

## SOCIAL REGIMES AND GENDER EQUALITY: CHILDCARE IN THE EU

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### Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the European Union has recognised, particularly through its European Employment Strategy (EES), that promoting 'equal opportunities at work' has not in itself been sufficient to raise female employment levels or pay across the EU (Simon Duncan, 2002). Women remain less likely to be in paid work and, when they are employed, earn significantly less than men despite the enactment of European hard law, or directives, in the 1970s on equal pay for men and women, and on equal treatment in access to employment, vocational training and promotion.<sup>2</sup> They are also more likely to work part-time, often as a way to balance work with family life, and frequently for less pay and fewer employment benefits. Women are, as a result, more at risk of poverty and tend to receive lower pensions in retirement.

It is tempting to ask why this should matter more today than it did at the outset of the EU project in the 1950s. Apart from a guarantee to equal pay for men and women,<sup>3</sup> there was little appetite among the original member states to develop a European model of social policy as a counterweight to the Internal Market (Scharpf, 2002). The principal architects of European integration were above all concerned to secure peace in Europe by embedding national interests in the economic interdependencies of a common market. Women, having fought for and obtained female suffrage in most of Europe over the past half century, were still a decade away from claiming equal rights in the workplace despite their large-scale participation in the industrial workforce during the Second World War. Most 'first-wave' feminists maintained a discourse of 'equality in difference', seeking to increase the social value attached to women's unpaid labour at home and reduce their dependency on their husbands' wages through, for example, family allowances paid directly to mothers (Bock & Thane, 1991).

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<sup>2</sup> Across all 27 EU member states in 2009, 58.6% of women compared to 70.7% of men were considered to be employed. On average, women in the EU earned 17.6% less than men for every hour worked. Source: Eurostat.

<sup>3</sup> Enshrined in Article 119 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, this guarantee is usually dismissed as a political compromise to appease the French government's concern that lower-paid labour from other countries should not undercut their own relatively high-paid female workers (Simon Duncan, 2002; Hoskyns, 1992).

Female employment levels have since grown substantially in most, if not all, EU countries. Women's interests and aspirations are nowadays much more directly tied to the labour market than in the 1950s, although it is important to stress two caveats at this point. Firstly, historical data tend to underestimate the number of employed women in paid work. Secondly, many families were never able to live off the husband's wage alone, and relied on other family members to supplement household income. The ideal of a family wage earned by the husband to support his wife and children, and which conceptually underpinned most European social regimes, remained elusive for many working-class families. Nonetheless, the family wage has today become less attainable, and indeed less desirable, due to changes in the economy and society that have redefined the traditional roles assigned to women as wives and mothers. Fewer marriages, higher divorce rates and a growth in single-parent households have made family relations more fluid and less stable. Women are often better educated than men, and in theory well-placed in modern, knowledge-based economies that attach a high value to human capital. People, especially with specialist and innovative skills, are more likely to map out their own career paths than rely on their firm, as in traditional industry and manufacturing, to provide a defined career trajectory (Crompton, 2006, p. 5). Appointments and promotions should hence owe more to merit than to social class, age or gender.

The persistence, however, of gender pay gaps and lower female employment rates across Europe suggests that other factors are at play. Explanations might focus either on the 'supply-side deficiencies of women' or on the work environment (Rubery, Grimshaw, & Figueiredo, 2005). The care of infants and young children is a good illustrative example. In most cases, it is undertaken by women and assumes a period of absence from paid work outside the home. Lengthy absences, or indeed the potential for long periods of leave, entail a loss of productivity in the workplace that employers may use to justify – whether legal or not – a wage or employment penalty on women. On the other hand, there are many ways in which the work environment can be more female-friendly through employer-sponsored childcare, work-from-home initiatives and flexible working hours, helping mothers to achieve a better work-life balance.

This preliminary discussion sets the background to this paper on childcare in the EU, and the role of government in fostering more equitable outcomes for women at work and, albeit to a lesser extent, at home. European social regimes vary considerably in how they deal with the birth and raising of children depending on how they view the care of young pre-school children: as a natural part of the female life-course (and, in narrow economic terms, 'a supply-side deficiency' that families deal with privately) or of public concern requiring social policy intervention. All European countries have, of

course, adopted family policies, and none see children as a purely private matter. There has long been a need for the state to intervene when children are deemed at risk of abuse or neglect, for example. European welfare states differ, however, in how far they regulate family-market relations and 'absorb family-care burdens' (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p. 61), particularly through public childcare provision. Countries that are more strongly attached to a male-breadwinner model of family relations tend to have limited public childcare provision and only minimal parental leave arrangements (Lewis, 1992). Research since the 1990s has hence found that national variations in family policies affect the degree to which the opportunity costs of having children are borne especially by women (Crompton, 2006; Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 1999). These costs not only refer to the temporary loss of income during periods of parental leave, but also to the potential loss of human capital, and employability, due to longer absences from the labour market or to a shift to part-time work in order to reconcile paid work with family commitments.

In countries where women are better able to balance their working and family lives, the opportunity costs of having a second or third child appear to be lower. Where female employment rates are higher, birth-rates – somewhat counter-intuitively – are also higher (although the rates remain below the standard replacement level of 2.1 births per women). Drawing on the experiences of Scandinavian countries, widening childcare availability as an EU-wide policy objective has emerged not only as a means of achieving a better work-life balance, but also as a way to promote female employment and address persistent gender inequalities in the labour market. This paper will critically discuss the assumed links between childcare, female employment and gender equality, considering the different policy approaches adopted in a range of European countries. It will also discuss the extent to which raising childcare provision might enable mothers to achieve a more satisfactory balance between paid work and family life. In essence, how far can childcare services lead to more equitable outcomes for women both at work and in the home?

## **Childcare in the EU**

Although an EU directive in early 2010 extended parental leave to four months, most social policy issues including childcare remain within the realm of soft governance. The diversity of national social welfare regimes within the EU, due to their unique historical legacies and different normative priorities as they evolved over time, has meant that common EU legislation on social matters has been difficult to achieve (Michalski, 2010). The solution in the form of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has been to reach common targets that, unlike EU directives, are not binding on

member states but are subject to peer review. In a pragmatic sense, the OMC form of governance favours a process of learning through benchmarking, self-assessment and sharing of good practice (Zeitlin, 2007), avoiding conflict in areas – such as family policy – that are highly contested (Strohmeier, 2002).

