018. 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 10.2 million in 2010 to 9.1 million in 2050.

Policy changes during the period under review have reinforced several of the measures mentioned in the previous SGI report. For example, textbooks were made freely available to all children in public schools between grades one and 12, while in 2018/19 textbooks were only freely available to children between grades one and six. Similarly, the amount and coverage of child-support credit (“abono de família”) was further increased in the 2019 budget.

However, these measures still 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>

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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 childcare 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 23% between men and women, and unemployment are disproportionately high among women. According to the National Institute of Statistics, women in Spain dedicate 26.5 hours a week to non-remunerated tasks, compared to just 14 hours for men. Employed women are also more frequently represented in lower-paid occupations, even though women on average have a higher level of education than employed men.

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 five weeks. The failed 2019 budget included a further increase in paternity leave for men.

Following a significant rise in the incidence of gender-based violence, and after numerous public protests and demonstrations, most political parties (with the exception of the far right Vox party) are determined to tackle gender-based violence. In 2019, a nationwide strike demanding an end to unfair wages and domestic violence was held on the occasion of the International Women’s Day.

Citation:

EC (2019), Report on equality

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United States

Score 7

The United States ranks near the bottom of the developed world on many measures of direct governmental and regulatory support for working mothers. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 requires employers with at least 50 workers to allow 12 weeks of unpaid leave for childcare. This measure has not proved 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 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 healthcare programs. The administration's 2020 budget proposal includes \$1 billion of funding to expand childcare assistance. In addition, the Senate passed legislation in 2019 that would provide federal workers with 12 weeks of guaranteed paid parental leave.

Responding to the arrival of two Trump-appointed conservative Supreme Court justices, several state governments have taken steps to dramatically restrict or even abolish access to abortion. The hope of these governments is that the Supreme Court will overturn *Roe v Wade*, the 1973 decision that established the right to abortion, and therefore uphold their efforts to restrict abortion. In some states, access to abortion has become nearly nonexistent.

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 childcare 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.

Family networks, and specifically the traditional involvement of grandparents in caring for children, constitute an important source of help that enables parents to be more economically active. Indeed, this is one of the determinants of the low rate of day care enrollment for children up to the age of two. There is an active child support payment policy that often attracts social and political commentary, but the actual disbursements are relatively small (even within the social policy budget) and the effect on parents' behavior seems negligible. This support is not means tested, and is given to rich and poor families regardless of their different labor market prospects.

Bogdanov, G., B. Zahariev (2018): Early childhood education and care services for children under the age of 3 in Bulgaria well below the Barcelona target. European Social Policy Network, ESPN Flash Report 2018/76, Brussels.

Czechia

Score 6

Parents' freedom to decide whether or not to work is limited by the quite limited provision of care for very young children, the availability of which declined significantly during the 1990s, and has shown only a little improvement more recently. The ability to reconcile parenting and labor-force participation is addressed by the Committee on the Reconciliation of Working, Private and Family Life, a body advising the Government Council for Gender Equality, but is limited in practice. The employment rate among women in Czechia is below the OECD average. This problem is especially difficult for women with children under three years of age. The rate of childcare availability for children up to two years of age is the OECD's third-lowest, and affordable after-school care offered by preschools and schools is insufficient. The number of single mothers has stabilized, but is still very high – around 48.5% of all children are born to unmarried parents. This places increased demands on childcare, especially preschool care. However, public support for alternative forms of childcare, most notably so-called children's groups, has expanded. Kindergarten attendance during the last year of preschool has been mandatory since 2017, putting additional pressure on preschool facilities. Czechia is the EU's second-worst performer in the European Union with regard to the range of nurseries and kindergartens available for children under three years of age. Differences in the regional availability of kindergartens persist. In May 2019, the government presented an updated version of the family policy, focusing on four fundamental objectives: 1) the well-being of the child, 2) equality between women and men, 3) the ability to reconcile work and family life, and 4) intergenerational solidarity. A government proposal that would increase the parental allowance has yet to go through the entire legislative process.

