



Families Report

Family Policy

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2022

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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 of newborns to benefits equal to her/his previous salary for 435 days. This system, which has been in place since 2004, has been revised several times in order to make it more flexible and gender neutral. 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. The latest amendments (which have been in force since April 2022) grant parents an extra 10 days of paid holiday per parent until the child reaches 14 years of age.

While the parental benefit system prioritizes stay-at-home parents over working parents of small children, access to preschool childcare is generally good for over-threes and reasonably affordable. Only 5% of preschoolers did not attend a nursery because of a lack of places. Limited capacity for special needs children has recently been identified as a significant issue (Lang et al. 2021)

Citation:

Lang et al. (2021) Alushariduse ja lapsehoiu uuring.
https://www.sm.ee/sites/default/files/alushariduse_ja_lapsehoiu_uuring.pdf

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. The fact that income taxes are calculated by on the basis of family unit and not individually is also very favorable to families, since (non-working or lower-paid) spouses and children lower the amount of taxable income per head. 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 two births per woman between 2006 and 2014 to 1.87 births per woman in 2019), 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) by reducing the child allowance for families earning incomes above a certain 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. President Macron continued this policy. His presidency has added both more restrictive and more generous measures (e.g., the parental leave extended from 14 to 28 days) without major impact on the existing pattern of family policy.

Iceland

Score 10

Family policy has long supported women's work outside the home. As a result, Iceland's rate of female participation in the labor force, at 75% in 2020, has long been among the highest in the world. For comparison, the average labor force participation rate for women in the OECD region as well as in the European Union in 2020 was 51%. For further comparison, Iceland's rate of male participation in the labor force was 83% in 2020 compared with 68% in the OECD region on average and 63% in the European Union. Accordingly, the male-female differential is smaller in Iceland than in most other countries. Family policy has also encouraged a more equitable distribution of the burden of child rearing between genders. Parental leave and kindergartens contribute to this situation. Parental leave is 12 months for a child, six months per parent of which six weeks are transferable. Most children are offered places at kindergartens, which are professionally run by the municipalities.

Citation:

Gender Equality in Iceland 2017. The Center for Gender Equality (Jafnréttisstofa).

Hreinsdóttir, A. M. (2019). Styrkleikar leikskólastigsins á Íslandi: Vangaveltur um skýrslu Eurydice fyrir árið 2019. <https://skolathraedir.is/2019/09/10/styrkleikar-leikskolastigsins-a-islandi-vangaveltur-um-skyrslu-eurydice-fyrir-arid-2019/>.

World Bank, World Development Report (2022), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.NE.ZS>. Accessed 1 February 2022.

<https://vinnumalastofnun.is/faedingarorlofsjodur/starfsmadur/rettur-til-faedingarorlofs>

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.

Benefits include an obligatory two-week leave for mothers immediately before or after they give birth. This is either paid, or the compensation is deferred to a subsequent period of leave (Dufvander and Löfgren, 2020). The other parent is entitled to 10 days of paid leave associated either with childbirth or adoption (to be taken within 60 days). For both parents, 77.6% of their regular salary is paid by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). The 10-day benefit is gender-neutral and is given to the parent that was not pregnant. If the parent who has been pregnant is a single parent, the benefit may be allocated to another person who is close to them (Dufvander and Löfgren, 2020).

Beyond this short-term benefit, the Swedish system for parental leave is comprehensive, egalitarian and flexible. Each parent is entitled to full-time leave from work until their child is 18 months old, regardless of whether they are using paid benefits. Parents with joint custody are eligible for 240 days of parental leave benefit each until the child turns 12 years old; some days are transferrable between them while others are non-transferable (Försäkringskassan 2021). For 390 of the total 480 days, the benefits provided during parental leave are based on income – up to an earnings ceiling. A flat rate of SEK 180 per day is provided for the remainder of the time (Försäkringskassan 2021). Parents can take full-time or part-time paid leave days, and can combine paid and unpaid leave to enable parents to stay at home

longer. Regardless, all parental leave benefits offer pension credits (Dufvander and Löfgren, 2020).

Additionally, early childhood education and care services are provided beginning at 12 months. This is full-time for the children of full-time employed parents, and part-time for unemployed parents' children (Dufvander and Löfgren, 2020).

Regarding the pandemic response, the government made a conscious decision to keep the schools open (Petridou 2020) in order to allow parents to continue going to work. Measures enacted in 2020 to make it easier for parents to stay home and take care of their sick children remained in place in 2021, and as of January 2022 they were set to expire in March 2022 (Försäkringskassan, 2022).

Citation:

Dufvander, Ann-Zofie and Niklas Löfgren. 2020. "Sweden Country Note." in Koslowski, A., Blum, S., Dobrotić, I., Kaufman, G. and Moss, P. (eds.) "International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2020." http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports/

Försäkringskassan. 2022. "Coronaviruset – Det Här Gäller." <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/privatpers/coronaviruset-det-har-galler>

Försäkringskassan. 2021. "Parental Benefit." <https://www.forsakringskassan.se/english/parents/when-the-child-is-born/parental-benefit>

Petridou, Evangelia. 2020. "Politics and Administration in Times of Crisis: Explaining the Swedish Response to the Covid-19 Crisis." *European Policy Analysis* 6: 147-58.

Denmark

Score 9

By international comparison, Denmark performs well in terms of its family policy. Day care centers, preschools and kindergartens provide both parents the flexibility needed to work. In fact, 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 a better work-life balance. Social parties and business play a role too. The government is proposing an increase in the number of employees per child resulting in a proposal that increases spending by DKK 1.4 billion until 2024.

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.

Citation:

Ministry of Finance: Finanslovsforslaget, August 2021. (https://fm.dk/media/25143/hverdagen-tilbage-nu-ser-vi-fremad_web-a.pdf)

Luxembourg

Score 9

In Luxembourg, an automatic wage and salary adjustment to consumer prices used to be applied also to pensions and other social transfers. Nevertheless, since 2006 family benefits had been excluded from this mechanism.

The governmental coalition program of 2018 reintroduced regular adjustment of child benefits in line with consumer prices, which is implemented from January 2022 onwards. Through the Children's Future Fund (Caisse pour l'Avenir des Enfants - CAE - Zukunftskeess), which is a public institution under the Ministry for Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region, are granted benefits to parents and children, including family allowance, the back-to-school allowance (allocation de rentrée scolaire), the childbirth allowance, the special supplementary allowance, the parental leave. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) free of charge are made available for low-income households, via child, care vouchers, including free access to crèches for up to 20 hours a week during school terms (46 weeks).

From January 2020, the government increased also the "High-cost-of-living" allowance (Allocation de vie chère [AVC]), which is allotted to low-income households to compensate for high subsistence costs (e.g., energy costs). This subsidy of €1,452/year (for a single person) is increased by €63 for every additional person in the household (with an upper limit of €2,904/year). Due to the coronavirus crisis, the AVC has been doubled only for the year 2020, with a further increase from 1 January 2022 onwards (by €200 for a single person, augmented by €50 for every additional person in the household).