Childcare targets as a key part of the European Employment Strategy were agreed at the European Council meeting in Barcelona in 2002. Childcare provision was to be made for 90 per cent of children between three years old and school age, and for 33 per cent of children under three by 2010. A related target agreed two years earlier in Lisbon was to increase the female employment rate to 60 per cent by the same year. Neither of these two sets of targets is specific about how they are to be achieved or how their success is to be qualitatively measured. Given the non-prescriptive nature of the OMC process, it is unsurprising that the Lisbon target failed to specify, for example, the number of hours to be worked by employed women, although it is clearly important in any discussion about work-life balance. The Barcelona targets are also vague about the type of childcare desired although they are implicitly understood to refer to formal provision in childcare centres. Consequently, informal or private care arrangements are likely to be neglected or overlooked (Plantenga, Remery, Siegel, & Sementini, 2008, p. 34). This paper adopts a broad definition of childcare but distinguishes between alternative types to formal, centre-based childcare (e.g. home-based care by registered childminders, or more informally by grandparents), and between public and private forms of childcare. It will focus primarily on childcare services but also discuss care undertaken by mothers at home as part of parental leave entitlements. Whilst the EU is encouraging member states to increase formal childcare provision, many European countries have created long parental leaves of up to three years that appear to run counter to gender-equity aims such as raising female employment rates. The paper does not, however, include after-school care or school holiday programmes, focusing only on care arrangements for infants and young pre-school children. It is nonetheless the case that a lack of childcare options for school-age children can restrict mothers' employment options, often entailing shorter working hours as a way to meet parents' childcare responsibilities.

### *Childcare and female employment*

The rationale for the Barcelona childcare targets is firmly employment-driven. In raising childcare services, they aim to remove a significant barrier to female labour-force participation: that is, the difficulty that predominantly women face in reconciling work with family life due to a lack of

affordable or available childcare. The targets are thus seen to form part of a broader 'employment-anchored social policy' (O'Connor, 2005) that emphasises the 'economic value of social policy' in contrast with the prevailing view of social policies as a cost (Clasen, 2005). The economic gains of improving access to childcare services are to be felt at the individual level by mothers whose lifetime earnings suffer whenever suitable childcare is lacking, and at the macro-level through tapping into a hitherto under-used female labour supply as a way to support the long-term viability of welfare states that are under pressure from a mix of demographic (ageing populations and falling birth-rates) and financial (growing poverty levels and long-term unemployment) factors.

The link between raising formal childcare availability and female employment appears self-evident, and has a firm logic supported by economic theory. The 'costs' of having children can be measured in two related ways: in terms of the *income* forfeited during periods of parental leave or spent on childcare, and the *time* spent by parents on caring for their children outside of paid work. When parental leave is not fully compensated or when childcare fees are expensive then, as women usually earn less than their male partners, it makes economic sense for mothers instead of fathers to take time off work to care for their children. Time devoted to the care of children at home is hence seen as an employment sacrifice that is usually borne by women because they either have to stop work or reduce their working hours as a way to manage family life. Employed mothers often work on a part-time basis that, given the poor quality of part-time work in parts of Europe, can entail a loss of income and long-term career prospects.

References in the academic literature to a child penalty, invariably borne by mothers, are therefore frequent. Gash (2009) speaks of 'penalties to motherhood' that vary in size across Europe, being smallest in the Nordic countries and greatest in (West) Germany and the UK due to inadequate policy support for working mothers. Similarly, Meyers *et al.* (1999) conclude that availability of public childcare in several Nordic countries reduces any associated child penalty by supporting continuity in mothers' employment. Employment rates for mothers of young children are high and comparable to the general female employment rate across most of the Nordic region.

The key conclusion, based on economic theory and empirical observation, is that policy shapes female employment rates and that welfare states do matter (cf. Hakim, 2004, p. 77ff). Policies that act as disincentives to work, such as extended parental leaves as in Germany or France, are likely to adversely affect women's future earnings and employment prospects whereas leave arrangements that are shorter in duration and dovetail with affordable childcare provision are seen to support

female employment. If mothers must rely on less universal forms of childcare to be able to work, then the likely effect will be that fewer women are able to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance. A bias towards higher-income women or families will emerge, as in the UK where childcare is comparatively expensive although lower-earning families receive tax credits to help with childcare costs, and towards working mothers who can rely on family and friends to care for their children on a regular basis.

As this discussion suggests, raising childcare provision would seem to positively affect the ability of mothers to return to work. Since the fall of communism and the closure of many public childcare services in CEE countries, fewer mothers of young children are in work and those who are now depend on family networks to provide informal childcare support (Hantrais, 2004, p. 185). Figure 1 shows, for example, the very low employment rates for mothers of children under three in Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics. Yet, mothers in some countries began entering the labour market in large numbers even in the absence of public support or policies for working mothers. The mass entry of mothers into work in the Nordic countries can be seen as a catalyst, rather than an effect, of extensive public support for Scandinavian mothers (Leira, 1992). Likewise in Portugal, female employment rates have long been higher than in other parts of Southern Europe despite historically limited state provision of childcare. A combination of outmigration and colonial wars drained labour supplies and economic resources, bringing a greater proportion of women into the formal labour market. Partly as a result of this economic legacy, wages in Portugal are low by European standards and family income often remains dependent on two salaries. Economic necessity appears to have raised female employment rates more than the availability of public childcare facilities (Crompton, 2006, pp. 130, 183).<sup>4</sup>

In the absence of public childcare facilities in Portugal, parental demand for childcare was to a greater extent than in most other European countries met by employers (OECD, 2001). Hence, a crucial question is whether there is unmet demand for childcare services across the EU to which the Barcelona childcare targets are responding. This may well be the case in Portugal given that only large firms are able to offer working mothers childcare facilities, and in view of the limited number of part-time jobs available to allow Portuguese mothers to achieve a better work-life balance.<sup>5</sup> Yet,

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<sup>4</sup> Portugal's GDP per capita, expressed in purchasing power standards, stands at three-quarters of the EU average for all 27 member states, and is more comparable to some of the new member states than its Mediterranean neighbours.

<sup>5</sup> The European Social Survey (ESS: 2004-05 data) found that most Portuguese mothers in paid work wanted 'much more' (36.1%) or 'slightly more' (37.6%) formal childcare provision (Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008, p.

demand for formal childcare services is shaped by more than just levels of female employment including preferences for other forms of childcare and different lengths of parental leave (Plantenga et al., 2008, p. 36).

As Meyers *et al.* (1999, p. 136) acknowledge, it is possible that public support for working mothers in the Nordic countries is a response to consumer demand or political pressure that, for cultural reasons, does not exist in other parts of Europe where mothers choose to stay home to care for their children or prefer less formal types of childcare. Portugal, it is important to note, tends to be grouped with other southern European countries in welfare state typologies where informal networks of support are extensively used. Together they are seen as 'familialistic' welfare states in the sense that it is the household, and not the state, which is primarily responsible for family welfare issues (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p. 51). There is a sense of familial obligation when it comes to the care of young children or the elderly. This is in contrast to social-democratic welfare states, as found in the Nordic countries, where it is a legitimate role of the state to encourage mothers back to work and, in this way, promote a family model in which parents can share childcare more equally. The care of children in Southern Europe remains a family matter into which the state has minimal input, which often means that mothers stop work following childbirth for prolonged periods and rely much more on kinship networks of childcare support when they return to work.