Japan

Score 6

According to OECD statistics, Japan has one of the group's highest gender gaps with respect to median incomes earned by full-time employees. While the labor-force participation rate among women aged 15 to 64 increased to 71% in February 2019, 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 (so-called womenomics). For example, it has made efforts to expand the provision of childcare in order to improve conditions for working mothers. Efforts to abolish kindergarten waiting lists have made some progress, as the day care capacity has expanded from 2.2 million in 2012 to 2.8 million in 2018. The ratio of fathers taking paternity leave has also increased significantly, from around 2% (2012) to 5% (2017), but this number is still low, and many fathers take only a few days leave.

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 out of reach, as, for example, the total number of marriages shrank from 621,000 to 586,000 between 2016 and 2018.

Questions remain as to whether the government is 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 et al., *Womenomics 5.0*, Goldman Sachs, Portfolio Strategy Research, 18 April 2019

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>

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Chile

Score 5

In recent years, the government has sought to expand the provision of preschool education. New policies have offered Chilean parents more opportunities to place their children in free or low-priced nurseries and kindergartens. Former President Bachelet's 2015 budget included a significant increase in public funding in both categories.

Under President Piñera, budgets in this area have remained stable. A bill that would facilitate employees' access to day care services for children under two (*sala cuna universal*), independently of the company size (previously, only companies employing at least 20 women have been legally obliged to offer daycare services), was submitted to parliament in October 2019. As of the time of writing, discussions had focused on the financial mechanism and the administration of funds rather than on the purpose of this proposed law.

As yet, the day care system does not 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 (1,941 hours per year and worker) far exceed the OECD average (about 1,734 hours per year and worker). A measure that would gradually reduce official weekly working hours to 40 has been drafted and approved by the lower chamber of Congress, but has yet to pass the Senate.

Families' abilities to find day care for their children depend to a great degree on their economic backgrounds, as wealthier families normally pay for private housekeepers and nannies. Aside from the issue of labor-market participation opportunities for women, 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 instance, they are weak on issues such as single parents and adoption.

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

Citation:

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https://www.cnnchile.com/pais/camara-de-diputados-aprueba-en-general-40-horas_20191024/

<http://www.uchile.cl/noticias/157483/40-horas-semanales-como-puede-afectar-al-pais-reducir-la-jornada>

Croatia

Score 5

The gender gap in the employment rate for 15 – 64 year olds is 12.0 percentage points in Croatia compared to 10.2 in the EU-28 (Eurostat data, Q2 2019). It has increased from just 7.6 in Q2 2015 indicating a worsening of the situation over time. Maternity pay is relatively limited. In 1993, the government abolished the right to a full salary over the one-year period after the birth of a child, being the only former Yugoslav country to do so. Similarly, childcare facilities and extended-day school programs are meager. In 2020, the maternity pay cap between the sixth and 12th months of leave will be raised from HRK 3,991 per month to HRK 5,564 per month. Childcare 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 European Union. 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 member state 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, childcare density is among the lowest in the OECD. If a family is poor, this condition also negatively affects child poverty. Although the child-poverty rate declined from 22% in 2013 to 16% in 2018, this remains a serious challenge for Greece.

Instead of focusing on the poor and children, the bulk of social attention is focused on pensioners, often regardless of their income level. However, during the period under review, the government began distributing a benefit called Social Solidarity Income (first established in 2017; see “Social Inclusion”).

Women provide childcare 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 instead depends on the traditional behavior and structure of the Greek family, as well as on funding from the European Union.

Citation:

Data on child poverty, enrollment in preschool services for children up to five years old and fertility rate is provided by the SGI database 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. After the April 2018 elections, the government further intensified its pro-family rhetoric. Prime Minister Orbán has spoken of the "demographic focus" of his fourth government and has announced a "deal with the Hungarian women," which is intended to stop Hungary's population from shrinking. Spending on family policy in Hungary has been high. However, family policy has continued to focus on improving the material situation of parents and providing incentives to having children rather than on enabling women to combine parenting and employment. In this vein, a reform package adopted in April 2019 introduced interest-free loans for married couples who commit to having children, subsidies for the purchase of new, seven-seater vehicles for families with at least three children and an expansion of the preferential home purchase subsidy scheme for parents. By contrast, the expansion of childcare facilities announced by the government some time ago 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 toward family policy. The cornerstone of the latter, which

featured prominently in the 2015 election campaign, has been the “Family 500” program, in effect since 1 April 2016. The family allowances for parents with two or more children to PLN 500 (€116) for each child is paid irrespective of the parents’ income. Since May 2019, all families (not only poor families) have been eligible to receive a grant of PLN 500 for their first child. The expansion of benefits has increased the estimated costs of the “Family 500” program from 1.3% to 1.7% of Poland’s GDP. Similar payments also exist in other EU member states, but in the Polish case the sum is high compared to the income of people. While the measures have improved the financial situation of Polish families, concerns that the Family 500 program would reduce labor market participation rates among women without having positive effects on the birth rate have been confirmed. The female employment rate has decreased by 2 – 3 percentage points since 2016.