New policies have emerged in the housing sector, especially since rents and prices have been rising dramatically for many years (14.5% in 2020 alone). Thus, alongside the "Housing Pact 2.0" (Pacte logement 2.0) in force since July 2021, the government has announced the construction of 8,200 additional housing units by public developers, by 2025. Indirect help is also offered, such as subsidized mortgage interest rates, with this depending on the number of children at home.

By international comparison, 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 childcare facilities system facilitates women's active life. However, despite a strong increase in recent years, the workforce participation rate among women from 15 to 64 years remains relatively low at 64 % (2020), compared to an EU average of 67.2%, but is higher than OECD average (59.6%).

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 the gender-based job segmentation and gender pay gap have decreased. In 2020, the country ranks 10th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index (with a score 2.4 points above the EU's score).

Citation:

“Récapitulatif: Les nouveaux paramètres sociaux en janvier 2022.” PaperJam (4 January 2022). <https://paperjam.lu/article/nouveaux-parametres-sociaux-en>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

“De Budget 2022.” Luxembourg’s Stat Budget 2022 official website. The Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. <https://budget.public.lu/lb.html>. Accessed 3 January 2022.

“Nouveautés 2022.” Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg (30 December 2021). <https://paperjam.lu/article/nouveaux-parametres-sociaux-en>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

“Rapport d’activité 2020 du ministère de la Famille, de l’Intégration et à la Grande Région” (6 June 2021). <https://mfamigr.gouvernement.lu/en/publications.gouvernement%2Ben%2Bpublications%2Brapport-activite%2Bminist-famille-integration-grande-region%2Bmfamigr%2B2020-rapport-activite-mfamigr.html>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

“Children, young people & families.” Caritas Luxembourg. <https://www.caritas.lu/en/children-young-people-families/services>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

“Employment and unemployment rate, by sex and age group, quarterly data (2007-2020).” OECD Statistics. <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54744>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

“Study to support the evaluation of the EU Strategic Framework on health and safety at work 2014-2020.” European Commission (2021). <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8413&furtherPubs=yes>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

“Women in Work Index 2021. The impact of Covid-19 on women in work “.” <https://www.strategyand.pwc.com/de/en/functions/organisational-strategy/women-in-work.html>. Accessed 14 January 2022.

Norway

Score 9

The labor market participation rate for women in Norway is among the highest in the world; at above 70% it is almost at par with that of men. However, there is a significant and persistent gender segregation of the labor market: women work part-time in the public sector, men work full-time in the private sector. The fertility rate has for several years been close to the population replacement rate, but has in the last few years fallen, coming closer to the European average.

Norway’s family policy has been driven by a widely shared objective of providing women the same economic and career opportunities as those available to men. On the one hand, this has implied a gradual erosion of benefits and tax rules that favors the single-breadwinner family. On the other hand, a generous system of paid parental leave has been developed, now providing a 12-month leave during which one receives 80% of one’s regular wage. One-third of the paid leave is reserved for the

father only. To promote labor market participation for parents with children of preschool age, a right to heavily state-subsidized childcare services has been introduced.

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 10 years, the number of children enrolled in nursery schools has almost doubled. In January 2021, the Janša government introduced a new policy that provides families free nursery schooling for the second child, if first child is also enrolled, plus all children in families with three or more children are eligible for free nursery care. While the incidence of part-time work is growing slowly, most women work full time. 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.

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.

Previously, however, Canada did not have a universal childcare system, although some provinces had 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. However, throughout the summer and fall of 2021, the government began moving toward universal childcare, negotiating and signing Early Learning and Childcare agreements with most of the provinces. The goal is to make childcare more affordable, eventually reducing the cost of regulated care to \$10 a day by 2025-

2026 and reducing costs to parents by 50% in the interim. At the time of writing, all but Ontario had signed on to the agreements. In the case of Québec which already has a full-fledged care system in place funding will be used to enhance their system. Budget 2021 has dedicated \$29.8 billion to the new initiative, to be allocated over the next five years.

This initiative is significant, given the government's commitment to gender equity and coming on the heels of the pandemic when many women had to shoulder both work and childcare in the home environment. Moreover, 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.

Citation:

Government of Canada, A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience: Budget 2021, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html>.

CTV News, "What's the status of Ottawa's childcare deal with the provinces and territories?" 9 November 2021, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/what-s-the-status-of-ottawa-s-child-care-deal-with-the-provinces-and-territories-1.5658879>.

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

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.

According to Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government program, Finnish family policy faces new challenges. These relate to new kinds of needs and the growing complexity of family models (Prime Minister's Office 2019). The traditional nuclear family pattern, with two parents of opposite sexes, is changing. Non-traditional families already account for around one-third of all families in Finland, and the number of blended families and rainbow families is increasing. Existing benefits schemes and service models do not always meet the real needs of families (Eydal et al. 2018). For example, the government program mentioned that access to services – such as couples or divorce counseling, which foster the well-being of families and support parents when they experience parenting or relationship problems – is not systematic or equal across the country.

The core aims of policies aimed at families with children in Finland are twofold: to improve equality between children by ensuring that all children can enjoy a good and safe childhood, regardless of family form and/or the social situation of their families;

and to enhance gender equality by enabling both parents to work and provide care. Family policies in Finland ensure that parents are provided with support to care for their young children both by guaranteeing paid parental leave and offering subsidized childcare and family benefits. Family policy remains somewhat problematic with regard to gender equality. Although the employment rate among women, and in particular the full-time employment rate, is among the highest in the European Union, family policies have still not fully solved the challenge of combining parenting and employment. 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.

Additionally, there are social, healthcare and school services, which aim to ensure children get the best possible service and outcomes, which are either fully financed by the public sector or require parents to pay small user fees. Parents are entitled to a paid leave of absence from their work after the birth of a child, and the law guarantees that parents can return to the same job after the period of leave. Under the Employment Contracts Act, an employee is entitled to a period of leave during which he or she can receive a maternity, special maternity, paternity or parental allowance (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare 2020).

Finland has given children legal rights to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. ECEC services are intended to facilitate female labor market participation, ensure the well-being of children, and – in more recent years – support the development of children’s social and cognitive skills. In other words, ECEC is an investment in children’s beings and becomings. ECEC services are subsidized by the public sector, with parents paying relatively modest user fees compared to other countries.

The most important family cash benefit is the child benefit, which is paid to parents without consideration of the parents’ income or means, and is the same for all children. Finland pays additional benefits to single parents and a supplement for additional children. In addition to child benefits, if a partnership is dissolved resulting in single parenthood, the parent that legally resides with the child often receives a child maintenance payment from the nonresident parent. The amount and the arrangement of the payment is decided during divorce proceedings or in connection with the birth of a child out of marriage, through mutual agreement or a decision from the court or local authorities. Public authorities guarantee maintenance payments for children. Poverty among families with children is most common in single-parent families and in families where children are under the age of three.