In Italy and Spain, Leira *et al.* (2005) describe how grandmothers are a crucial source of intergenerational help for working mothers, often living in the same neighbourhood or (more so in Italy) in the same house as their grandchildren. Unlike in the Nordic countries, most grandmothers are not in work but even those who are employed have been found to care for their grandchildren for several days a week (Musatti & D'Amico, 1996). Family support plays a crucial role in helping working mothers reconcile paid work and family responsibilities, especially when their children are very young and formal childcare is less available. In this way, informal care should not necessarily be seen as traditional, backward or unfriendly to women as it provides crucial support for mothers to maintain their careers (Pfau-Effinger, 2005). Families are adapting to changing forms of family life, especially to a rise in the number of lone mothers. It is interesting to note that lone mothers in Italy, as well as in Spain and Greece, have higher activity rates than partnered mothers thanks largely to kinship support in the absence of the father (Leira et al., 2005; OECD, 2007).

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Table 7). Employed mothers in most other European countries surveyed, however, felt that provision was 'about right'.

Levels of maternal employment in Southern Europe, as indicated in Figure 1 again with the exception of Portugal, are still relatively low by European standards despite – and arguably because of – reliance on informal types of childcare. A lack of part-time jobs and formal care for children under three are often held up as reasons for low female participation rates and low fertility rates (on Italy, see Boca, 2002). Yet, as Figure 2 shows, preschools in Italy and Spain offer almost universal coverage for children aged three and over. As in Belgium and France, they find their roots in Catholicism and its interest in the early socialisation of preschool children (Bahle, 2009, p. 26), but are not linked to any explicit policy to promote female employment. In contrast, family policy in France has since the 1970s actively sought to help working mothers through childcare allowances, services and paid leave (Letablier & Jönsson, 2005). Most recently, the 35-hour week adopted in France aimed to reduce potential work-family conflict. In Southern Europe, normal working hours are usually longer than in France and even less likely to fit in with preschool opening hours. Grandmothers hence fulfil an important caring role in being available to ferry their grandchildren to and from preschool, or be there when children are sick. They are an integral part of a ‘care package’, including both informal and formal types, on which working parents depend to reconcile work and family commitments (Knijn, Jönsson, & Klammer, 2005).<sup>6</sup>

Another type of childcare recently used by working parents in Italy and Spain is domestic help, usually offered by immigrant women. Domestic workers represent another familial solution to the dilemma of childcare: not only are they hired privately, but also often live with their employer family. The growth in this form of childcare partially accounts for the higher than expected rates of enrolment for very young children in Figure 2 as the OECD figures include paid childminders in the home of the child. This may well suggest a preference by some mothers for alternative types of childcare to day-care centres, especially as domestic workers offer one-to-one care for very young children in the home setting. Demand in Italy has overwhelmingly been for live-in domestic workers (Andall, 2000), which, as a highly gendered occupation that relies on cheap and flexible female labour, challenges the positive link between female employment and gender equality (as discussed later).

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<sup>6</sup> Recently, the Spanish general workers’ union in Andalusia called for grandparents to strike in response to figures showing that half of all grandparents look after their grandchildren every day, and one in eight for more than nine hours a day. But as one grandparent exclaimed: ‘What do they think we are going to do with [our grandchildren]? Do they want us to dump them in the street?’ (Tremlett, 2010). This touches on the real issue of whether raising childcare provision will afford caregivers a more substantive choice in balancing paid work and care. This is discussed in more depth in the paper’s final section.



Childcare preferences are, though, shaped by a number of factors: cultural, individual and structural. It is not simply that mothers prefer, as in Southern Italy, a more familial type of childcare but that this preference fits in with cultural norms and values to which fathers and other family members subscribe. Norms and values clearly affect the type and levels of institutional arrangements available, such as formal childcare centres. It seems unlikely at present that childcare will 'go public' in Italy and Spain given its lack of cultural salience as an issue on which political support could be mobilised as in the Nordic countries (Leira et al., 2005, pp. 84-85). The family, supported by a flexible labour market, will continue to play a determining role in shaping mothers' employment prospects.

At the individual level, social class too plays a part in the ability of parents to realise their childcare preferences. As Crompton (2006, p. 184) suggests, it is professional and managerial women who appear better able to exercise a real choice by, for example, being able to afford better childcare. They are, she continues, more likely to reconcile their attitudes to childcare with their actual behaviour, and thus achieve an 'ideal' work-life balance. Some mothers, irrespective of social class though, prefer to relinquish paid work for extended periods of time in favour of caring for their children at home (Simon Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds, & Alldred, 2004; Hakim, 2004). The option to take extended parental leave, usually to care for children up to the age of three, exists in a number of EU countries. Hakim (2004, p. 77) argues that the success of 'cash-for-care' schemes in Finland and France demonstrates the weakness of class-based or institutional factors in explaining low levels of maternal employment. Despite the schemes' generally low level of benefits and the widespread availability of public childcare, many Finnish and French mothers prefer not to work outside the home when given the option. Figure 1 clearly shows that comparatively few mothers of very young children in both countries are working, yet a competing explanation might refer to more structural factors. In Finland, most women work full-time as part-time work tends to be of poor quality and less protected (Crompton, 2006, p. 129), making the choice between paid work and childcare more stark. In France, as in Finland too, the introduction of the scheme 'coincided' with a period of high unemployment, suggesting that the change in policy sought also to reduce levels of joblessness by encouraging some mothers, especially those with fewer qualifications, to take up the homecare option (Fagnani, 1998).

The link between raising childcare provision and promoting female employment is hence more ambiguous, not to say contentious, than EU political discourse might suggest. The UK offers a good example of competing explanations for persistently low levels of employment amongst mothers of pre-school children. Maternal employment rates remain low at comparable levels to Greece, Italy

and Spain, despite improved access to childcare. There persisted, at least until recently, a notion of 'good mothering' that morally disapproved of mothers of young children who chose, even through economic necessity, to work full-time (S. Duncan & Edwards, 1999). Research with lone mothers by the Policy Studies Institute in the UK has found that many consider that their primary duty is to care for their young child who 'needs them at home' (Ford, 1996). Only five per cent of respondents said that the cost of childcare was the only serious barrier they faced and just two per cent said the availability of childcare was the sole obstacle to employment.

This research was conducted in the late 1990s at a time of very limited childcare services. The UK has since improved access to childcare through publicly-subsidised, but often private childcare centres, and by the introduction of means-tested tax credits and employer-provided childcare vouchers. Figure 2 indicates the success that the UK has had in raising enrolment rates for children in day-care and preschools,<sup>7</sup> especially since the introduction of 12.5 hours free early-childhood education for 3 to 4-year-olds per week, now increased to 15 hours. It should be noted, however, that the market-based provision of childcare in the UK remains expensive, and children are more likely to attend for far fewer hours than in Sweden or Denmark where full-time places are common and childcare fees are kept at an affordable level by laws preventing fee increases above a legally set amount. The OECD (2007) has produced figures showing that the net costs of childcare for dual-earner families range significantly across Europe from 6.2 per cent of the average wage in Sweden to nearly a third of a family's net income in the UK although tax credits and childcare vouchers lower the costs for less affluent families.

