

What can conservative welfare states learn from the Nordic experience?

Transitions between family work and employment from a comparative perspective

Andrea Leitner & Angela Wroblewski

Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna

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Leitner, Andrea & Wroblewski, Angela

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CONTACTINFORMATION:

TLM.NET co-ordinator:
SISWO/ Social Policy Research
Plantage Muidergracht 4
NL - 1018 TV Amsterdam
T +31 20 527 0600
F +31 20 622 9430
E tduyvene@siswo.uva.nl

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Abstract

Increasing the labour market participation of women is one of the main goals of the European Employment Policy. The development of the last years shows that many countries have been successful on their way to integrate women into the labour market. But the linking between employment and family patterns has strengthened the problem of declining fertility rates. However, the experience in northern countries like Denmark and Finland shows, that high female employment does not necessarily have to lead to a decline in birth rates. Policies promoting the reconciliation of work and family serve not just gender equality but also a positive demographic development.

The presentation is based on the results of a just finished research project on factors influencing female labour market participation in Denmark, Finland, Germany and Austria.¹ In the paper we compare the four countries concerning their parental leave schemes and ask how they fulfil the criteria to support good transitions between family work and the labour market. Another criteria we study is gender equity. The comparison between the Nordic countries and the conservative countries shows aspects where reforms in conservative welfare states could start.

¹ Wroblewski A., Leitner A. (2004), Umbau von Arbeitsgesellschaften. Eine Chance zur geschlechtergerechten Verteilung von Arbeit, Zeit und Einkommen, Studie im Auftrag der Hans-Böckler Stiftung (D) und des Bundesministeriums für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur (A), Wien.

1 Introduction

The attempt to increase employment participation, which has been one of the key objectives of the European Employment Strategy, has in many ways been crowned by success (EC 2002a). Since a higher employment rate can primarily be obtained by a better integration of women into working life, this will, on the one hand, have a positive effect on the economy and, on the other hand, promote equal opportunities between women and men. The effectiveness of employment measures is also heightened by social changes, such as the increasing focus on gainful employment in general, the instability of family structures, or the growing number of women with higher education and training, which in turn lead to a more equal distribution of jobs among women and men. But the different efforts to integrate women into the labour market has also had some unintended negative effects. Lower birth rates² – not just in Southern Europe, but also in Austria and Germany – are mostly taken to be a result of the growing number of gainfully employed women. The situation is somewhat different in the Nordic countries, where in spite of the large amount of working women the average number of children is still higher. Therefore, one of the main political challenges during the next few decades will be to find ways to encourage demographic development and prevent a further increase in the proportion of elderly people, in order to ensure the employment potential on a long-term basis.

In a recently concluded study, where we were asking – among other things – how political measures can promote stable demographic development in spite of the growing number of gainfully employed women, we mainly concentrated our attention on Denmark and Finland, as those countries have proven to handle this issue rather successfully. The main question in this context was: What can conservative welfare states learn from the Nordic experience?³ Women's employment participation in Denmark and Finland is higher than the EU average.⁴ Finland has had a long tradition of female employment, as the economic situation – especially after World War II – has caused them to take specific measures to increase the number of working women and the employment rate in general. In Denmark, the integration of women into the labour market started somewhat later (in the 1960s). Both in Denmark and Finland birth rates are above the EU average⁵, and the low employment rates that are usually found among 30- to 40-year-old women are much less pronounced than in other places. This implies that it is somehow easier in these countries to combine work and family life than it is in Austria or in Germany.

We have chosen Denmark and Finland as our "model countries" because they apply to rather different approaches with regard to female employment. In Denmark, for instance, the primary form of employment for women with children used to be part-time work,⁶ whereas in Finland most women were working in full-time jobs from

² cf. EC 2002a, Eurostat 2003, Diekmann 2003, Seyda 2003.