Citation:

Katja Repo, "The Contradiction of Finnish Childcare Policies," www.ungdata.no/reassessassets/20608/20608.ppt;
Mia Hakovirta and Minna Rantalaiho, "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

Eydal, G. B., Rostgaard, T., & Hiilamo, H. T. (2018). Family policies in the Nordic countries: aiming at equality. In G. B. Eydal, & T. Rostgaard (Eds), *Handbook of Family Policy* (Pp. 195-208). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784719340.00024>

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. 2020. Gender Equality and Corona Crisis. Accessed, 28.12.

2020.<https://thl.fi/fi/tutkimus-ja-kehittaminen/tutkimukset-ja-hankkeet/koronakriisin-vaikutuksetkukupolten-tasa-arvoon-suomessa>

Prime Minister's Office 2020. "Ecologically and socially sustainable economic growth, high employment and sustainable public finances." Government Programme. Accessed 18.12. 2020.

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/marin/government-programme/finland-as-a-sustainable-economy>

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, was extended in 2007. Parents can receive a parental-leave subsidy for over 14 months with a wage replacement rate ranging from 56% to 100% with an absolute cap of €1,800 per month. The rules for paternal leave have increasingly improved, for example, by allowing for greater flexibility in terms of part-time employment and by incentivizing male uptake.

The number of public childcare slots has also increased. A legal right to childcare beginning at the age of one year came into effect in August 2013. By international standards, the ratio of children under the age of three enrolled in a childcare-facility is below average but on the rise. It reached 35.0% in March 2020, with a strong regional variation between Eastern Germany (52.7%) and Western Germany (31.0%), which mirrors the different traditions of female employment in both parts of the country (Destatis 2021).

The success in the modernization of German family policy is also reflected in a fertility rate that has significantly increased from 1.25 in 1995 to 1.53 in 2020 (Destatis, 2021), a much more positive trend compared to many aging European countries.

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 66.9% of women between 15 and 64 years of age were employed, this figure had risen to 74.9% by 2020 (compared to an OECD average of 65.0%). However, 36.3% of women are working part time, which is well above the OECD average of about 25.4% (OECD 2022).

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, German family policies have reacted in various ways to assist families during lockdowns, school closures and for those parents subject to short-time work or job losses. Measures that were taken since 2020 include: a doubling of children's sick days that parents can take in the event of school or childcare center closures, a higher short-time work replacement rate for parents, and a flat rate additional pandemic bonus in addition to the normal child bonus (Rüb et al., 2021).

Citation:

Destatis (2020), Betreuungsquote der unter 3-jährigen Kinder auf 35.0 % gestiegen, Pressemitteilung Nr. 380 vom 30. September 2020.

Destatis (2021), Zusammengefasste Geburtenziffer, Stand 16. Juli 2021, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Geburten/Tabellen/geburtenziffer.html> (accessed: 10 January 2022)

OECD (2022), Employment database, stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=GENDER_EMP (accessed: 10 January 2022).

Rüb, Friedbert, Friedrich Heinemann and Reimut Zohlnhöfer (2021): Germany Report, Sustainable Governance in the Context of the COVID-19 Crisis, Sustainable Governance Indicators, BertelsmannStiftung.

New Zealand

Score 8

The 2021 Women in Work Index (published by consultancy firm PwC) rates New Zealand third in the OECD, behind Iceland and Sweden (PwC 2021). 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 gender pay gap is significantly lower than the OECD average. The gap has fallen from 16.3% (1998) to 9.1% (2021), but has stalled in the last decade (Ministry for Women 2021). On the other hand, 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 (Ministry for Women 2017). Moreover, the Māori Women's Welfare League and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner have raised the issue that these figures mask significant disparities experienced by Māori and Pacific Islander women. For example, Pacific Islander women earn 27.4% less than the average Pākehā (European-descent) man (RNZ, 2021).

A number of family support policies have been passed under the government of Jacinda Ardern 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 (Bennett 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 \$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 careers. It is estimated that 384,000 families will benefit from the policy package.

In the government's 2019 "well-being" budget, measures to combat family violence received a record investment of \$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 (Owen 2019). The 2020 budget spent \$220.6 million on extending the free school lunch program (Dreaver 2019), while the 2021 budget boosted working-age benefits by \$36/week for single parents and \$55/week for couples with children (Manch 2021).

Citation:

Sources:

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Australia

Score 7

Following large increases in family payments over the early 2000s, in recent years these payments have been scaled back. The high cost of childcare for children not yet at school continues to be a problem for many families in Australia. A new childcare subsidy (CCS) that commenced in 2018 increased subsidies for most families. As of December 2021, those earning AUD 70,015 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 354,305. 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, but costs are still more than 50% higher in real terms than at the start of the decade (2010). Rural areas still have access to less comprehensive services and as a result families in rural areas are disadvantaged.

A government-funded paid parental leave (PPL) scheme was introduced in 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 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 costs to 2017: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/childhood-education-and-care-australia/jun-2017>

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

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-18/new-mum-cry-for-help-parliament-debate-childcare/100838760>

Austria

Score 7

Both the federal 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 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 one and under 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. In addition, 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 in kind allowances. 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.

Recent developments in this area include an increase in the employment rate of mothers in Austria from 64.1% in 2010 to 67.7% in 2020, although this rate is considerably lower than that for employed fathers (nearly 91%). Moreover, in 2020, 72.3% of all employed women with at least one child worked part time, while only 7.3% of fathers worked part time. In 2020, nearly 91% of all employed single parents were mothers. Meanwhile, 71.3% of all single mothers, but only 67.2% of mothers living in a partnership, were employed.

Regarding “childcare enrollment, age 0–2,” Austria now ranks in the lowest third of OECD countries. The score for 2020 marked a slight improvement on the previous period under consideration (2017–19), but is lower than in 2015. A similar pattern and evolutionary dynamic can be observed concerning “childcare enrollment, age 3–5.” However, in this sector, Austria currently ranks just in the upper half of OECD countries.

The country’s suboptimal performance at this level has also come to be reflected in the fertility age of Austrian women – with Austria ranking top of the lowest quarter of OECD countries (30 out of 41 countries). Austria’s score for 2019 (1.46) was the lowest since 2015, but still slightly better than for the period 2010–13 (with scores between 1.43 and 1.44). Child poverty increased only slightly, but the score for 2020 was the worst since the early years of the 21st century.

While more particular assessments of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on single mothers in Austria are lacking, early exploratory studies strongly suggest that the pandemic most likely aggravated the already difficult status of single mothers, despite the various extra benefits for single parents provided by the government.

Citation:
https://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse/125929.html

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, which remain among the highest in the OECD (OECD, 2019). The high costs of childcare and the paucity of public provision in this area have 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 with the introduction of the new Access and Inclusion Model (CI, 2021). The minister claimed that children aged three years and over will be able to access free childcare until they enter primary school. In 2016, parental leave was extended to fathers, with new fathers now able to take two weeks off work following the birth of a child. Employers are not obliged to pay employees during paternity leave, but fathers may qualify for Paternity Benefit, if they have enough PRSI contributions from the Department of Social Protection (CI, 2022).