The more liberal, market-driven approach adopted in the UK to childcare provision, with limited public support for working parents compared to the situation in the Nordic, social-democratic welfare states, has meant that many mothers of young pre-school children in the UK remain unable, preferences aside, to reconcile work with family life. The type of part-time work available, which will fit in with childcare arrangements, is often poorly paid and of poor quality. It does not make sense for them to work simply to see a large proportion of the earnings used to cover the additional costs of childcare, especially if the work available offers few career prospects and results in a process of deskilling for overqualified workers. As Hantrais (2004, p. 191) argues, the decision to engage or not in paid work is clearly affected by the suitability of available jobs, as well as the extent to which mothers can access flexible employment without incurring an employment penalty. It is only when

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<sup>7</sup> As compulsory schooling begins at five in the UK, the preschool enrolment rate also includes children attending primary school. Nonetheless, nearly 80 per cent and over 90 per cent of three- and four-year-olds respectively are in formal care according to the OECD figures used in Figure 2.

their youngest child reaches compulsory school age that a significant number of mothers in the UK return to work, up to over 70 per cent as shown in Figure 1.

Such long absences from the labour market are very likely to entail losses in human capital, future job prospects and, certainly, in lifetime earnings. For a mother with two children, the highly gendered costs of having children were estimated in the early 1990s to amount to over half of her lifetime earnings in the UK compared to 49 per cent in Germany, 16 per cent in Sweden but just 1 per cent in France prior to the introduction of extended homecare leave (Joshi & Davies, 1992). Although public support for working mothers has since improved in the UK and Germany,<sup>8</sup> their employment prospects remain adversely affected by inadequate childcare provision. According to Fagnani (1998), mothers' unpaid care for children can have three clearly gendered effects. Firstly, mothers' career paths become more interrupted and potentially disjointed if they stop work or feel obliged to accept jobs that are not commensurate with their skills or experience as a way to meet care responsibilities. Secondly, employers may discriminate against mothers if they are seen as less committed, flexible or loyal to the company. Thirdly, the traditional division of labour within the home is reinforced when mothers reduce their working hours or stop work for extended periods of time to care for children. The following section develops these ideas by discussing the extent to which employment is seen to promote gender equality at work as well as in the home. Childcare in the EU remains the case study through which the links between employment and gender equality are explored, but the focus turns to the care of children by parents and, in particular, parental leave entitlements.

### *Female employment and gender equality*

The project of the European Union has been criticised as neo-liberal, fiscally conservative, based on a 'male standard of worker and citizen' (Guerrina, 2002), and reproducing through European Court of Justice rulings a 'dominant ideology of motherhood' (McGlynn, 2000). Gender equality is seen to have been narrowly conceptualised at the EU level, focusing primarily on market considerations and paying insufficient attention to how policies affect gender divisions in the family (Lewis, 2006). To use Stratigaki's (2004) term, gender equality objectives have been 'co-opted' into an employment agenda despite efforts, such as gender mainstreaming, to highlight gender issues in all fields of EU policy-making. Gender mainstreaming has itself been criticised for reducing the consideration of

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<sup>8</sup> Germany set a target in 2006 to guarantee a childcare place for a third of all children aged 0-2 by 2013.

gender issues to a 'tick-box' approach (Shaw, 2002), being 'rhetoric devoid of substance' and sidelining positive action initiatives in favour of women (Stratigaki, 2005).

One of the key ideas behind gender mainstreaming, however, was to shift the focus in EU policy-making from equality of treatment to equality of gender impact (O'Connor, 2005, p. 30). As already seen, the area in which policy is seen to affect men and women in quite different, and often unequal, ways is the care of young children. The most recent EU parental leave directive, in raising the minimum leave arrangements from three to four months for each parent, includes a provision that one month of the four cannot be transferred to the other parent.<sup>9</sup> By recognising that women are overwhelmingly more likely than men to take leave from work, the directive aims to encourage more equal take-up of parental leave. Yet, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, family policy remains primarily the concern of member states. This is why, despite its binding nature, the new parental leave directive is weak in substance, for example, by leaving member states to decide whether the leave is to be paid, and if so, the level of pay. Mothers remain much more likely to take most of the leave especially, given gender pay gaps within the household, when parental leave is not fully compensated. The impact of the directive is likely to remain highly gendered and, in reality, quite limited since, as Table 1 shows, most EU countries already grant more than the minimum of four months' parental leave.

As the EU has limited authority in the area of family policy, it is important to consider how national policies affect women and men in different ways; in other words, to what extent are welfare states a source of gender inequality? The welfare state can be seen as having reproduced patriarchal family relations and the gender order through institutionalising gendered divisions of labour, the family wage system and traditional marriage, yet it is undeniable that it has also improved the situation for many women by reducing the risk of poverty and improving access to healthcare (Orloff, 1996). Motherhood brings a series of dependencies, firstly on good pre- and antenatal care for both the mother and child, then on adequate sources of income replacement and, as discussed in the previous section, on access to non-parental forms of childcare. Whilst healthcare for new mothers in Europe is near universal, income replacement levels as measured by types of statutory parental leave vary considerably, being much more generous in the Nordic and Baltic countries than in the UK and Ireland where long maternity leave is favoured but with low levels of wage compensation. Fathers in the UK tend to take a minimal break immediately after the birth of their child and, like mothers, may use annual holiday leave as a way to compensate for lost earnings. Households often

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<sup>9</sup> To be implemented across all 27 member states by 2012.

revert to a traditional male-breadwinner model of family relations: the mother and child become dependent on the father's paid labour whilst he is, consciously or not, a beneficiary of her unpaid care work and 'welfare dependency' (Lewis, 1992). His independence, in other words, is contingent on her acquiescence in fulfilling the dual role of mother and homemaker.

This mutual dependency tends to be neglected if a narrow focus on public provision of welfare to the standard full-time worker is adopted. As Esping-Andersen (1999, p. 43ff) acknowledges following a good deal of criticism of his earlier work *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990), his use of the term 'decommodification' to capture the degree to which welfare states grant entitlements independent of the market overlooked the vital unpaid care work provided by women with little or no attachment to the labour market. Motherhood in some countries, as discussed in the previous section, can entail long absences from the labour market for women. This has meant that many mothers, without sufficient employment-related insurance contributions to be granted the more generous parental leave benefits, have only been eligible for basic welfare assistance, such as maternity allowances and/or one-off grants (Lewis, 1992). Access to paid work, as Orloff (1993) concludes, is essential if women, especially mothers, are to maintain their economic independence. Yet, in some instances, the benefits attached to being in work may be seen to decouple women's attachment to the labour market, such as long parental leaves, creating dependencies on welfare and, more often than not, a male partner's income when leave benefits still do not equate to a living wage.

As Table 1 shows, countries distribute the total number of weeks of statutory leave, as maternity, paternity or parental leave, in quite different ways. Historically, maternity leave was the only leave entitlement and remains more generous in terms of income replacement in virtually all EU countries than either paternity or parental leave with the exception of Denmark, Hungary and Slovenia where parental leave is paid at an equivalent rate to maternity leave. Many countries have in recent years created much longer parental leaves to allow parents to care for their children for extended periods, usually up until the child's third birthday. Although statutory parental leave is gender-neutral, protecting the mother or father from unfair dismissal when on leave, women are much more likely to take long-term care leave. As discussed, these cash-for-care schemes are in practice highly gendered due to a combination of factors: gender pay gaps, parental preferences that may reflect cultural norms or expectations, access to alternative childcare options and to suitable jobs. The present concern, though, is with the gendered effects of extended periods of leave: again following Fagnani (1998), how do they shape mother's labour market trajectories, especially their subsequent

employment choices, what is the effect on employers' attitudes to women of childbearing age, and how do they (as well as other types of leave) affect the division of labour within the home?