³ In the project we carried out several interviews with researchers (15) and people from ministries, trade unions and employers representations (11) in Denmark and Finland. The focus of these interviews was the policy mix, which supported or enabled the high female labour market participation and the reconciliation of work and family life. The interviews should amplify an analysis of the existing literature concerning female labour market participation in the four countries and the results of a secondary analysis of EU- and OECD statistics. For further details see Wroblewski, Leitner 2004.

⁴ In 2001, the employment rate was 72% in Denmark, 65% in Finland and 55% in EU-15 (2001, Eurostat).

⁵ The birthrate is in Denmark 1,76, in Finland 1,73, in Germany and in Austria 1,34. The EU average is 1,53 (2000, Eurostat).

⁶ The share of part-time employment in Denmark has decreased during the last few years. Now the majority of women have full-time jobs, although they are on average working less hours than in other EU member states.

the very beginning. During the course of this project we tried to identify the specific policy mix that made such a development possible and to find out whether and to what extent this policy mix could be implemented in Austria and Germany as well.

Since the largest part of women to be integrated into the labour market consists of mothers, the analysis mainly focuses on socio-political regulations concerning women with smaller children with a much greater need of care. The existing ways to deal with the transition between employment and childcare as well as the social security provided during that time, not only affects women's employment participation but also their decision whether to have children or not. If it is hard or impossible to combine work and family life, women are forced to choose one over the other or else be faced with major disadvantages in the attempt to have both.⁷ In order to reach both goals – increased employment participation and stable demographic development – it is therefore absolutely necessary to have an appropriate employment and socio-political strategy, which will make this transition easier for women.

In this paper we focus on parental leave schemes and ask how the compared countries fulfil the criteria to support good transitions between family work and labour market work as well as gender equity. The analysis is based on the results of the mentioned comparative study (covering Finland, Denmark, Germany and Austria)⁸, to prove how the policy mix in those countries meets the criteria of transitional labour markets.

2 Assessment criteria for the transition between employment and childcare

Empirical findings have proven that the existing ways to deal with the transition between gainful employment and childcare, do determine whether and in what way women are employed.⁹ Generally speaking, there are three different types of transition: Firstly, mothers leaving their jobs for good as soon as they have a child. Secondly, the so-called "three-phase model", in which women with children take a leave from their jobs for a limited amount of time, but go back to work again later on. Thirdly, the so-called "parallel model", in which women return to their jobs almost immediately after giving birth. The difference between these three models lies in the amount of time away from the job and in the extent of work after the re-entry.

The way this transition is handled doesn't just affect women's integration into the labour market, but – due to women's role in the working world and the resulting social norms and values – also indirectly determines how unpaid work is shared within the family and how easy or difficult it is for women to be gainfully employed and/or earn an appropriate income. It is thus not only important for female employment participation in general, but also for gender equity, i.e. for the equal distribution of paid and unpaid labour, working time, and income among women and men.

⁷ cf. Daly 2000, OECD 2003.

⁸ The comparative study was based on analysis of OECD and EUROSTAT statistics and expert interviews in Denmark and Finland (cf. Wroblewski, Leitner 2004).

⁹ cf. e.g. Rubery, Fagan 1998; O'Reilly, Fagan 1998; Rubery et al. 1999; Dingeldey 2000; Hakim 2000; Pfau-Effinger 2000.

In order to analyse the policy mix in the four countries we were asking the following questions:

- To what extent do the existing policies promote labour market participation of women with children?
- Are parents entitled to take a leave from their jobs for as long as their children are in need of specific care? How long and how flexible are these leaves?
- Is there any form of compensation for the income loss during childcare leave? How much is it, and for how long is it granted?
- Is there a realistic chance to return to the former job?
- How does the time away from work affect the income in a long-term perspective?
- To what extent do the existing regulations encourage men to carry out unpaid work as well?
- Does the policy mix produce different incentives for different groups of women?