Child benefits, which had been significantly reduced during the 2008–14 financial crisis, rose to €135 per child per month in 2016 and €140 in 2017, and has remained at that level. This is still below the level in 2009. Furthermore, the benefit does not vary depending on whether the mother is employed outside the home.

Female labor force participation is still quite low relative to Ireland's peer countries in Europe, but there is some evidence that it improved significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, Eurostat data shows that between Q4 2019 and Q4 2021, female labor force participation increased more in Ireland (almost 9%) than in any other euro zone member state (Eurostat, 2022). Female participation is, however, still limited due to the relative lack of affordable preschool nursery care.

Citation:

CI (2021) Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme, Citizens Information, available at: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre_school_education_and_childcare/early_childhood_care_and_education_scheme.html#10b797

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Israel

Score 7

Israel has a mixed family policy that is pro-family while also supporting the integration of mothers into the labor force. The total number of weeks of maternity leave 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.

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, especially for highly educated women. This positive trend is more prevalent among working Jewish women, whose employment rate nearly equals that of Jewish men. In line with government policies, there has been a gradual increase in workforce participation among Arab and ultra-Orthodox Jewish women, although they still lag behind.

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. 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 (Taub Center 2017).

During the initial stages of the pandemic outbreak, women were more likely to lose their jobs than men (Kidar & Yarden 2020). In addition, about 7% of all working mothers did not return to work after the first lockdown (Ilan 2020). A decrease in earnings for women has also become apparent during the crisis (Rosenberg & Demeri, 2020).

Regarding emergency childcare for families, it seems that initiatives in municipalities and local authorities made use of already existing programs to support those in need, such as programs to support families in low-income neighborhoods in Israel (e.g., after-school activities and teaching). These programs are generally run in the neighborhood, and can be used to provide childcare and activities for children to do, instead of the child staying at home while parents work (Almog-Zaken & Sorek 2020)

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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2. The State Social Insurance Agency (2021) Maternity Benefit, Available at: <https://www.vsa.gov.lv/en/services/maternity-benefits>, Last accessed: 03.01.2022.

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 incidence of domestic violence, divorce and single-parent families also present challenges. The country's fertility rate is low in the global context, but average compared to other country's examined in the SGI, and has also been gradually increasing over the last decade. The child poverty rate is average compared to other countries in the SGI report. The female labor force participation rate is very high – the highest among countries surveyed in the SGI report.

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 Skvernelis government gave substantial attention to family policy, and passed measures intended to help parents combine parenting and work as well as increases financial benefits for families with children. The Šimonytė government has continued increasing financial benefits, raised salaries for specialists in the field, and introduced some new services. For instance, from 2022, new preventive social services will be introduced; in addition, 250 individual care specialists will begin working to provide care services for families.

In April 2017, the Skvernelis 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 22% difference between men and women, Malta has the highest gender-based employment gap in the European Union. However, women's participation in the informal economy (which accounts for 21% of GDP) may make this figure somewhat inaccurate. Malta also has the largest share of inactive women due to care responsibilities in the European Union. In the Global Gender Gap Index for 2021, Malta was ranked 84th out of 156 countries. Women score low in terms of formal political and economic engagement. However, the latest index has shown a slight improvement, which might be boosted further by the gender corrective mechanism

legislation that was introduced recently, and women score well in terms of educational attainment.

Malta ranked 13th within the European Union on the 2021 Gender Equality Index, scoring 62 out of 100 points. The country has moved toward gender equality at a faster rate than the EU average, but remains slightly lower than the overall EU average of 68. Mean monthly earnings almost tripled for women and men between 2006 and 2014, but the gender gap persists, with women earning an average of 11% less than men. However, the gap widens to 16% among high-income earners. Women only make up 7.4% of managerial positions in the workforce and, though women with a high level of education make up 34.5% of the female workforce, only 13.4% of women held managerial roles.

Since 2017, nearly 40,000 women have (re-)joined the workforce. 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 childcare centers, school breakfasts, after-school clubs, tapering of benefits, in-work benefits, and lifelong-learning programs. These measures are enabling more women to enter and remain in the labor market. However, research indicates that the pandemic has had a negative influence on mental health. Personal work-life balance became increasingly precarious with job losses, and reduced support from childcare, school facilities and extended families. The pandemic thus exacerbated gender inequality in the family, since women continue to be the primary care givers. Female participation in the workforce declined in 2020 and 2021, and reached pre-COVID-19 figures in 2022.

The parents of more than 15,800 children are benefiting from free childcare facilities. As a result, Malta experienced a large boost in the labor market participation rate and currently surpasses the EU average (77.3% compared to 72.1% in 2021). 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 2022 budget has introduced and continued to consolidate measures that benefit families, such as the extension of free childcare to support parents that work shifts and weekends, an increased bonus of €400 for every child born or adopted, increased allowances to support families with disabled children, and in-school support for materially disadvantaged students. The introduction of free childcare services for jobless parents is also being explored.

Citation:

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Central Bank of Malta (2020) An Analysis of the Shadow Economy in Malta: A Currency Demand and MIMIC Model Approach

Times of Malta 03/12/2021 Malta Has Highest Share of Inactive Women Due to Care Responsibilities in EU
The Malta Independent 19/06/2021 Malta in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/compare-countries>
 European Semester Thematic Factsheet – Women in the Labor Market p. 2
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics
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https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_labour_market_-_quarterly_statistics#Main_indicators
 Malta Today 30/01/2019 More Than 15,800 Children Benefiting from Free Child Care Services
 The Budget Speech 2022 (English) p. 34, p. 10, p. 11, p. 17
 Malta Today 25/06/2021 Free Childcare for Families with Jobless Parents Proposed
 Malta Today 25/06/21 Covid19 effect on families
 The Journal.mt More than 40,000 women joined or rejoined the workforce in 2017
 NSO Malta 2021 Malta Labour force
 NSO News release March 2019

Portugal

Score 7

As noted in the previous edition, the birth rate rose 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, this number diminished to 8.2 in 2020, after already having dropped to 8.4 in 2019.

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 further by the country’s 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.

During the period under review, the government introduced several additional measures, including an extension of fathers’ mandatory parental leave from 15 to 20 days; more tax deductions for families with children under three, from the second child on; and pre-kindergarten financial support for families, with low-income families provided with free access to pre-kindergarten services.

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:

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UN, “World Population Prospects 2019 Data Booklet,” available online at: https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_DataBooklet.pdf

Spain

Score 7

Traditionally, Spain is categorized within the Southern European social model, due largely to its strong dependence on family assistance and support. However, concerns about very low fertility rates have grown since the 1990s, which has awakened a new sensibility to the need to support caregiving performed by families. Family policy in Spain has evolved from support for the patriarchal family to a recognition of family pluralism, and from the evolution of the family salary to a policy that aims to combat poverty and promote family-work life balance.

