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RECON
Reconstituting Democracy in Europe

Integrated Project
Priority: 7 - Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-Based Society

Deliverable No. 79
Workshop on social regimes for child bearing
and child rearing on gender equality

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Lead contractor for this deliverable:
Partner 21 UOA
University of Auckland, New Zealand
Partner 1 ARENA – Centre for European Studies
University of Oslo, Norway

Final Version

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)		
Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	X
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

1. Introduction

RECON Deliverable No. 79 – *Workshop on social regimes for child bearing and child rearing on gender equality* is part of work package 7 – The Political Economy of the EU. The aim of WP 7 is to analyse the relationship between public finance and democracy in the EU's multilevel political system. WP 7 starts from the assumption that there is a close connection between a polity's tax system and the purpose of public expenditure, and research in this WP links such questions to the discussion of the European social model and identifies the conception of social integration underlying each RECON model, with particular emphasis on the relationship between solidarity, justice and democracy. In the final project period, WP 7 partners would finalise research and synthesise the findings and explore their implications for the WP as a whole. One strand within the work package would concentrate its research on the nature of social insurance as practiced in the EU, and the consequences for the democratic legitimacy of the EU according to each RECON model. This would combine both a descriptive and a normative approach.

2. Presentation of the workshop

The Europe Institute at the University of Auckland (UOA) organised a two-day workshop on 24-25 February 2011 entitled 'The Costs of Children'. Hosted by ARENA at the University of Oslo and taking place in nearby Lillestrøm, it brought together academics from several European countries working in the related areas of childcare and gender equality. The workshop hence also elaborated on the gender equality aspects of WP 7, which have clear parallels to the research agenda within work package 4 – Justice, Democracy and Gender.

The aim of this workshop was to explore the role and status of gender by investigating the aspect that has the greatest impact on the different roles of men and women: namely, the bearing and raising of children. Family policies vary considerably across the EU in two distinct ways: in how they affect levels of female employment and pay; and, in the degree to which they adhere to the principle of equality of treatment. The accession of former communist countries to the EU, which under socialism actively encouraged female labour force participation through extensive state-funded childcare, adds another perspective to debates about family policy and gender regimes. In contrast to the much-praised Nordic model of female-friendly childcare services, the closure of many state-run childcare centres and a reported 'return' to a male-breadwinner model in the new European democracies complicates any assumed links between gender equality and democratic values such as social justice and citizenship.

A call for papers was launched in September 2010, attracting the attention of a number of experts in the field as well as NGOs. Mark Thomson and David Mayes (both from the Europe Institute, UOA) selected paper givers who represented nine different academic institutions external to RECON and one charity organisation, in addition to UOA-affiliated researchers and RECON WP 4 researcher Roza Vajda (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest/ELTE). Leader of WP 7, Agustín José Menéndez (University of León) also attended the workshop, which welcomed a total of 18 participants.

The workshop started with an introduction by David Mayes and a presentation by Mark Thomson of the background paper 'Social regimes and gender equality: childcare in the EU' (Deliverable 7). In the first session 'Childcare as a public good?' Arnlaug Leira (University of Oslo) started off by arguing that the collectivisation of childcare costs in Nordic countries has strengthened the notion of the citizen-parent. Despite this, parental leave remains

disproportionately taken up by Nordic mothers. In contrast with the Nordic approach to childcare as a means to achieve more gender-equitable outcomes and to socialise young children, Róza Vajda (ELTE) contended that family policy in Hungary has largely been linked to concerns with the country's low fertility rate. Her paper argued that the political framing of childcare policies, in particular through support for long parental leave, has taken little account of the gender impact of policies on lowering female employment rates.



Workshop convenor David Mayes together with workshop participants in Lillestrøm.

Whilst public nurseries remain in short supply in Hungary for working parents, childcare in the Netherlands as presented by Janneke Plantenga (Utrecht University School of Economics) has shifted rather dramatically towards private provision (and away from the idea of children as a public good). In assessing Dutch childcare today, Plantenga described an imperfect solution whereby childcare, although sold in large quantities, is of relatively low quality as parents have difficulty in evaluating the quality of childcare services and face high costs of switching between suppliers. The papers in this first session hence raised questions about the purposes of childcare provision as well as its interaction with the labour market.