In its second year in office, the PiS government adopted a second 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 childcare, the third-lowest such rate in the European Union, while 61% of Polish kids in the three-and-up cohort attend childcare, the fourth-lowest such rate in the European Union. Only one year of preschool (prior to entering the first grade in primary school) has become compulsory.

Citation:

Owczarek, D. (2019): Soziale Probleme lösen oder Wähler gewinnen? Die Sozialpolitik der PiS seit 2015, Polen Analysen Nr. 246, Darmstadt/ Bremen (<https://www.laender-analysen.de/polen-analysen/246/soziale-probleme-loesen-oder-waehler-gewinnen-die-sozialpolitik-der-pis-seit-2015/>).

Romania

Score 5

Generous parental-leave benefits have been central to Romanian family policy. Parents can claim parental leave for up to two years, with job security ensured throughout this period and for six months upon returning to work. In terms of value, benefits are set at 85% of the net average income earned previously, up to a cap of RON 8,500 per month. Parental-leave benefits are complemented by child allowances, tax credits for children, and means-tested benefits in certain cases (e.g., single-parent families). All measures are intended to reduce the costs of having a family.

In spite of this, women’s participation in the labor market remains a serious concern in Romania, with women’s activity rate a full 20 percentage points below men at 63.7%. The situation is particularly dire for young and middle-aged women, as well as in certain parts of the country where women’s participation rates have fallen below 50%. This is largely attributable to the lack of childcare services in the country, with persistently low investment and availability of nurseries, as well as

their uneven distribution where they do exist. Low participation rates of young children in childcare illustrate shortcomings in both the quality and quantity of these services. As a result, combining parenting and paid employment remains a significant challenge for Romanian women.

Sexual harassment in the workplace was criminalized by Art. 223 of the 2019 Penal Code, but incidents are underreported. While employers must record incidents, provide training sessions about harassment, and ensure that gender-based discrimination is rooted out, not all of them comply.

South Korea

Score 5

Despite making substantial efforts, 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 childcare and education costs, and precarious job and wage conditions are the most important factors in young couples' decisions not to have children. In 2018, the fertility rate reached a record low of 0.98, which is by far the lowest in the OECD. President Moon has promised to strengthen family and childcare policies by building and expanding childcare centers and kindergartens. Starting on October 2019, paternal leave was expanded to 10 days, to be taken following a child's birth. Previously, only three days of paid paternal leave was allowed. 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. Many local governments have also offered additional incentives in an effort to raise fertility rates in their areas. 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 the population of college graduates is 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 in which the employment rate among female college graduates is lower than that among women with no more than compulsory education.

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

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Cyprus

Score 4

Family-support services are very limited, as indicated among others, by the very low rate of children in formal childcare (20.8%, compared to a 30.3% EU average). Combining motherhood with employment is difficult and may be the reason for the rapidly declining birth rate (1.07 in 2017 compared to 1.37 in 2016). Nevertheless, 75% of women between 25 and 54 were employed in 2018 (73.5% in 2017). Compared to the average of the EU-28 (63.4%), the employment of women is a little higher (64.2%) in Cyprus. Younger children can be registered in public kindergarten based on the availability of limited places and other criteria. This forces families to seek childcare primarily in the private sector and in community centers supervised by the labor ministry.

Family members, mainly grandparents, offer childcare, which contributes to reducing the rate of child poverty. However, the EU warned that childcare costs have become less affordable for households. An additional burden for parents is the insufficiency of public-transportation infrastructure.

The establishment of full-day pre- and primary schools in many communities has clearly benefited families and its expansion would further 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 provides for 15 days of paternity leave, but there is need for the adoption of comprehensive policies. The primary need remains removing the dilemma of choosing between employment and childcare.