Budgetary limitations and the slow implementation of programs that provide care for dependents has made it difficult for women to free themselves of the burden of family care. In 2021, the government adopted an expansion of free childcare for children three years old and under. Previously, Spanish public schooling had been free for children from three to 18 years of age.

Paternity leave in Spain was also increased. Since 2020, male employees can take up to 12 weeks of paternity leave. The 2021 budget plan included a further rise in paternity leave from 12 to 16 weeks.

There is a wage and pension-value gap of close to 23% between men and women, and unemployment rates are disproportionately high among women.

Royal Law-Decree 6/2019 addresses urgent measures to ensure equal opportunities, and equal treatment between men and women at work. At the beginning of December 2020, the Spanish government adopted two complementary decrees intended to improve gender equality in the workplace. The Equality Plan Decree (Royal Decree 901/2020) regulates the minimum requirements for company equality plans (the diagnosis, contents, issues to be treated, pay audits, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms) as well as the registration of these plans. The Equal Pay Decree (Royal Decree 902/2020) refers to the obligation that professional classifications be carried out based on nondiscriminatory criteria.

The various pieces of legislation within the autonomous communities provide different solutions to discrimination based on gender identity. Some autonomous communities have established joint anti-discrimination protections on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation (Galicia, Catalonia, Extremadura, Murcia and Andalusia). Others have established specific and differentiated protection based on sexual identity (the Chartered Community of Navarre, the Basque Country, the Canary Islands, Madrid, the Valencian Community and Aragon).

Nevertheless in 2021, Spain was ranked by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report at 14th out of 156 countries (2020, eighth out of 156 countries). In fact, much as in other countries, the coronavirus crisis led to a resurgence in traditional family roles in Spain.

In 2020 and 2021, the government approved family support policies designed to ensure a fair distribution of the burden between the partners during the crisis, such as the urgent action plan adopted in March 2020. In 2021, workers' rights and support in the area of work-life balance have been strengthened. For example, workers can

request greater flexibility in work hours or a reduction in working hours in order to take care of family members.

In September 2021, in coordination with other departments, the Ministry of Equality launched the preparation of a blueprint aiming to design policies for the reconciliation of family life and employment, expected to be delivered in one year. The goal is to reduce the amount of people who are not able to shorten their work days in order to take care of relatives (49.6% in 2018, according to INE).

Citation:

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United Kingdom

Score 7

Over the last 20 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 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 did not result in any statistically significant betterment in the living conditions of the supported families, though 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, negatively affected some core family policy measures, especially for single mothers who rely disproportionately on social benefits. Initial difficulties around the introduction of Universal Credit have had negative effects on some families, not least by lowering support for larger families.

The lockdown during the pandemic presented a considerable challenge to families, as schools closed, and parents were furloughed or worked from home. This particularly affected women, while men increased their relative share in paid work. As a study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies shows, compared to fathers, mothers

were 47% more likely to lose their jobs, were more likely to be furloughed and 50% more likely to have their work hours cut. It seems that – during the lockdown – the government mainly responded to this with remote working solutions, which proved inconsistent with adequate childcare, thus widening the UK gender pay gap and worsening policy goals compared with the pre-pandemic situation. However, a temporary £20 per week increase in Universal Credit payments was seen as a valuable support, although there was dismay when it was then ended in the autumn of 2021.

Citation:

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

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<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/07/how-coronavirus-is-widening-the-uk-gender-pay-gap>

<https://ifs.org.uk/publications/14861>

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. This is the case partly because of the lack of federal paid parental leaves and limited access to affordable, subsidized childcare in many states. 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.

Before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration's main actions affecting low-income families consisted of strengthening work requirements in cash assistance, food stamps and low-income healthcare programs. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the United States witnessed an expansion of family benefits. For instance, in March 2021, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan, which featured a major expansion of the federal Child Tax Credit for one year. Later in the year, as part of the Build Back Better debate, Democrats sought but ultimately failed to prolong this temporary expansion of the Child Tax Credit for a second year.

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

Negative population growth is a challenge with regard to achieving a sustainable family policy in the country. Since the last 2011 census, the population has fallen by 11.5% (2021), and the average family size declined from 2.4 to 2.3 members.

The WEF's Gender Gap Report of 2021 gives Bulgaria relatively high marks, but it has fallen somewhat as a result of poor educational attainment numbers for women in the country.

In 2021, the tax allowance for raising children was increased to above the national poverty line, to BGN 450 a year for one child, BGN 900 for two, and BGN 1,350 for three kids, no income criteria has been applied since 2020. Maternity leave (including pregnancy) is two years and applies to adopted children.

Other childcare bonuses may be negotiated on a contractual basis with employers. Due to labor shortages, employers are typically flexible in keeping qualified mothers in the firm or the organization. The choice of full or part-time employment schedules for mothers is not exclusively guaranteed but is practiced, especially in high value-added occupations and firms.

Child support: Bulgaria is among the countries with the longest paid maternity leave globally. Whereas the EU average is at 20 weeks, in Bulgaria, paid maternity leave is nearly 100 weeks. Against this background, ahead of the November elections, the parliament voted an increase in the compensation for maternity leave from BGN 380 to 650, starting October 2021. This amount is approximately 75% of a Bulgarian woman's net salary for 2019 (the latest gender wage statistics); in nine of 28 country districts, the amount of the maternity compensation is 100 or above 100% of female net wage. These policies do not seem to have any impact on demographic trends.

Family networks, and specifically the traditional involvement of grandparents in caring for children, constitute an important source of support that enables parents to be more economically active. This perhaps accounts in part for the relatively low rate of day care enrollment for children below two years of age. It also serves as a safety net for old age family members, because in-family redistribution rate is about 20% of the income.

Czechia

Score 6

As evidenced by the female employment rate in Czechia being below the OECD average, parents' effective freedom to decide whether or not to work is limited. The main obstacle is the poor provision of care for very young children, the availability of which declined significantly during the 1990s, and has shown little improvement more recently. Enrollment in facilities for children aged 0–2 is rather low. The

situation is better among older age groups, reaching 93% for five year olds, as kindergarten attendance during the last year of preschool has been mandatory since 2017. While public support for alternative forms of childcare, including corporate kindergartens and so-called children's groups, has expanded, the gap in childcare facilities has persisted. A further reason for the low employment rate of women with young children is the lack of willingness among employers to provide part-time work or flexible working hours. Although the Labor Code entitles parents caring for a child under 15 years old to part-time work, only 9.9% of women were employed part-time in 2020, much less than the OECD average.