Extended periods of care leave have been introduced as a way to enable parents to choose between work and care, to achieve a better balance between work and family life, and ostensibly to value care work (Morgan & Zippel, 2003).<sup>10</sup> The value of home care, though, at best equates to 40 per cent of average earnings in Estonia, is around a fifth of the average wage in Germany, Finland, France and the Slovak Republic, whilst in Spain it is unpaid (see Table 1). The policy is thus associated, at least on a theoretical level, with increasing women's vulnerability to poverty because: mothers on lower incomes are more likely to choose homecare leave; it increases women's dependence on welfare, especially in the absence of the father for lone mothers; and, homecare leaves often remove women from the labour market at formative periods in their career development. The potentially negative impact of long parental leaves, as Morgan and Zippel (2003) suggest in their study of care leaves in Austria, Finland, France, Germany and Norway,<sup>11</sup> is mitigated when mothers return to work sooner than required, within one or two years as in (East) Germany and Finland. Findings that the authors cite from the 1990s show that maternal employment rates soon return to high levels in both countries, unlike in Austria and (West) Germany where women regularly took the full period of three years' leave and return rates to paid work were much lower. The OECD figures for maternal employment rates shown in Figure 1, however, paint a different, more up-to-date picture. Finland's employment rate for mothers with children under three is in fact lower than in France, Germany and Austria, indicating that more Finnish mothers are now taking the full three years of leave. Their employment rate, however, rises back to over 80 per cent once their youngest child reaches the age of three – the highest maternal employment rate in the EU. The impact of homecare leave in Finland appears less negative than anticipated given that most Finnish mothers return to work, albeit after an extended period of absence from the labour market.<sup>12</sup>

Most mothers, though, return to work after long care leaves albeit at higher rates in countries such as Finland where there is a much stronger tradition of, and less societal resistance to, maternal

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<sup>10</sup> Although homecare leaves are more associated with conservative and centrist political parties, Morgan and Zippel (2003) find that parties of the left have also supported these policies in France, Germany and Austria, albeit for more pragmatic than ideological reasons; e.g. as a way to tackle unemployment, or simply because homecare leaves are popular with voters.

<sup>11</sup> Norway is included, although not an EU member state, as it provides some useful examples of childcare arrangements in a social-democratic welfare state.

<sup>12</sup> The data should be treated with caution, however. In principle, all women on statutory paid leave are counted as employed but countries may or may not include women on extended or unpaid periods of parental leave as employed. Many Austrian parents on parental leave are seen as inactive whereas Finnish parents on homecare leave are often included in the country's employment statistics.

employment than in more conservative welfare states such as Austria and Germany. In both countries, some previously employed women faced unemployment after taking care leave – nine per cent in Austria, six per cent and 16 per cent respectively in West and East Germany (Morgan & Zippel, 2003, p. 69). East German mothers, in particular, lost their jobs due to economic restructuring in the 1990s, suggesting that long-term care leaves expose women to greater risk during periods of economic downturn. Yet, even in Austria and Germany female employment rates generally rise again after having children. Only in countries which retain a very strong attachment to a male-breadwinner model of family relations, providing limited public support for working mothers, do female employment rates fail to climb again after periods of childcare.<sup>13</sup> This is moreover the case in familialist social regimes such as Greece, Italy, Ireland, Malta and Spain as well as in the Netherlands.<sup>14</sup> Amongst these countries, only Spain has (unpaid) statutory parental leave of three years.

The impact of long care leaves, from a gender-equality perspective, is hence not simply about the risk of increasing the likelihood of mothers' unemployment. It also relates to a concern that mothers are more likely to be channelled into lower-waged, lower-status and more temporary work following long periods of absence from the labour market. In Austria, the income of women who did not go on leave increased by 20 per cent between 1993 and 1997 whereas income levels fell by nine per cent amongst women who took leave due, in part, to their return to part-time positions (Morgan & Zippel, 2003, p. 70).<sup>15</sup> Although homecare schemes usually guarantee parents the right to return to the same job or an equivalent position following the end of their leave, the job may no longer appear suitable especially if it previously entailed long working hours. Part-time work can, however, mean far fewer hours in some countries than others, and is not necessarily a byword for marginal jobs. Gender wage gaps, and associated employment penalties, will vary between welfare states, whilst mothers' employment choices will be shaped by the suitability of available jobs and access to affordable childcare. Part-time work in Sweden usually entails longer hours than in the Netherlands, but formal childcare facilities in Sweden are more developed than in the Netherlands where 'informal' care arrangements are frequently used.<sup>16</sup> Dutch part-time work, however, is better protected and less precarious than in the UK as a result of policies to promote a better work-life

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<sup>13</sup> See the OECD family database 'LMF1.4 Employment profiles over the life-course' found online at [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database).

<sup>14</sup> The inclusion of the Netherlands in Esping-Andersen's cluster of more universal, social-democratic welfare states singularly failed to consider the gendered impact of public policies on women (see e.g. Sainsbury, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> It is unclear whether the authors are referring only to extended periods of parental leave or to all types/lengths of leave. There is also an element of self-selection: mothers who do not take leave are much more likely to be career-focused than mothers who choose to care for their children at home for a long time.

<sup>16</sup> A grant was introduced in 2007 for Dutch grandparents who care for their grandchildren on a regular basis.

balance – the so-called ‘combination model’ that sought to achieve a more equitable sharing of work and care between men and women. Whilst the model has contributed to a growth in female employment, especially part-time work, it has had limited impact on men’s working hours who remain by and large employed on a full-time basis (Plantenga, 2002).

Although different national studies have found that only a minority of women, between 8–15 per cent, have faced problems with employers upon their return to work following extended care leave (cited in Morgan & Zippel, 2003, p. 69), this may reflect differences in workplace cultures that vary by sector (public/private) and by occupation. Employers’ attitudes to family life vary to a significant degree from one workplace to the next. It is well-known that mothers in Scandinavia tend to gravitate towards jobs in the public sector, despite lower wages, because the work environment is more family-friendly. Similarly, the gender pay gap is an outcome of occupational segregation. There are positions that offer greater financial rewards for high levels of work commitment, and often mean long working hours and a lack of flexibility, and jobs that enable a better work-family balance but for less remuneration. The trade-off between work and family life is becoming less clear-cut, however. The growth in services, offering non-standard and part-time work for low wages, often means irregular working hours that are unfriendly to family life (e.g. early or late shifts, weekend work) and that require employees to adopt flexible work schedules. These are the types of job in which women are disproportionately represented, and can be seen as a less obvious, but structurally-embedded form of gender discrimination. In the UK, Ireland, Austria and Germany, the growth in non-standard employment has led to significant gender wage gaps of over 20 per cent at the bottom end of the wage structure, and potentially caused hardship for some women (Rubery et al., 2005). For some Austrian or German mothers who return to work after long care leave, their employment options are narrowed to part-time work, bringing a significant wage penalty but without necessarily improving their work-life balance.

