

Gender Equality and Leave Policies in the Baltic States and Poland

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Purpose of this research article is to investigate the role of leave policies on gender equality in the Baltic States and Poland. Mainly it takes into account two pillars of childcare policy: publicly provided childcare services and parental leave provisions. In this paper is considered the degree to which leave policies (parental leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, publicly provided childcare services, flexible working time arrangements and etc.) promote egalitarian distribution between mothers and fathers of the time devoted to child. Baltic States and Poland present an interesting case to investigate. All three Baltic States and Poland experienced radical changes in welfare state, e.g. internalization, Europeanization, welfare state retrenchment and etc. These countries undergo significant social policy reforms during the last decades, developed modern gender equality infrastructure. As many Eastern European countries, the leave for parents in the Baltic States and Poland is long, especially in Estonia and Lithuania. Unequal division of care is one of the causes behind gender inequalities (penalty of motherhood). There are policies that are believed to lead to dual earner-dual carer family model. Leave policies, on the one hand, increase female labour market participation, but long career breaks generate inequalities since men do not share the leave and the leave-taking in these countries is gendered. The paper is structured as follows: First part of the paper is devoted to the comprehensive analysis the development leave policies and gender equality after regaining independence in 1990s. A special attention is paid to the development of leave policies and gender equality after entering European Union by these countries in 2004. All three countries experienced re-familisation of care, support mother's childcare at home rather than reconciling work and family responsibilities. The development of childcare policies in the region is, therefore, often presented in a one sided way (Szelewa and Polakowski, 2008). Provision of good-quality and affordable childcare facilitates maternal employment (Fagan and Rubery, 1997; OECD, 2007). Second part of the paper provides theoretical explanations. Following Esping-Andersen's (1999) influential formulation, welfare states address the first type of inequality by *decommodification* and the second by *defamilialization*. "Family" in the Esping Andersen sense means "women" just like "citizen" in his original analysis from 1990 meant "man", Daly (2000). The parental leave policies and gender equality patterns in different countries (Farré, 2016; Kurowska, 2016; Javornik, 2016; Catro – Garcia, 2015; Gornick, Lewis, 2004; Kronsell, 2015; Kamerman, 2009; Campbell, 2005; Barnett, 2001) were discussed. Third part of the paper presents multi-dimensional statistical analysis of the available data focusing on Eurostat labour market LFS and Eurostat EU-SILC statistics (employment rate for women and men, employment rates for women and men with children, unemployment rates and etc.), impact of parenthood, children in formal/informal childcare and etc. The concluding part of the paper presents conclusion and discussion sections.