In recognising that not all childcare can be provided – or ‘commodified’ – through formal arrangements, the second session considered alternative forms of childcare. Karoliina Majamaa (University of Helsinki) described how, even in Finland where there is a high level of public support for working parents, grandparents play an important role in filling gaps in childcare. Changing family forms and more atypical working hours increase the importance of kinship support, yet the desire to care for their grandchildren remains the principal reason for Finnish grandparents to assume a caring role. In further highlighting the fine line that exists between a desire to care by close relatives, their ethic of care and their duty to care, Marilyn McHugh (University of New South Wales) presented the role of kinship carers (usually grandparents) of vulnerable children in need of care. Compared with foster carers, support for grandparents who care for children with increasingly complex needs is lacking when care arrangements remain informal – an argument in favour of formalising informal kinship care.



Janneke Plantenga presenting her paper on the EU's Barcelona targets and the European Social Model



Arnlaug Leira, one of the most internationally renowned Norwegian sociologists contributed to the workshop

The third workshop session dealt with 'Employment and childcare'. Shireen Kanji (University of Cambridge) argued that, beyond a behavioural issue (as policy rhetoric tends to suggest), lone mothers in the UK draw on networks of support from their own parents and friends to enable them to work. Their concentration in low-paid, precarious service-sector jobs does not necessarily offer them a route out of poverty, though. Indeed, the following presentation by Rachel Dennison and Nora Smith (Employers for Childcare Charitable Group, Northern Ireland) found families paying on average 45 per cent of their average weekly earnings on childcare. The value of work, in such circumstances, thus appears to be more than just about the financial rewards of employment if some mothers see (virtually) all 'their' earnings allocated to childcare fees. Ineke Casier (Centre for Gender and Diversity, Brussels) turned the focus on higher earning, highly qualified women and the gendered division of labour within the household. The paper's findings were twofold: that women assume a much greater share of household responsibilities than men when there are children in the family home; and, more surprisingly, that women are in fact *less* likely to change jobs when they have childcare commitments despite facing more difficulties than women without children in finding a satisfactory work-life balance.



Roza Vajda and Cris Shore, both RECON members

Depending on national context, and in particular the level and affordability of childcare provision, *not* having children (or having fewer children) appears as one way to 'resolve' issues of work-life balance. The final workshop session looked at the future of the family. Anne Lise Ellingsæter (University of Oslo) argued that the 'Norwegian "Fertility Machine"' rests on the notion that child-

ren are the 'essence' of normal adult life. Together with favourable economic circumstances (high labour demand, a regulated labour market, standard working hours and the oil economy), Norway has been able to strengthen policies favouring motherhood combined with maternal employment. The presentation by Kirsten Scheiwe (Hildesheim University) argued from the German context, but offering a comparative perspective with other European countries, that family policies have traditionally been premised on couples in stable relationships, and that the economic consequences of divorce still fall much more heavily on women and their dependent children than on men. Whilst these 'costs' vary across national contexts, Nordic countries (notably Sweden) appear to have lower costs associated with divorce partially thanks to a model that is based on a gender-neutral concept of active citizenship and the widespread provision of childcare.

Janneke Plantenga considered in her second, and the final, presentation the EU's Barcelona targets to increase formal childcare provision across the member states, and how these targets interact with the European Social Model. Whilst there exists one identifiable employment model in Europe (the adult-worker model), the existence of several different care models across Europe poses some challenges to reaching the Barcelona childcare targets. Countries differ significantly on the optimal levels of parental leave versus childcare services, as well as over questions about who leave and services are for (e.g. mothers, fathers and/or children). Although many countries remain below the stated childcare target levels in terms of formal services on offer, informal care arrangements remain an important and value source of care.

Wrapping up the workshop, David Mayes (University of Auckland) considered the different types of costs associated with having children, such as direct costs and gendered-opportunity costs. Although enabling new and future parents to exercise real choices when having children ought to be a policy aim for European welfare states, there remains the question over the redistribution of these costs between the state and parents (as well as grandparents) in terms of income replacement and services. Also, is social inclusion by necessity to be achieved through employment, noting especially that the costs of children in some countries appear ostensibly to be prohibitive to work? What is the impact of the European agenda of promoting ‘flexibility’, depending of course on its actual definition in terms of either promoting a flexible job environment or a flexible workforce? What is the relationship with the democratic framework; i.e., who is responsible for delivering and financing support services for parents – the local, national or supranational?

A list of papers with abstracts as well as the call for papers is available at RECON’s website: <http://reconproject.eu/projectweb/portalproject/OsloFeb11.html>. A book edited by David Mayes and Mark Thomson with revised versions of the workshop contributions is under preparation, and will appear on Edward Elgar in 2012. This book will consider different approaches adopted by a range of EU countries plus Australia and New Zealand in dealing with the costs of children, and, more broadly and reflecting the concerns of RECON, reflect upon the implications of these different approaches for democracy and social inclusion.