These criteria are based on the idea that equal opportunities do not just mean the equal treatment of women on the labour market but also the equal distribution of unpaid work between the genders. As long as the increase of female employment is not also accompanied by a re-distribution of unpaid labour – and of childcare in particular – women will still have to carry a heavier load, spend more time, and deal with various other work-related disadvantages, despite the fact that they may eventually have equal opportunities on the labour market (for more details, see Fraser 1997). For as long as these structural differences prevail, women will surely find it more difficult to combine work and family. If they are not provided with any appropriate solutions, i.e. if they don't get any kind of support (by the government, employer, or partner), women with children will continue to be disadvantaged on the labour market and therefore – if they are not willing to overcome these obstacles – will decide to have few children or to have no children at all.¹⁰

Now, how is this transition handled in Denmark and Finland and/or in Germany and Austria, and what are the consequences with regard to female employment and equal opportunities?

3 Policy mix in Denmark and Finland

Both in Denmark and Finland parents have the opportunity to take a leave from their jobs for childcare purposes for approximately one year after the child is born (maternity leave & parental leave). During that period they are entitled to benefits which are based on their prior income. The first few months after birth are reserved for the mother, but during that time fathers can take as well paternity leave of two weeks (Denmark) or 18 working days (Finland). In principle, most of the leave is a family entitlement, which means that parents can share it. In Finland, parents

¹⁰ cf. Buber 2001; Buber, Kytir 2001.

may extend the leave if they choose to take care of the child themselves, i.e. if the child does not attend a childcare institution. In this case, they are entitled to a flat-rate benefit payment (child home care allowance) of approximately 252 € each month.¹¹

After taking parental leave, parents have the right to return to their former workplace. This is actually possible in most cases due to the well-developed childcare infrastructure. The example of the Nordic countries shows that the time of return depends on the availability of a suitable childcare facility. While waiting for a place to become available, parents often take some additional time away from work. However, due to the individual right to childcare provision they usually don't have to wait very long.¹²

To make the return as easy as possible, it is also important that childcare outside of the own home (i.e. by someone else besides the parents) for children older than one year is also accepted by society and that this option may even be preferable to homecare due to the high level of quality in such facilities (as for instance in Denmark). Because of these well-regulated and easily available childcare options, companies are also much more willing to employ women with children. A successful return of course also depends on the labour market development. In Finland, for example, the recession at the beginning of the 1990s did have a negative effect on women's job opportunities and working conditions.

Both in Denmark and Finland women now usually take full-time jobs when they return, which means that in the long term they only have to deal with minor disadvantages; the chances on the labour market are almost the same for women with children and women without children (e.g. in terms of career advancement, field of work, working time). A Danish study, for instance, shows that temporary absences from work for childcare purposes hardly have any negative effects on the overall income of Danish women (cf. Datta Gupta, Smith 2000).

But in spite of the large proportion of gainfully employed women in the two Nordic countries, women are still expected to carry out most of the unpaid work as well. Only very rarely do families take advantage of the possibility to share the parental leave, mostly because they would lose more money if the father takes a leave from work. Even though men in these countries generally carry out more housework and family duties than in other EU member states, women are still responsible for most of it. This means that they have to work longer hours (care work in addition to a full-time job), a problem that was also frequently pointed out in the interviews (key word: stress).

4 Policy mix in Germany and Austria

The proportion of working women in Germany and Austria has also clearly increased during the last decades and now (2001) amounts to 59% (Germany) and 60% (Austria). Compared to Denmark and Finland, however, it is much more

¹¹ In some cases socially disadvantaged families and families with several children receive additional financial support from local authorities (2003).

