



Family Policy and Welfare Regimes

Summary

This report develops a typology of five family policy and welfare regimes based upon analyses of parental leave policies, family policy and working time and the provision of care for small children. It is the first of its kind to cover the whole of Europe comprehensively. The analysis found that this typology of family policy welfare regimes predicts actual behaviour of households as well as attitudes to care.

The typology

It is possible to identify a number of welfare regimes in terms of the ways they support (or not) parents combining

paid employment with their caring responsibilities. These different regimes have very different consequences for how parents organise work and care and especially impact on women.

In terms of our research findings the extensive family policy regime comes closest to one which is likely to meet European policy objectives and the aspiration parents have for combining paid employment and caring. In this respect an important finding is that the extensive family policy model is not invariably the most expensive option – the long leave, part- time model is comparable in costs. The ‘cheap’ alternatives are when there is a very low level of

| Work-care Regime | Spending on Family Policy | Key Features |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Extensive Family Policy | Sweden (2.9%) ³ , Denmark 3.7%), Belgium (2%), France (2.5%) | High level childcare 0 -3 years, with generous payment of parental leave. High proportion women working part-time. |
| Short leave, Part -time | UK (1.6%), Netherlands (1.6%) | Short period of poorly paid parental leave, medium provision of public childcare for 0 – 3 year olds and high proportion of mothers working part-time. |
| Long Leave, Part-time | Germany (3.1%), Austria (2.9%), Luxembourg (3.4%) | Long period of relatively well –paid parental leave followed by mothers who return to the labour market working part-time. |
| Family Care | Estonia (1.2), Slovenia (1.9), Spain (1.2%), Latvia 1.2%), Greece 1.5%), Italy (1.2%), Portugal (1.2%) | Period parental leave varies but badly paid. Mothers generally withdraw from the labour market and do not return when their children are older. |
| Extended Parental Leave ¹ | Hungary (2.8%), Poland (0.8%), Czech Republic (1.4%), Lithuania (1.1%), Finland (2.9%) | Very long period of parental leave with women returning to full-time employment when they have exhausted their entitlement to leave. Finland deviates somewhat as there is a greater provision of public care for 0-3 year olds and more women working part-time. |

1. Bulgaria also has this regime but was not included in the Workcare analysis.
2. Part-time work is working less than 30 hours a week. In the Scandinavian countries, including Finland, part-time is generally relatively secure long-part-time whereas in the UK, Netherlands, Germany and Austria many women work in short-part -time jobs which with the exception of those in the Netherlands are often marginal and insecure.
3. Figure in brackets % GDP spent on Family Policy in 2006

public support for families. The highest level of public investment in supporting families is in Denmark (3.7% GDP) and the lowest level in Poland (0.8% GDP). However, the levels of investment are much the same in Sweden (2.9% GDP), which provides high levels of support for families to work and care and Austria (2.9%) which encourages fathers to have paid employment and mothers to become full-time careers. The costs of the long leave, part-time model are not below the costs of the extensive family care model but the two models have very different consequences for women's capabilities in reconciling work and care and for the gender equality in households with small children.

The typology affected the household strategies of families in dealing with the care of children. These can be summarised as:

- *Extensive family policy model:* mothers regain employment after 6 months to one year parental leave and rely on public institutions of childcare
- *Long-leave, Part-time Model:* Mothers stay at home on long parental leave - up to three years per child - and if they return into employment it is typically on a contingent part-time basis on short hours and extremely low wages
- *Short-leave, Part-time Model:* The period of leave is restricted and the lack of affordable childcare facilities often forces mothers to take up part time jobs on short hours or leaving the labour market completely
- *Family care model:* A polarisation is registered between mothers who return to the labour market after a short leave relying on help from grandparents and mothers who are not participating in the labour market at all
- *Extended leave model:* Mothers stay at home during long parental leave, but typically they take up full time employment when the children are 3 years old. Children cared for by grandparents

Policy Recommendations

To give parents more choices in combining work and care all EU Member States have to:

- Introduce parental leave periods for both mothers and fathers
- Invest in more public and affordable child care facilities
- Increase the possibility for taking part-time leave with giving parents more options for combining work and care
- Have a protected right of return to their previous job after the care period

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About Workcare

Workcare is a research project drawing upon the collaboration of 10 different institutional partners (University of Aberdeen, University of Roskilde, Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna, Economics University Vienna, University of Sussex, London School of Economics, DISPO University of Florence, ISCTE Lisbon, TARKI Hungary, University of Warsaw) and 16 persons.