3. List of participants

Ineke Casier	<i>RHEA – Centrum voor Gender en Diversiteit, Brussels</i>
Rachel Dennison	<i>Employers for Childcare, Lisburn</i>
Anne Lise Ellingsæter	<i>Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo</i>
Shireen Kanji	<i>Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge</i>
Arnlaug Leira	<i>Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo</i>
Karoliina Majamaa	<i>Department of Social Studies, University of Helsinki</i>
Marie Marin	<i>Employers for Childcare, Lisburn</i>
David Mayes	<i>Europe Institute, University of Auckland</i>
Marilyn McHugh	<i>Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia</i>
Agustín José Menéndez	<i>University of León</i>
Janneke Plantenga	<i>Utrecht University School of Economics</i>
Mari Rysst	<i>National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO), Oslo</i>
Kirsten Scheiwe	<i>Department of Social and Pedagogical Sciences, Hildesheim University</i>
Cris Shore	<i>Europe Institute, University of Auckland</i>
Nora Smith	<i>Employers for Childcare, Lisburn</i>
Mark Thomson	<i>Europe Institute, University of Auckland</i>
Roza Vajda	<i>Institute of Sociology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest</i>
Cecilie Øien	<i>Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, Oslo</i>

4. Programme

See attachment.

The Costs of Children

RECON Workshop

WP 7 – The Political Economy of the European Union

Lillestrøm, 24-25 February 2011

Venue: Thon Hotel Arena, Nesgata 1, Lillestrøm

Programme

Thursday 24 February 2011

Introduction

- 09:00-10:00 **Welcome**
David Mayes, *Europe Institute, University of Auckland*
- Social Regimes and Gender Equality: Childcare in the EU**
Mark Thomson, *Europe Institute, University of Auckland*

Childcare as a Public Good?

Chair: David Mayes, Europe Institute, University of Auckland

- 10:00-13:00 **The Care of Young Children in Scandinavia: Parental Responsibilities, Rights and Costs**
Arnlaug Leira, *Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo*
Discussant: Roza Vajda
- 11:00-11:15 *Coffee break*
- Childcare Provision in Hungary**
Roza Vajda, *Institute of Sociology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest*
Discussant: Cris Shore
- A Market for Child Care Services? Private Provision and Public Finance in the Dutch Child Care Sector**
Janneke Plantenga, *Utrecht University School of Economics, Utrecht University*
Discussant: Karoliina Majamaa
- 13:00-14:00 *Lunch*

Alternative Forms of Childcare

Chair: Mark Thomson, Europe Institute, University of Auckland

14:00-16:00 **Childcare as Intergenerational Support**
Karoliina Majamaa, Department of Social Studies, University of Helsinki

Discussant: Marilyn McHugh

15:00-15:15 Coffee break

Costs and Consequences for Carers of Vulnerable Children
Marilyn McHugh, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia

Discussant: Janneke Plantenga

19:00-22:00 Dinner at Ekeberg Restaurant, Oslo
 Please meet in the reception at 18:20 for common transport from Thon Hotel Arena, Lillestrøm.

Friday 25 February 2011

Employment and Childcare

Chair: Agustín José Menéndez, University of León

09:00-12:00 **How do First-time Mothers Participate and Stay in Employment in the UK?**

Shireen Kanji, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

Discussant: Ineke Casier

The Impact of Childcare Costs for Northern Irish Females
Rachel Dennison and Nora Smith, Employers For Childcare Charitable Group, Lisburn, Northern Ireland

Discussant: Kirsten Scheiwe

High-Qualified Women and the Gendered Division of Domestic Labour: An Exploratory Analysis in Photonics

Ineke Casier, RHEA – Centrum voor Gender en Diversiteit, Brussels

Discussant: Anne Lise Ellingsæter

12:00-13:00 Lunch

The Future of Family Welfare: Towards a More Just and Democratic Society?

Chair: Cris Shore, Europe Institute, University of Auckland

13:00-16:00 **The Norwegian 'Fertility Machine'**
Anne Lise Ellingsæter, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo

Discussant: Shireen Kanji

**The Costs of Caring for Children Before and After Divorce:
Contradictory Legal Messages and Gender**

Kirsten Scheiwe, *Department of Social and Pedagogical Sciences, Hildesheim University*

Discussant: Arnlaug Leira

15:00-15:15 *Coffee break*

The European Social Model: The Barcelona Targets and Beyond

Janneke Plantenga, *Utrecht University School of Economics, Utrecht University*

Discussant: Nora Smith

Concluding Remarks and Discussion: Welfare Policy in the EU and the RECON Models

16:00-17:00 Chair: David Mayes