¹² If there is no acceptable childcare alternative, and if one parent is therefore unable to go to work, the parent staying at home is entitled to substitute payments to make up for the loss of income during that time. In Helsinki, for instance, it is enough if parents apply for childcare about three weeks before returning to their jobs.

dependent on the family situation. It is taken to be quite natural that women are gainfully employed before they have their first child. There are hardly any gender differences regarding the extent of employment participation for people without children. After the first child is born, women usually stay away from their jobs for a few years, while the parental leaves they are entitled to may also last several years (in Austria: 30 months, or 36 months if the father chooses to stay home for at least 6 months; in Germany: until the child's 3rd birthday). However, they will only get substitute payments for their loss of income for eight weeks before and eight weeks after birth (maternity protection).¹³ After that, they receive a benefit of 436 € per month in Austria, regardless of any prior income or the family's overall income at that time. In Germany, the benefit amounts to 300 € per month for 24 months or 450 € per month for 12 months. It is based on the prior income and is discontinued or reduced accordingly if the family income reaches a certain predefined level after 6 months.

In theory, parental leaves are quite flexible. But due to the rather complicated regulations regarding additional incomes and the companies' reluctance to implement flexible working time models for employees with childcare duties, this makes hardly any difference in practice. Neither Germany nor Austria has a leave that is exclusively reserved for the father (e.g. during the maternity leave).

Because of the frequent lack of adequate childcare institutions for children under three years of age, which would allow a better combination of job and family life, it has proven to be rather problematic for parents to go back to work. This is mainly due to the fact that childcare is primarily seen as a pedagogic instrument and not as tool to improve the work-life balance. In Germany, for example, parents with children over 3 years merely have the right to part-time childcare.¹⁴

Most mothers try to make up for these institutional shortcomings by working only part-time after maternity leave. But since part-time jobs are still a marginalised form of employment, which may often lead to de-qualification, women are faced with various disadvantages in the long term. Fewer opportunities for career advancement, lower incomes, etc. will most likely result in lower benefits and/or retirement pensions.¹⁵ In addition to that, various socio-political regulations do in fact enforce the traditional idea of a family with one provider having a full-time job (*male breadwinner*) and the female partner being responsible for childcare and housework and – if at all – earning an additional, small income. The tax system and social policy schemes are largely based on this particular family model.¹⁶ Women's entitlements are frequently dependent on the male partner's income or employment situation. This clearly presents a considerable incentive to have one partner on leave for an extended period of time, who concentrates on family duties. The fact that it is usually the woman who stays at home cannot only be explained by the influence of social norms and values but also by economic decisions, because men usually have higher incomes (women in Austria still earn about a third less than men do).

¹³ or 12 weeks after birth in case of a multiple birth or delivery by caesarian section.

¹⁴ In Austria, parents don't have any right to institutional childcare.

¹⁵ Especially in Austria, where after the latest reforms pensions are now calculated on the basis of 30 years rather than on the 15 years with the highest income. The same goes for Germany: Despite the fact that childcare leaves are now increasingly taken into consideration in the calculation of retirement pensions they are still considered to be less significant than employment.

¹⁶ In Austria: e.g. regulations regarding additional income during parental leave, tax credits for sole earners and sole providers, contribution-free inclusion in the employed partner's insurance plan; in Germany: e.g. income tax splitting for married couples, tax credits (cf. Dingeldey 2000, Mairhuber 2000).

Both Germany and Austria have tried more or less successfully to encourage women to return to their jobs earlier. When the new childcare allowance was introduced in Austria, a specific regulation regarding additional incomes was meant to serve as an incentive for women with children to take a job during maternity leave. They receive childcare allowance as long as their income doesn't get any higher than 14.600 € per month. If they earn more than that, payment will be discontinued.¹⁷ An initial assessment of the Austrian childcare allowance, however, has shown that women are now even more likely to stay at home for an extended period of time and that they hardly ever take advantage of the above-mentioned regulation on additional incomes.¹⁸ This means that, all in all, the new regulation seems to have enticed women to stay away from their jobs even longer. Certain groups of women, on the other hand, may feel compelled to go back to work earlier. This mostly applies to higher-qualified women with a higher potential income, who will also be able to afford the more expensive private childcare facilities. In the long run, this situation is likely to increase the differences between certain groups of women – according to their family duties and career prospects (especially education).