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It runs for three years from October 2006 to September 2009.

The project will last three years. Information can be found on the website:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/socsci/research/nec/workcare/>

Ways of Managing Work-Life Balance in Europe

In a world where the dual career family is increasingly becoming the norm, there are great pressures on the parents of young children in balancing work and care. The boundaries of work and family are shifting, something which is not only a woman's problem, but also affects men as well as grandparents, friends and other kin. The way people make decisions about how to manage conflicting demands of work and care usually involve a compromise between what they would prefer to do and what they are in fact able to do.

This workpackage within the "Workcare" project focused upon qualitative interviews carried out with different family types (dual career, male breadwinner and lone parents) in a range of contrasting European countries: Denmark, the UK, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Poland and Hungary. The interviews focused upon work and care strategies in daily life and across the life course.

In all countries the dual-earner model is emerging as the dominant type, even in countries such as Italy and Austria, where this goes against mainstream cultural stereotypes. The previously dominant cultural model of the "male breadwinner family" (where the man works full time and supports a dependent wife and children) is fast

disappearing, even in countries with a previously "familist" ideology and despite the unequal division of labour in the home, with women doing most of the household work in addition to increasing their participation in the labour force.

In these interview, 111 parents were selected in 7 countries representing different household types and different social classes.

Main Results:

How can we best ensure the development of our children?

Everywhere in Europe, children are seen as the centre of family life. Parents are deeply concerned about the cognitive and educational development of their children as they move through childhood, with diminishing differences among social classes. Parents invest a great deal in this cognitive development.

On account of this emphasis on cognitive and educational development, fathers are seen as playing a key role. The father is no longer a distant figure whose job it is to earn the money, but rather someone who is present in family life and helping in the care and development of the

children. For this reason, fathers felt acutely the need to be more involved in their children's lives, even though they were also under pressure to maximise their earning potential at this stage in the life course.

What kinds of resources are necessary to maintain work-life balance?

All families combined formal and informal resources. Formal resources included childcare services and schools, informal resources included babysitters, grandmothers, friends and neighbours. In Southern and Eastern European countries, grand parents were an important resource but in all countries, they could be a source of emergency help. Four types of care networks emerged:

| | Stable arrangement | Unstable arrangement |
|---------------|---|---|
| Rich networks | Mixture of formal and informal resources. | Several layers of possible substitutes. |
| Poor networks | Only informal resources. | No network, shift parenting. |

Negotiating with the workplace

There were important differences in workplace negotiations according to the level in the occupational hierarchy.

- High levels managers and professionals are less constrained by office systems. They are better able to work their time flexibly and in the case of mobile workers, can manage without physical presence in the office.
- Lower level managers and skilled and unskilled service workers have varying degrees of autonomy and negotiation in the workplace.
- Working class employees have much less scope for negotiating workplace flexibility and are much more dependent upon informal sources to help them out in managing time conflicts

There are important gender differences too, since families are still much more women's responsibility and it is expected that they will take time off work to care for children when required. Women have less access to leisure time as well.

Policy implications

1. *Recasting parental leave.* The generosity and duration of parental leave is a pre-requisite for managing work and care. More equitable leave arrangements will occur only when rights are not just offered but also enforced since people may not take up the leave to which they are entitled
2. *Caregiving options.* There should be a mixture of flexible measures to ensure that the different needs of parents are met.
3. *Requirements for childcare.* There is a need to see this in terms of a pedagogical discourse rather than only a childcare discourse. Parents in most countries need care which is tailored to the changing pedagogical needs of the child. In all countries affordable, flexible coverage was considered desirable
4. *The social recognition of care.* Families with young children feel that there is an unequal distribution of caring work across society. The work of caring for children should be seen as a societal problem rather than an individual one.

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