The Babiš government has done relatively little to address these issues. In 2019, it reduced the ceiling on the level of earnings required to be eligible for a parental allowance benefit, but also allowed parents to put their children in kindergarten while receiving parental allowance and increased the limit for placing children under two years of age into preschool care to 92 hours a month. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government also extended the nursing allowance, a social benefit for persons who cannot work full-time because they care for a child, or a sick or disabled family member, with the view of supporting families hit by kindergarten and school closures. However, these measures, though they have improved the material situation of families, have not been sufficient to prevent a resurgence of traditional gender roles.

Netherlands

Score 6

By far the biggest scandal in 2021 was the childcare benefits tax scandal, which eventually led to the fall of the Rutte III government. Thousands of families fell victim to a rigid, automated tax system aimed at detecting fraud. As a result, many innocent families were forced to pay back large amounts of money to the state. This resulted in family tragedies, divorces, the loss of homes, mounting debts, children growing up in poverty and distress, and in some cases even out-of-home placement. Many victims still have not been fully compensated. The fallout of the scandal has influenced the whole Dutch welfare system, trust in government and the overall political climate.

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. During the coronavirus crisis, families received some compensation for the period when childcare facilities were closed.

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. In spite of some success in the recent years, violence has been seen to flare up again within a year and a half in 53% of the families that have received help. In response, the government is investing an additional € million in 2022 for regional and local efforts to tackle the problem.

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. However, recent further cuts have exacerbated the situation. Short-term solutions at the municipal level cannot make up for the structural problems in the sector.

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. For the first time, the number of full-time working women exceeded 1 million. The share of working women with only lower levels of education is still very low, at about 20%. Recently, the government announced plans to increase parental leave significantly, including paternal leave for fathers, in an effort to address these difficulties. The plan will be implemented in 2022.

The coronavirus crisis affected Dutch families in a number of crucial ways. First, the government chose to support businesses, without providing direct support to families. Alleviation efforts for families were organized at the municipal level, with varying degrees of success. Second, working families with children, particularly those with low incomes and a disadvantaged background, experienced an extra strain due to home schooling or the need to provide day care. Third, the situation with youth services worsened, leaving many families in distress, sometimes producing abuse and complex psychological issues as a result. Fourth, many students lost their part-time jobs, returned to live at home and experienced study delays, all of which added to the financial burden of families.

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

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Geen betere Cao Ziekenhuizen: vakbonden starten eind juni met acties, 6 juni 2019, Zorggids Nederland

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

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Chile

Score 5

In recent years, governments have 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. The budget 2015 of

former President Michelle Bachelet 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), independent 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. However, this was ultimately rejected by the parliamentary commission due to concerns with the proposed financial outlays and the administrative mechanism for the funding.

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 (1,825 hours per year and worker) far exceed the OECD average (about 1,687 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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On the national social program "Chile Crece contigo":

Chilean Government, <https://www.crececontigo.gob.cl>, last accessed: 13 January 2022.

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Croatia

Score 5

The gender gap in employment rate for those 20 – 64 years old is approximately 10 percentage points, which is slightly lower than the EU-27 average. At approximately 12 percentage points, the gender pay gap in Croatia is less than the average such

figure in the EU as a whole. When it comes to education, the picture looks different. The share of females in the 20-34 age cohort who earn a university degree is 17 percentage points higher than among the corresponding male group, and is higher than the EU average.

The country seems ready to complete a full 30-year circle with regard to maternity leave. In 1993, the government abolished the right to a full salary after a one-year period after the birth of a child, being the only former Yugoslav country to do so. In 2020, the maternity pay cap between the sixth and 12th month of leave was raised from HRK 3,991 per month to HRK 5,564 HRK per month, while the first six months provide full salary coverage. In autumn 2021, the government announced that it intended to go even further, and lift the cap on the salary coverage in the period from the sixth to 12th month of maternity leave. It remains to be seen how the whole scheme will be financed in light of existing fiscal pressures. The government also obliged itself to introduce paid paternal leave by August 2022, according to EU directive 2010/18/EU.

Childcare facilities and extended-day school programs are unsatisfactory. Childcare coverage is especially poor in less-developed rural and semi-rural areas with low employment rates, reflecting the inability of local governments to pay for services. Even the richest parts of Croatia, such as the capital city of Zagreb, lack necessary kindergartens due to the concentration of younger families in the most economically vibrant parts of the country. All of this complicates the work-life balance for younger parents, and is additionally compounded by the poor track record of policies aimed at the elderly population. There is a dearth of adequate nursing homes and trained personnel, which will become an even more pressing issue with the rapidly aging population.

There is no coherent national strategy for demographic revival, and existing initiatives are poorly coordinated. For example, the leftist coalition that took over the mayor's office in Zagreb decided to scrap "parent-educator" measures targeting families with three or more children. This measure had enabled mothers to stay at home and raise their children. Even though the measure had been fiscally unsustainable, its abrupt termination, with a short phase-out period, will push many large families into social exclusion. Finally, parents of disabled children still find themselves in a very precarious situation, in spite of some improvements over the last two years. The financial costs to support disabled children and their medical bills stand in no correlation with the monthly payment of HRK 4,000 per caregiver parent.

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 if both parents work, families care for their elderly or disabled at home, parents help around the house and feed the younger generation, sometimes long after children become adults.

Traditionally, the burden of caring for the very old and the very young within households, falls on the shoulders of women. In the context of that tradition, female labor force participation in Greece is among the lowest in the OECD. Thus, women who stay at home taking care of family members may not contribute to the family incomes. If a family is poor, this condition negatively affects child poverty levels, which 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, since 2017, the government has distributed a guaranteed minimum income (GMI) to the poorest Greek families. It also established a child allowance, which is distributed to families with an annual income up to €15,000.

After the change in government in 2019, the new government combined the GMI and the child allowance with a housing benefit and an additional allowance of €2,000 per each new born child, which was distributed in 2020 and 2021. These policy measures are implemented through the state agency OPEKA. Moreover, in the same period, the government increased tax breaks for all families with children regardless of family income and tax breaks targeted at families with three or more children. The government's aim was to support poor families, but also to help curb the demographic decline of the Greek population. In 2020, the government amended the relevant legislation to include permanent residents among the family allowance beneficiaries.

While family support has improved over time, for a poor family, the best option would be for the mother to enter the labor force and, in particular, to become a public sector worker. Notably, a young mother employed in the public sector receives much better support than a mother who is self-employed or is employed in the private sector. Female public sector workers 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 sometimes the case for women employed in the private sector.

Although the Greek state has made family support more comprehensive over time, it still depends on EU funding for the provision of nursery services offered by the local government. Many low-income families benefit from European Social Fund (ESF) projects, which finance Greece's municipal nurseries.

In summary, in the period under review, the Greek state started streamlining a policy to reconcile work and family life, but still 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, fertility rate and female participation rate is provided by the SGI database on this platform.

The relevant legislation are Laws 4512/2018 and 4659/2020.