5 Similar regulations – different effects

If one compares the regulations on maternity protection and parental leave in the Nordic countries with the Austrian and German regulations, they are at first glance a lot more similar than one would expect when looking at the much larger differences between the employment rates in these countries. Both Austria and Germany have extended their maternity regulations, while their maternity protection period as well as paid parental leaves, are even longer than in Finland and Denmark. However, the differences lie in the financial support provided to parents and in the assistance they get with regard to childcare.

In Germany and Austria full replacement of the income loss is only paid for 8 weeks after birth, and then parents receive a flat-rate childcare allowance that is not necessarily enough to make a living. On the other hand, Danish and Finnish parents still get 90% and/or 80% of their prior income for approximately one year. After that, parents in Denmark (at least in theory) and in Finland can extend their leaves if they wish to take care of the children themselves. But generally, they can choose from a large and adequate selection of childcare facilities for children older than one year. In Germany and Austria, childcare is only secured for older children (three years and older), and the quality is often criticised. There are hardly any options for children under three years of age.

In spite of the theoretical possibility to return to work, which is given in all four countries, women in Austria and Germany face much greater difficulties due to the longer absences from the workplace and the frequent lack of adequate childcare alternatives (also for older children, especially in the afternoon and during vacation time).

The disadvantages resulting from long absences and part-time jobs are also reflected in the large gap between women's and men's incomes. These differences in

¹⁷ According to the law, they are even required to pay back the childcare allowance they have already received. But so far, this specific regulation has not yet been enforced.

¹⁸ cf. Lutz 2003 and 2004.

income also clearly reduce women's pensions or the benefits they are entitled to whenever they are unable to work (unemployment, illness). But although women in Denmark and Finland have failed to fully reach male income levels, the margin is considerably smaller than in Germany or Austria.¹⁹

In case of unpaid labour, on the other hand, the dissimilarities are much less pronounced: in none of the four countries unpaid work is distributed equally among the genders, although men in Denmark and Finland do take on more responsibilities. But housework is generally handled in a more pragmatic way in the Nordic countries and tends to take less time and effort than in Germany or Austria.

What finally explains the different extent of women's integration into the labour market in Finland and Denmark on the one hand and Germany and Austria on the other hand, is the way different groups of women are affected by the respective leave regulations. There are, in fact, considerable differences between women with higher qualifications and women with lower skills, both with regard to employment participation and to the number of children they have.²⁰ Considering that their potential income would probably not be a lot more than the benefits they receive during maternity leave (flat-rate) and that childcare is rather expensive in Austria and Germany, it seems to be more economic for women with lower skills to stay home longer and take care of the children themselves. The situation is somewhat different for women with higher skills: For them – provided that they even have children and do not just concentrate on their careers – putting a child in a childcare centre can indeed be more economic.

The main difference between the Nordic and the conservative countries is therefore not to be found in the specific type of regulation but rather in the way it is handled or used in practice (i.e. how long the leaves are and how the return to the job actually works). While in Denmark and Finland absences from the job usually don't last longer than one or one and a half years, mothers in Austria will in most cases use up the entire parental leave period of two and a half years rather than choosing a more flexible solution. After that, they mostly work part-time, which is still a rather marginalised form of employment. This is mainly due to the shortcomings in institutional childcare and to the somewhat ambivalent idea of motherhood that most political measures are based on. There is no consistent view on women and working mothers in politics, and the inconsistencies and sometimes contradictory opinions cause women to be left alone with their decisions and with the problems they encounter in trying to combine work and family life. Any effort to counteract this problem, e.g. by active labour market measures, will be doomed to fail unless the prevailing socio-political conditions are changed. The fact that the existing socio-political regulations still provide for women's alternative roles as housewives or mothers, also offers them an opportunity to escape the pressure on the labour market for a short period of time and thus postpone a problematic job-search. So far, neither the government nor companies have been seriously committed to solving this dilemma (e.g. by investing in institutional childcare or qualified part-time jobs).