It is unsurprising that long parental leaves of up to three years have concerned advocates of gender equality. The brief introduction of a homecare scheme in Sweden in the mid-1990s was seen by many as a ‘trap for women’ (Hiilamo & Kangas, 2009).<sup>17</sup> Not only would it foster women’s dependence in the short-term on welfare and/or a male partner’s income, but also, in the longer-term, it could expose women to greater employment uncertainty and risk. Long periods of parental

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<sup>17</sup> A cash-for-care scheme was, however, introduced in 2008 by the non-socialist cabinet. The introduction has occurred at the municipal level where support for childcare allowances is stronger than at the national level. This will, according to Hiilamo and Kangas (2009), make it difficult for any future cabinet to abolish the scheme again.



leave, it was feared, would undermine the gender contract that had, since the 1970s, promoted more equitable outcomes for women in Sweden by, for example, expanding municipal childcare. Mothers, and not fathers, would choose to care for their children at home, reducing demand for childcare places and thus incentives for local authorities to invest in care facilities. The impact of long care leaves could also be felt at the household-level. If the thesis is correct that women's employment in the labour market makes the division of labour at home more equitable by raising their bargaining power within the household (Korpi, 2000, p. 140), long care leaves especially are likely to have the opposite effect. Expectations are raised that a stay-at-home mother will, in addition to childcare duties, perform other household chores and tasks by virtue of her being a homemaker.

The question then turns on how to value care without reinforcing the traditional division of labour at home (Lister, 1994). Some cash-for-care schemes, in France, Finland and Norway, allow parents to use the childcare allowance to pay for private childcare if they wish to continue working.<sup>18</sup> In Norway, however, initial findings after its introduction indicated a shift from full-time into part-time by mothers on low and middle incomes that is likely to have led to a more unequal sharing of household tasks, including the care of children, by gender and social class (Rønsen, 2001). More recent findings, though, point to a decrease in the take-up of the childcare allowance with the expansion of day-care places. Parents in Norway appear to prefer, trust and value childcare services over private childminders, and demand for full-time day-care places is considerable across all socioeconomic groups (Ellingsæter & Gulbrandsen, 2007). Beyond being a simple means to get more mothers into the labour market, childcare in much of Scandinavia is seen as a social right for all, irrespective of class, and as an important means to improve child welfare through early socialisation and pre-school education.

In France, however, the sharing of household tasks remains highly gendered despite longstanding public support for working women (see, e.g., Windebank, 2001). In this context, long care leaves may have aggravated an already unequal division of labour as mothers have withdrawn from the labour market. The separate childcare allowances on offer in France are also seen to privilege more wealthy families because the subsidies available do not cover the full costs of a registered childminder whilst lower-income families are left to struggle with a lack of day-care places (Fagnani, 1998). As elsewhere, private childminders in France are mostly women, on low wages and often

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<sup>18</sup> In France, eligibility criteria for a three-year parental leave are different to criteria for the childcare allowance. Parents may qualify for one but not necessarily both (Morgan & Zippel, 2003, p. 53).

required to work irregular hours. Public childcare allowances may well release some women from family duties, but in doing so create low-status work for other women without affecting men's (limited) contribution to household tasks, including the care of their children.

One way to help balance the division of labour at home might be to introduce a 'daddy quota' as part of parental leave which must be taken, or forfeited, by the father. Introduced across the Nordic countries since the 1990s,<sup>19</sup> it is seen as 'instituting a right of employed fathers to care for their children [and] signals a new policy approach to fatherhood and gender equality' (Leira, 1998, p. 369). The four weeks of leave initially reserved for Norwegian fathers, now increased to 10 weeks, was an immediate success with 85 per cent of eligible fathers using the quota by the turn of the century (Brandth & Kvande, 2003). Given the limited take-up of standard parental leave by fathers in Europe, the quotas appear to be an innovative way to encourage men to assume a more active care role as fathers. They represent a small step closer to Fraser's (1997, p. 59ff) 'universal caregiver model' in which informal care work would be less gendered and more highly valued, and where welfare states would be designed around the worker-caregiver in recognition that all workers have care responsibilities over the course of their working lives. Findings from Sweden, though, have been more circumspect as fathers have tended (and been allowed) to spread their daddy quota over an extended period of time,<sup>20</sup> taking leave of one or two days for long weekends, half days and/or for longer summer holidays. In this sense, the flexibility of paternity leave in Sweden has undermined the argument that a daddy quota would allow men to have time to bond with their new-born babies and to better understand the daily demands in caring for very young children. There has also been limited take-up by highly paid men in the private sector (Bergman & Hobson, 2002). It may be that fathers, like mothers, are constrained by cultural norms of parenthood, but workplace expectations – especially in the private sector – will prevent some fathers from taking extended periods of parental leave if they feel that their absence will adversely affect their employment prospects and their family's future well-being.

## Discussion and conclusions

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<sup>19</sup> Except Denmark which in 2002 abolished its two-week quota that had been introduced four years earlier (see Ellingsæter, 2009, pp. 6-8).

<sup>20</sup> Fathers are allowed to use this leave up until the child is eight years old.

Even more progressive European states thus appear to fall short in achieving gender-equitable outcomes: women remain much more likely than men in Scandinavia to take a greater share of parental leave to care for their children and still earn on average less than men despite registering the highest employment rates in Europe. In fact, the gender wage gap for employees working more than 15 hours per week is smaller in other European countries, such as France, Belgium and Portugal, than in the Nordic countries. Although gender wage gaps tend to be higher in some countries with lower female employment rates, as in Austria, Germany and the UK, these gaps do not necessarily narrow as more women enter the labour market.<sup>21</sup> It is important to ask which jobs women, and especially mothers, are filling, and whether their predominance in more family-friendly occupations indicates a real choice to accept lower wages in return for a better work-life balance. The widespread availability of childcare services, alongside generous parental leave benefits, certainly makes this choice more meaningful for most Scandinavian women. Unlike in countries with limited public support for working women, their employment options are much less likely to be narrowed to insecure, low-wage and low-status jobs as a way to manage their personal childcare responsibilities. Yet, their choices are still constrained by gender because women, as elsewhere in Europe, remain by and large the primary caregivers of young children. The associated wage penalty persists for Swedish mothers who work in the public sector, for example, but access to affordable childcare allows them more freedom to engage in work that is secure, commensurate with their skills and experience, and more conducive to family life.