The latest information on the new child allowance, distributed by the government, through the OPEKA organization, is available (in Greek) at Translation-Verification@britishcouncil.gr

Hungary

Score 5

The Orbán governments have placed strong emphasis on family policy in a wide sense, but have done little to enable women to combine childcare and career. Most of the government's measures have been financial, providing help for families with respect to buying real estate or even bigger cars for families with many children. By contrast, few measures (most notably a measure that allows grandparents to take "parental" leave) have helped young parents to combine work and family duties. The background of these measures is a decline in the size of Hungary's population, and the refusal of the government to balance low birth rates and brain drain with immigration. The measures so far have not stopped this trend and have favored high income decennials over poorer ones. As recent data shows, it is only the highest income groups that keep family size stable (Vida 2021).

In terms of political communication, support for and protection of families has figured prominently on the Fidesz agenda for some time. Katalin Novák, state secretary for families and youth in the Ministry of Human Capacities (EMMI) since 2014, became family minister without portfolio in October 2020. After her nomination to the office of Hungarian president in late 2021, her responsibilities were transferred to the Prime Minister's Office. The Orbán government's family policy has emphasized traditional Christian values. It has produced a political hysteria around the danger of gender issues for Hungarian families, supposedly against the alleged Western practice of trans-operations on young children. The Orbán government has presented these controversies as the main reason for the clash with the European Union over the recovery funds.

Citation:

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Italy

Score 5

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, which continues to decline.

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.

However, the new citizen's income can to some extent provide help for needy families even if it is not specially tailored for them. Under the second Conte government, the "Assegno Unico per i figli" project (a single, unified allowance for children) was launched. The project, which was finalized under the Draghi government, will provide an allowance for every child from birth to the age of 21.

Citation:

<https://www.redditicittadinanza.gov.it/> (accessed 2 January 2022)

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Japan

Score 5

While the employment rate among women aged 15 to 64 remains at around 71% in 2021 – a level higher than that observed in the United States – the majority of employed women work in part-time, non-regular jobs. Several policy measures aimed at addressing these issues have been implemented since the 1990s but without much success.

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 daycare 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% in 2012 to 5% in 2017, but this number is still low, and many fathers take only a few days leave.

In 2020, the country recorded its lowest number of births, at 840,832. The birth rate has stabilized at a low level of around 1.4 births per woman with the government's target rate of 1.8 remaining out of reach.

The main reason the Japanese government is unable to achieve its aims of improving women's employment conditions and raising fertility rate is that its family policies are not in sync with labor market and employment policies. Women are unable to gain a greater foothold and advance their careers despite generous childcare and other positive family policies because employers and employment practices continue to discriminate women. As women continue to experience gender inequality and employment insecurity in the labor market, they will continue to postpone marriage and childbirth. The question is whether the government is willing to address this gap between positive family policies and the lack of gender-sensitive employment and labor market policies

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>

Japan's births in 2020 lowest ever: fewer marry since WWII's end, *Asahi Shimbun*, June 4, 2021, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14365588>

Poland

Score 5

Poland's employment rate among women falls below the OECD and EU averages. The PiS government has followed a very traditional approach toward family policy. The cornerstone of the latter, which featured prominently already in the 2015 election campaign, has been the "Family 500" (€16) program, in effect since 1 April 2016 and paid to parents with two or more children for each child irrespective of the parents' income (Ciesielska-Klikowska 2020). Since May 2019, all families (not only poor) have been eligible to receive a grant of PLN 500 for their first child. This has increased the estimated costs of the "Family 500" program from 1.3% to 1.7% of Poland's GDP. Similar payments exist in other EU member states, but in the Polish case, the sum is high compared to the average income. While the measures have improved the financial situation of Polish families, this program has reduced labor market participation rates among women by an estimated 2–3 percentage points since 2016 without having positive effects on the birth rate. In addition, there are benefits for families in difficult situations or with disabled children. Regarding childcare facilities, by contrast, nothing has improved so far. Currently, 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 children aged three and over 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.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government established additional financial support schemes for parents. Yet, it did little against the increase in domestic violence. While a new law from April 2020 allows for the immediate separation of

perpetrators of domestic violence from the victims, domestic violence is still considered a “family issue.” Moreover, the PiS government has considered leaving the Council of Europe’s Istanbul convention on the prevention of domestic violence. The controversies over family policy were stirred by a decision of the Constitutional Tribunal in October 2020, which declared abortions for health reasons to be unconstitutional.

As part of the “Polish Deal” and a new demographic strategy, the PiS government announced a number of new measures for families in 2021 (Wilczek 2021). It has launched an additional new child benefit scheme (“Parental Care Capital”), which will entitle parents to a total PLN 12,000 (€2,610) for each child after their firstborn between the age of 12 and 36 months. It has also announced that it will facilitate access to housing for families with small children, and provide guarantees of flexible work for pregnant women and parents of children aged up to four. The government’s Demographic Strategy 2040 includes measures to limit several financial incentives to married couples.

Citation:

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Romania

Score 5

Parental leave in Romania is an exemplary feat and a model for most developed economies. A report by the OECD and European Union on the quality of leave ranks Romania’s program as second, as it pertains to entitlement. The current plan offers 92 weeks of full pay and the longest leave reserved for fathers. The benefit amounts to 85% of the mean monthly gross income obtained in the last six months before maternity leave begins and considers the mother’s previous breaks from employment. Maternity benefits are not taxed and are funded by the national budget for social health insurance and are only given to residents that contribute to the social security system, irrespective of their occupational status. Paternity benefits are limited to a maximum of 15 days with 100% of earnings covered. Parental leave is permitted, prior to the child turning two years old, with each parent having 12 months of paid leave available at 85% coverage, or no less than €258.71 and no more than €1,759.29 a month. Since LGBTQ marriage or adoptions are not legally recognized in Romania, there is no provision for same-sex parents.

As it pertains to a child’s (aged 3–5) access to benefits, such as childhood education or care, Romania ranks toward the bottom of OECD and EU lists. As it pertains to the affordability of childcare, Romania ranks in the middle-third of the list.

According to the report, parents in Romania rely on informal care, or care provided without remuneration by relatives, friends or neighbors. Romania's participation rates of young children in childcare illustrate shortcomings in both the quality and quantity of these services, but also the lack of funding of said programs and a lack of services – both setbacks accentuated by the pandemic.

As in most EU member states, employment rates for women in Romania are lower than those for men. A report by MDPI found that the gender split in the Romanian workforce is wide, with only 23.7% of women participating in the pandemic workforce, while 76.3% are male. Moreover, 87% of the population that is looking for work or is unemployed are women, while only 13% are men.

A recurring hindrance for women in the workforce, both for those participating and wanting to enter it, is harassment. In Romania, 30% of women (44% of all Romanians) say they have been affected by physical or sexual violence – 12% of victims say that they experience such behaviors constantly. Only 21% said they went to superiors, while another 20% preferred to keep quiet and endure the situation. Most concerning, however, is that 30% of respondents found that once they confronted the aggressor, their situation got worse. That is because 35% found their superiors or employers to be the ones sexually harassing them. In 2019, 20,000 women were physically assaulted by a domestic partner and 44 died. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for prevention and support services for victims of violence. By March 2020, the number of domestic violence offenses had increased by 2.3% from 2019. The existing measures to combat violence against women are still insufficient. In 2019, police were finally given the power to issue restraining orders on the spot, but 36% of restraining orders were still broken in 2019. When women complain about or report violations of restraining orders to the authorities, they are often met with suspicion, doubt and victim-blaming.