¹⁹ Women's average hourly wages amount to about 89% of men's wages in Denmark, 87% in Finland, 80% in Austria, and 74% in Germany (Source: ECHP 1996).

²⁰ The employment rates of women with an education level lower than secondary II range from 49% in Austria to 50% in Germany. By comparison, the employment rates of women with tertiary education are 81% in Germany and 83% in Austria.

6 Transitional labour markets and equal opportunities

Leave regulations are generally a good example for transitional labour markets, as they provide some security for a temporary absence from work. But a comparison of the different countries also shows that the individual ways in which leave regulations are handled, have different effects on women's future careers as well as on their job opportunities in general. An assessment of these country-specific regulations, which was based on various principles for a successful transition formulated by Schmid (1994, 2002a, 2002b), clearly shows the shortcomings in the conservative states as compared to the Nordic countries.

Individual freedom of choice: In theory, parents of small children can choose to either remain employed or take a parental leave in all four countries. In reality, however, this option only exists in the Nordic countries, where the much better childcare infrastructure does indeed make it possible for parents with children over one year to choose either option. In the conservative welfare states only certain women (especially women with higher skills) have this freedom of choice. Men's options, on the other hand, seem to be limited in all countries. As opposed to Germany and Austria, however, Denmark and Finland do provide for more individual rights during that time of transition, both regarding the right to institutional childcare and men's right to take a paternity leave – even though the period set aside for that purpose is rather short. This means that women and men take different positions in the distribution of family duties.

Solidarity criterion: Generally, the benefits received during parental leave are meant to provide a basic level of security. But the respective regulations in the Nordic countries – income-based benefits in Finland, and an almost full compensation of the prior income in Denmark (90%) – allow much greater financial independence. The comparably low flat-rates in Austria and Germany, on the other hand, are in many cases not sufficient to make a living and thus increase the career's dependence upon the breadwinner. This means that the incentives for men and women to use this option are obviously not the same.

Effectiveness: In Germany and Austria, the criterion of effectiveness is not entirely fulfilled, mostly because the frequent lack of appropriate childcare facilities or qualified part-time jobs makes it rather difficult to co-ordinate paid and unpaid work. The different policy areas tend to be guided by different ideas about women's roles. On the one hand, they promote the traditional allocation of roles by encouraging women to commit themselves to reproduction work and only earn a small, additional income. Yet on the other hand, the pressure on women to continuously participate in working life is rising as well. As opposed to that, the socio-political regulations and measures in Finland and Denmark almost exclusively support female employment.

Efficiency: Job opportunities can also be increased by outsourcing private services, which happens to a higher extent in the Northern countries. Denmark, for instance, also gives tax credits for private home help. If the reproductive and care work is carried out by women instead of being employed this might lead to an overall economic loss of the investment in training.

Although the leave regulations in Germany and Austria do in some way promote women's integration into the labour market, they will not lead to any new types of full-time employment (cf. Schmid 2002) or promote gender equity. Besides

having a negative effect on the relationship between the genders (as gender gaps in employment are rather increased than reduced), they also lead to an increasing polarisation in the labour market chances of different groups of women. Even though more women are integrated into the labour market nowadays, women with children and/or lower skills increasingly find themselves in a disadvantaged position. In other words, the efforts to raise female employment rates in Germany and Austria have resulted in quantitative integration with qualitative deficits.

This transition seems to be much more successful in Denmark and Finland, where stay-at-home parents are paid a more acceptable substitute for their prior income and are given a practical – not just theoretical – chance to return to their jobs. But just as in Germany and Austria, these countries were not entirely able to achieve gender equality. The equal division of paid and unpaid labour among the genders is not promoted at all, and therefore women are still suffering from a greater lack of free time, lower incomes, and various other negative consequences.

Nevertheless, the comparison of these four countries also shows that a higher level of employment participation does not automatically create equal opportunities. The socio-political measures implemented in this connection clearly failed to achieve a truly equal distribution of paid and unpaid labour between the genders, even in the "model countries". Although such policies can indeed be conducive to gender equity on the labour market, they only have a limited effect on the distribution of unpaid labour. Thus the goal of true gender equity is still a far way from being reached.