From this perspective, both the potential and limitations of the current EU policy direction become clearer. Whilst it tends to see gender equality narrowly through an employment lens, the focus on barriers to female labour-force participation such as lack of childcare services is of obvious importance for mothers. Improving access to affordable childcare should give mothers more substantive freedom to choose how to balance paid work and home childcare. In widening their employment options, they gain greater equality in access to employment which, as Meyers *et al.* (1999, p. 118) argue, is fundamental to women's achievement of full social citizenship. If gender equality is measured against three general areas – capabilities, opportunities and empowerment/agency (Beer, 2009, p. 217) – then providing opportunities for women that previously were unavailable, such as access to more and potentially better work, is a significant

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<sup>21</sup> See the OECD family database 'LMF1.5 Gender pay gaps for full-time workers and earnings differentials by educational attainment' found online at [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database). The OECD data also indicate, rather surprisingly, that gender wage gaps are narrower in Ireland and Malta where comparatively very few mothers work. It may be that the labour market in these two countries is less segregated along gender lines.

development. The positive effects of improving women's access to better employment opportunities are seen in their enhanced capabilities (as measured by health, education and skills) and 'agency freedom' (Sen, 1999) – or, the ability to act in accordance with one's values and interests. Societal changes mean that women need and want to map out their own life trajectories, and not be dependent on others for their well-being. For Orloff (1993), this means that women will only achieve gender equality through access to paid work and the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household. Welfare states are gradually moving away from the traditional male-breadwinner model of family relations towards an 'adult worker model' (Lewis & Giullari, 2005) by adapting policies and practices that previously fostered dependencies on others, such as joint taxation of married couples, to reflect the individualisation of the life course.

Yet, the employment-focused approach to gender equality has been criticised on several counts. For many feminist critics, it promotes a 'fetishism of the work ethic' (Lister, 2002) by equating work with paid work, devaluing care as an alternative to paid work, and glossing over labour-market gender inequalities. Some mothers, especially those employed in more mundane, low-skilled work that offers limited employment prospects, will find a greater sense of self-fulfilment in caring for their children than they do at work. It is also implausible to think that all childcare could be commodified, or that most parents would wish to defamilialise all care responsibilities to childcare services. Caring for young children, especially, will entail some employment sacrifices for parents, so the issue must also be about how care work can be more equitably shared between men and women at home (Lewis & Giullari, 2005, pp. 87-88). Simply raising childcare provision ignores that parents have an 'ethic of care' and responsibility for others (S. Duncan & Edwards, 1999; Sevenhuijsen, 1998), and that the very presence of children brings deeper, mutual dependencies within households. Instead of raising the expectation that women will achieve gender equality by becoming more like men, Lewis and Giullari (2005, p. 93) argue that people ought to be seen as both 'autonomous and *interdependent*, capable of making choices out of concern and responsibility for others, as well as for one's self'.

The EU's childcare targets thus appear to critics as primarily instrumental, having much less concern for parental choice or child well-being than with financial concerns such as growing welfare dependency and economic growth (Lewis et al., 2008). They say nothing, for example, about the hours or quality of childcare provision, which are surely two of the principal concerns for parents

and which will affect mothers' employment choices. Nor does it have much, if anything, to say about men's roles as fathers or about how familial responsibilities, especially the care of children, can be shared more equitably between parents. Paid work for women may, as it has been claimed, bring a more equitable division of labour within the household but it can also expose mothers to the double burden of paid labour and unpaid care work. It does not necessarily follow, as many French women would attest, that women's employment leads to a more equitable sharing of household tasks or childcare.

This is perhaps overly critical given that, for political reasons, the scope for EU intervention in national family policies may be limited to making the economic case for policy change. Policies that seek to help family life, such as childcare targets or parental leave directives, can impose direct costs on national economies that, especially in the current economic climate, may be too high. In contrast to childcare services from which there may well be a financial as well as a social benefit in enabling more mothers to remain in work, parental leave entitlements are considered more as a cost. The most recent draft law to raise leave to 20 weeks on full pay for mothers and to two weeks on full pay for fathers, passed by the European Parliament, is very likely to be watered down by member-state governments before entering into law as an EU directive. Reaction in the UK has already suggested that employers, especially small businesses, would be less willing to employ women of childbearing age, confirming the fear that too much family-friendly legislation may lead to gender discrimination in the workplace (Hantrais, 2000, p. 192).

Family policy remains a highly sensitive area and varies markedly across the EU. Some member states, such as the Nordic countries and France, show high levels of policy support for families whereas family policy in Southern Europe lacks the same level of public commitment or legitimacy, factors that have contributed to a more hesitant and less coherent approach. Policy actors in Germany and the UK are similarly reluctant to intervene in the private lives of families (Hantrais, 2004, p. 160), although in recent years policy support for working parents such as childcare has grown. Germany has resolved, partly reflecting the influence of the Barcelona target, to raise childcare places to a third of all children under three by 2013. The UK, and now the Netherlands, has adopted a market-based approach to the delivery of childcare services that promotes parental choice over the type and form of care desired for their children but tends to favour more affluent parents. The impact of the childcare reform in the Netherlands in 2005 suggests that the provision of

childcare has shifted to more wealthy districts and away from non-profit organisations in less affluent areas (Noailly & Visser, 2009).

In contrast to the more instrumental economic arguments for childcare, policy actors in Germany and the UK have emphasised the social value of investing in children, particularly children from more deprived backgrounds or from immigrant families (Bahle, 2009). Early intervention is seen as critical in promoting child welfare through socialisation with other children irrespective of social class and ethnic origin. Clearly inspired from the Nordic approach to childcare that seeks to even out social inequalities from an early age, a more liberal market-based approach such as that adopted in the UK and the Netherlands may still produce unequal outcomes, for both mothers and children, if more affluent parents are able to buy better or more childcare. The challenge is to avoid producing a two-tier system where some parents, by virtue of living in the right area or being financially better-off, find it much easier to balance work with family life than other, less well-off, parents. Childcare in Finland, Sweden and Denmark is seen as a universal social right, is heavily subsidised and guaranteed by the state and dovetails with the end of parental leave entitlements (Finch, 2006). From a gender-equality perspective, however, two further conditions are key if women are to be able to make a more substantive choice in balancing their paid work and care. Firstly, working mothers must have access to decent jobs in more family-friendly workplaces where taking parental leave or other time off to care for young children does not unjustifiably result in a wage penalty or curtailed employment prospects. Secondly, there needs to be a cultural shift, both within the workplace and in wider society, to induce men to provide more care for their young children. As Fraser's universal caregiver model outlines, this would require the deconstruction of the prevailing gender order that sets in opposition the roles of (male) breadwinner and (female) caregiver.