Citation:

1. European Commission: Semester Country specific Recommendations, Cyprus, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-specific-recommendation-commission-recommendation-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 daycare 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 (albeit slowly growing) participation of women in the workforce and the low overall employment rate, while also contributing to a very low birth rate (except in the immigrant population), which continues to decline.

A number of proposals for modifying tax policy to benefit families have been advanced over time, such as the “*quoziante familiare*,” which would have divided taxable income by the number of family members. However, most have never been implemented. 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 childcare 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.

Beyond some rhetorical mention, the first Conte government never really prioritized family policies. However, the new citizen’s income can to some extent provide help for needy families even if it is not specially tailored for them. The second Conte government has indicated a willingness to expand benefits for families with children.

Citation:

<https://www.redditicittadinanza.gov.it/>

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 childcare and preschool coverage and extending the length of paternity and maternity leaves. In 2014, Congress approved a bill reforming the Federal Law of State Workers, giving state employees a 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 childcare 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 childcare in comparison to OECD countries is quite low.

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. It must be assumed that the number of unreported cases is much higher. 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.

In autumn 2019, President López Obrador presented a plan to tackle femicide. However, there are doubts that it is largely a statement of intent that lacks concrete measures. Meanwhile, the Proigualdad program, which includes far-reaching measures to achieve effective equality between men and women, and will be given a concrete budget, is still being prepared.

Citation:

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

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<https://justiceinmexico.org/femicidesinmexico/>

https://elpais.com/sociedad/2019/11/21/actualidad/1574372158_615125.html

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 years old) with children below six years of age reaches a mere 40%, and the gender employment gap for young women (20 – 29 years old) 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. Another financial disincentive that undermines female labor market participation is the loss of the dependent spouse allowance households face when a secondary earner enters the labor market. The number of spaces in childcare facilities have remained limited since the late 1990s and have not kept up with the increase in the birth rate. The proportion of children between four years old and the starting age for compulsory education in early childhood education in Slovakia is the lowest in the European Union, while the proportion of children below the age of three in early childhood education is the second lowest in the European Union. As a result, motherhood has a particularly discouraging effect on female employment in Slovakia compared to other European countries.

Compared to their predecessors, the Fico and 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. In the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections, Smer-SD has returned to its previous policy model. The government has increased the parental allowance by €100 per month for children below the age of three, although only for children that are not enrolled in a public childcare facility.

Citation:

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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 leave as well as enrollment of children between 3 and 5 in formal pre-primary education.

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 2018, a new law providing two weeks of paternity leave to fathers was enacted. There are currently additional initiatives by left and green-liberal parties to establish longer parental leave periods.

In general, Swiss family policy has a clearly conservative outlook with a strong liberal undertone. It is mildly supportive of the traditional family: In addition to a number of childcare facilities, Switzerland offers some tax deductions, a parental leave period of 14 weeks to mothers and, more recently, the aforementioned two weeks of parental leave to fathers.

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. In this regard, the OECD recently suggested expanding affordable childcare and access to early childhood education so that women can increase their working hours. Currently, 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.

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 Bundesamt für Sozialversicherungen 2017: Schweizerische Sozialversicherungsstatistik 2017, Bern: BSV

Turkey

Score 4

In 2018, there were 40.8 million women in Turkey, with 31.5 million women aged 15 and over. In June 2019, the population aged 15 and over included 31.1 million women, but only 9.1 million of these women were employed and 1.7 million women were unemployed. During the same period, the female labor-force participation rate was 34.7%, the female employment rate was 28% and the female unemployment rate was 15.6%. Note that the labor-force participation rate of women in Turkey remains quite low, far below the EU average. In June 2019, 26.8% of the female labor force was employed in agriculture, 15.1% in industry and 58.1% in services. Of these working women, 43.3% 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. There is a wide gap between the employment rates of women and men, and a gender pay gap is observed for all levels of educational attainment.

Several national and local-level initiatives in recent years have ostensibly been aimed at helping women become more employable, helping them find more and higher-quality jobs, and in general helping to remove obstacles to their participation in the workforce. However, there have been many shortcomings in the implementation and proper monitoring of these policies. In general, the government's conservative stance on women and family affairs (e.g., concerning the number of children, or women's roles) has provoked ongoing public debate on gender equality in the labor market and public life more generally

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