All in all, it can be said that the transition between paid and unpaid work can indeed be shaped in such a way that female employment is promoted without jeopardising demographic development. It is clear, though, that this cannot be accomplished by single measures but rather by a set of well-matched and balanced measures in various political areas. Female employment is rather tensely situated between the labour market (production sphere), family and care work (reproduction sphere), and socio-political conditions (sphere of government regulation).²¹ It is also shaped by the prevailing social norms and values regarding childcare and gainfully employed women, which is why the work-life balance needs to be facilitated and promoted by different political areas.

Based on the results of this study, we therefore propose that the criteria for flexible transitions between paid and unpaid work should be explicitly targeted to women *and* men, by taking into account their different situations in life, their different interests, and the different obstacles or incentives in order to take advantage of the respective regulations. Only by means of *gender mainstreaming* can the characteristics of these transitions be adapted in such a way that they will allow a more equal distribution of work, time, and income among the genders.

²¹ cf. O'Reilly, Spee 1997.

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8 Appendix

Table 1. Relevant country parameters and socio-political regulations

	Denmark	Finland	Germany	Austria
Women's employment rates*	72,0%	65,4%	58,8%	60,1%
Proportion of women without children working in part-time jobs*	18,5%	7,5%	24,0%	17,4%
Proportion of women with children working in part-time jobs*	16,2%	13,6%	60,2%	43,7%
Ø number of children per woman**	1,76	1,73	1,34	1,34
Eligibility for parental leave				
Mother	4 weeks before the estimated birth date, 2 weeks after (for all mothers) + 12 weeks maternity leave	maternity allowance (105 days = 17,5 weeks), 6-10 weeks before birth, the rest after.	8 weeks before and 8 weeks after birth (full compensation of prior income), 12 weeks after birth in case of multiple births or delivery by caesarian section	8 weeks before and 8 weeks after birth (full compensation of prior income), 12 weeks after birth in case of multiple births or delivery by caesarian section
Father	2 weeks	18 days, during maternity protection period	---	---
Shared	32 weeks	158 days = 26,3 weeks, parental allowance	parental leave up to 3 years, parental allowance for 2 years, unless income is higher than a certain predefined level	childcare leave – until the child's 3 rd birthday if taken by both parents (otherwise 2,5 years), unless income is higher than 14.600 € per year
Total	52 weeks, depending on income (80%)	33,7 weeks, depending on income (66%)	16 weeks, depending on income; 2 years 300 € and/or 1 year 450 € per month	16 weeks, depending on income; 3 years 436 € per month (if taken by both parents)
Additional leaves	no more	possibility to take a leave until the child's 3 rd birthday, with the right to return to former workplace, allowance of 252 € per month + additional payments	---	---
Childcare	widely available, childcare for children over 1 year is guaranteed in most cases all-day, high-quality childcare	provision of childcare services in public and private facilities all-day childcare, large variety	new states: well-developed network old states: not sufficient, often just part-time childcare, not enough facilities for children under 3 years West: childcare is seen as a pedagogic tool (part-time), East: childcare is seen as a tool to facilitate the work-life balance (full-time)	adequate supply of public childcare facilities for children over 3 years, parents with smaller children mostly have to use private childcare services, large regional differences childcare is seen as a pedagogic tool
Subsidies for household-related services	yes	no	promotion of mini-/midi-jobs	childcare expenses are tax-deductible
Conditions on the labour market	open jobs generally short working hours	labour market problems due to recession long working hours	lack of qualified part-time jobs	lack of qualified part-time jobs
Financial incentives for a traditional allocation of roles	exist at a formal level, but no practical relevance	no more	mostly tax credits	some tax credits, eligibility for childcare benefits, etc.

* 2001 (Eurostat)

** 2000 (Eurostat)