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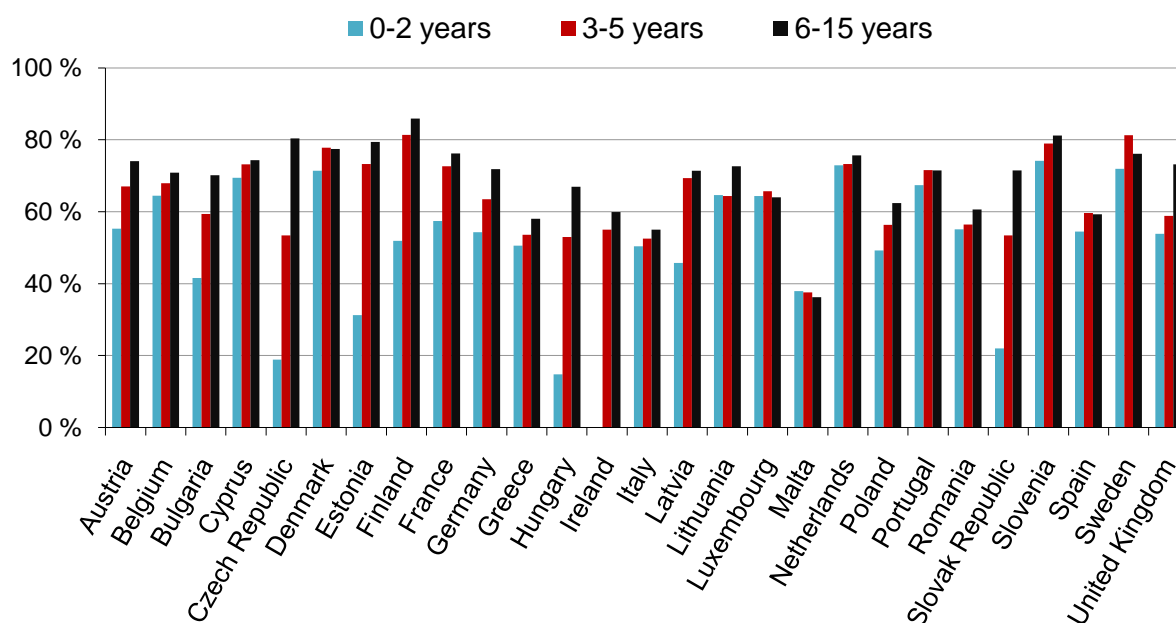
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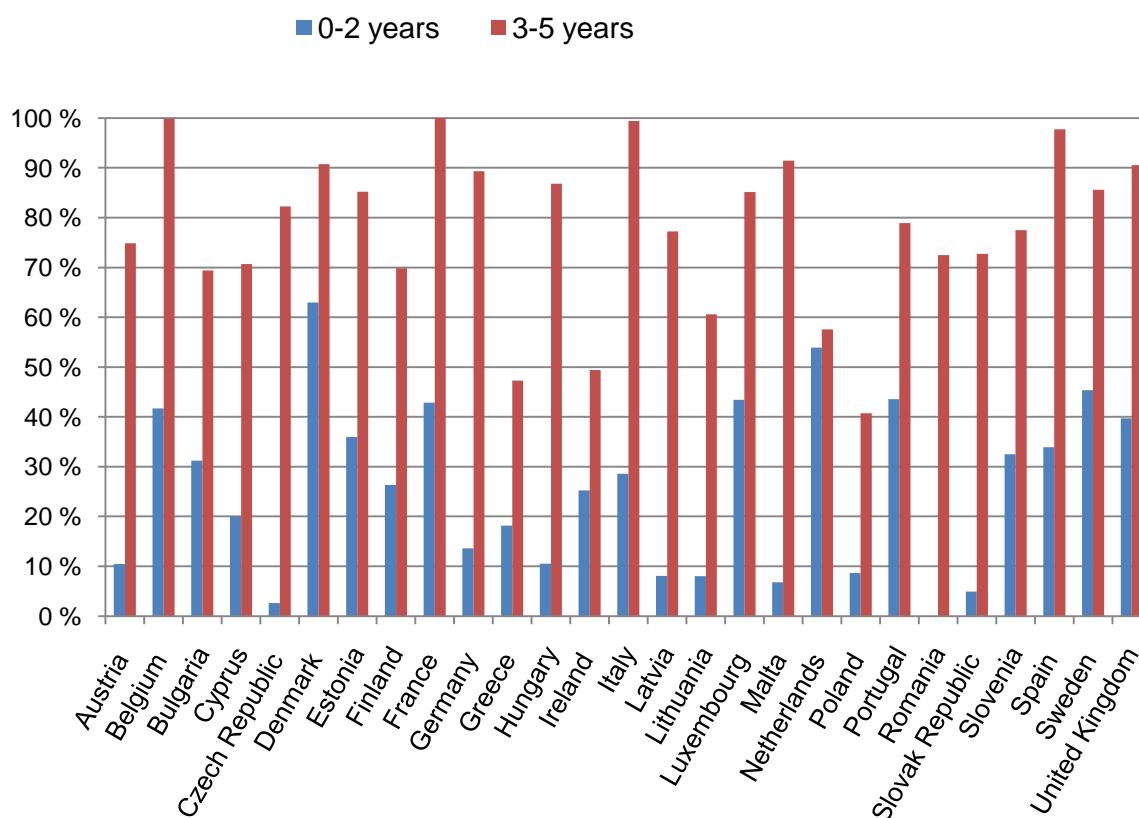
## APPENDIX

Figure 1 – Maternal employment rates by age of youngest child, 2007



Source: online OECD family database at [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database). No '0-2 years' data for Ireland.

Figure 2: Enrolment rates of children in formal care or early education services, 2006



Source: online OECD family database at [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database). No '0-2 years' data for Romania.

**Table 1: Statutory leave arrangements for parents, EU member states and Norway, 2006/2007, by type of leave, duration and full-time equivalent (FTE) of the leave period if paid at 100 per cent of last earnings of average wage**

	Maternity leave		Paternity leave		Parental leave	
	Weeks	<i>FTE Paid Leave</i>	Weeks	<i>FTE Paid Leave</i>	Weeks	<i>FTE Paid Leave</i>
<b>Austria</b>	16	100%	0.4	0%	104	16%
<b>Belgium</b>	15	75%	2	60%	12	22%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	63	90%	-	-	-	-
<b>Czech Republic</b>	28	49%	-	-	156	32%
<b>Denmark</b>	18	100%	2	100%	32	100%
<b>Estonia</b>	28	100%	2	100%	156	40%
<b>Finland</b>	17.5	67%	7	64%	156	21%
<b>France</b>	16	100%	2	100%	156	20%
<b>Germany*</b>	14	100%	-	-	156	22%
<b>Greece</b>	17	100%	0.4	100%	14	0%
<b>Hungary</b>	24	70%	1	100%	104	70%
<b>Ireland</b>	48	38%	14	0%	14	0%
<b>Italy</b>	21	76%	-	-	26	30%
<b>Latvia</b>	19	100%	2	80%	52	70%
<b>Lithuania</b>	21	100%	4	100%	104	85%
<b>Luxembourg</b>	16	100%	0.4	0%	24	50%
<b>Malta</b>	13	45%	-	-	12	0%
<b>Netherlands</b>	16	100%	0.4	100%	13	75%
<b>Norway*</b>	9	100%	8	75%	48	80%
<b>Poland</b>	18	100%	4	0%	156	10%
<b>Portugal</b>	17	100%	3	67%	12	0%
<b>Romania</b>	21	75%	-	-	-	-
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	28	55%	-	-	156	20%
<b>Slovenia</b>	15	100%	13	22%	37	100%
<b>Spain</b>	16	100%	2	100%	156	0%
<b>Sweden*</b>	12	80%	11.7	79%	72	73%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	39	24%	2	15%	13	0%

Source: online OECD family database at [www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database)

\* Country has no separate regulation for maternity leave with stipulations integrated into the parental leave scheme.