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South Korea

Score 5

Despite substantial effort, 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. Cultural (traditional family values that view women as mothers and housewives) 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. COVID-19 exacerbated these gender gaps, as disproportionately more women than men were laid off and/or exited the workforce. Women's rate of employment declined twice as fast as of men in 2020, as measured on a year-over-year basis in August 2020.

In 2021, Korea experienced its first-ever population decline – in part due to the low birthrate and in part due to declining immigration. High housing prices, high childcare and education costs, and precarious job and wage conditions contribute to young couples' decisions not to have children. In 2020, the fertility rate reached a record low of 0.84, the lowest in the world. This rate is expected to have dropped further to 0.82 in 2021. This is in spite of the Moon administration's efforts to strengthen family policy, including an expansion of childcare centers and kindergartens; an increase in childcare leave to one year for both women and men (up from 90 days and 20 days, respectively); the provision of subsidies during childcare leave; the provision of subsidies to encourage employers to allow flexible working arrangements; an increase in the scope of coverage of KRW 100,000 allowances for all children aged seven and under; the provision of a new KRW 300,000 monthly allowance for children less than 12 months old (effective 2022); and the provision of a new KRW 2 million bonus for newborns (effective 2022). Many local governments and churches have also offered additional incentives in an effort to raise fertility rates in their jurisdictions.

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Cyprus

Score 4

Family support services are limited, despite recent improvements. It's difficult for women to combine motherhood and employment, which makes increasing the birth rate difficult (1.33 in 2019 compared to 1.37 in 2016). Nevertheless, 77.8% of women aged 25 to 54 were employed in Q3 2021 (75% in 2018). Under the Recovery and Resilience Plan, free pre-primary education will start earlier, with public kindergartens. However, childcare for younger children is offered primarily by the private sector and in community centers supervised by the Ministry of Labor.

Family members, mainly grandparents, offer childcare, contributing to a lower AROPE rate among children (23% in 2019). Eurochild says the Recovery and Resilience Plans for Cyprus and most other EU member states ignore children's well-being. Children suffered from the COVID-19-related lockdown, although support measures provided children with some assistance.

The operation of kindergartens in most communities, and full-day preschool and primary school care in many communities, which had clearly benefited families, was disrupted by the COVID-19 lockdown. Resumption and expansion of operations would further improve the overall situation.

Multi-member families receive special allowances and the guaranteed minimum income has alleviated financial difficulties. In addition to a 2017 law granting paternity leave, a new law extended maternity leave and employment protections.

Furthermore, what is needed is comprehensive policies for women, families and children's well-being.

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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. 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 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 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.

President López Obrador proposed a referendum in January 2021 to vote on legalizing abortion. He himself has not taken a concrete position on this issue. However, before the referendum could take place, a ruling by the Supreme Court ensured nationwide legalization.

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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.

In the run-up to the 2020 parliamentary elections, Smer-SD returned to its previous policy model. The Pellegrini government 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. The 2020 change in government has not resulted in major changes in family policy. As of the 2021/22 school year, the new center-right government has made pre-primary education compulsory for five-year-old children. The coalition partners, and in particular OL'aNO and Sme-Rodina, have remained committed to a traditional family model and have preferred tax-based family-support measures over an extension of childcare facilities.

Switzerland

Score 4

In general, Swiss family policy has a clearly conservative outlook with a strong liberal undertone. It is mildly supportive of the traditional family. For example, there are some tax deductions and a period of 14 weeks of parental leave offered to mothers, as well as a very limited number of childcare facilities. In September 2020, a constitutional amendment was accepted in a public vote. The amendment, which establishes two weeks of parental leave for fathers with a coverage of 80% of the father's wage, came into effect on 1 January 2021.

Recent statistics show that women spend an average of 16.6 hours a week in paid employment compared to 27.3 hours for men. Likewise, women spend a weekly average of 28.1 hours on domestic work and men 17.9 hours (BfS 2017). Other figures show that within couples that live together domestic chores are carried out by

women in 60% of cases. In 33.7% of households the tasks are divided equally between men and women. However, it was noted that inequalities in the distribution of domestic chores explode with children. Tasks are distributed equally among 49.5% of couples without children, against 25.9% of couples in households with children under 25 (BfS 2019).

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 has been enacted providing a paternity leave of two weeks. There are currently additional initiatives by left and green-liberal parties to establish a longer leave for parents.

In 2020, the WEF's Global Competitiveness Report, which focused on the road out of the pandemic, ranked Switzerland 12th with regard to expanding care for the elderly, childcare, as well as healthcare infrastructure and innovation, after countries such as Canada, the United States or Germany (WEF 2020: 74). It is also notable that many measures introduced to mitigate the pandemic placed a greater burden on women than on men. For example, the closure of schools and childcare facilities, as well as quarantine periods for children were mostly compensated for by women who were pushed back into the household, reinforcing the traditionally conservative division of labor.

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. For example, in the largest canton of Zürich, 75% of the costs of preschool care (Kitas) are covered privately by parents (NZZ 9 December 2020). 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 expand 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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Turkey

Score 4

Inequalities between men and women with regard to combining participation in the labor force and parenting persist in Turkey. Most strikingly, no regulation has been made relating to part-time work for working parents in the public sector. In 2019, the

employment rate among men (63.1%) was more than twice that among women (28.7%). Despite a modest increase in the latter figure, Turkey still lags behind advanced economies such as Germany (46.3%) and France (48.1%). What is troublesome is that the gender pay gap is observed at all levels of educational attainment. In 2018, the pay gap was 15.6%. The wage gap tends to diminish as educational level and age increase. According to the EU commission, the gender employment gap was 38.1% in 2020, which was the highest such rate among EU candidate countries and potential candidates.

Under the provisions of the Labor Law No. 4857, female workers have a right to maternity leave of eight weeks before giving birth and eight weeks after giving birth, for a total of 16 weeks. The right to return to one's job after maternity leave is no longer exclusive to civil servants or women married to a civil servant. Women whose spouse is no longer a civil servant, but who has worked in civil service for a minimum of 360 days in the last two years, may apply for maternity leave and have the right to return to their position. However, to benefit from this provision, people must have paid premiums for at least 360 days in the last two years.

In general, the government's conservative stance on women and family affairs (e.g., concerning the number of children, or women's roles) harms gender equality in the labor market. Turkey's withdrawal in March 2021 from the Istanbul Convention, which protects women from domestic violence, allegedly because the measure was incompatible with Turkish family values, illustrates the desire of the government to curtail women's rights under the pressure of the religious groups in Turkey.

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