

Balancing the welfare state Work-Family Arrangements in Europe

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EUROPEAN REGULATION AND INITIATIVES ON WORK-FAMILY POLICIES

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1. Introduction

During its forty-year existence, the European Community (later: European Union) has increased its involvement with 'women's issues'. Even though the Community has been based on principles of efficiency from its establishment, on several occasions measures that have been taken have also contributed to the principles of equity. In 1957, the principle of equal pay for men and women was already set out in the Treaty of Rome. Since the 1970s, this principle has been expanded with a number of Directives aimed at ending all other forms of discrimination in the area of employment. Later still, the principle of equal treatment was also introduced in the domain of social security, and legal and vocational rules. The recognition of this principle led to the promotion of equal opportunities in the 1980s.¹ While early regulation and measures taken were directly inspired by ideas on competition and efficiency, equal treatment and social policy have become independent goals that exist alongside those already in existence.

While the promotion of equal opportunities was still focussed very much on employment as a world apart, the causes of unequal treatment more often than not can be traced to the interaction between the public sphere of labour and the private sphere of family and care. As a result, the European Union (EU) has become more and more active in the last decade in promoting reconciliation of work and family life. Over the past ten years, Directives setting minimum standards for maternity leave and parental leave have been adopted, and a Council Recommendation on Childcare has been introduced, which is supplemented by a Commission Guide of good practice.² A Framework Directive on how to combine work and family is still under consideration. The Structural Funds, especially the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) Initiatives now play a more active role in the development of services. There is

¹ The EU distinguishes a number of measures:

- * Directives, which oblige Member States to adapt their national legislation within a certain time, in accordance to the content and intent of the directive;
- * Recommendations, which request Member States to pursue a certain policy (so-called soft law), and
- * Action Programmes, which intend to stimulate the realization of policy in each Member State (Goedhard *et al.*, 1992).

² European Commission, DG V, Social Europe. Work and childcare: implementing the Council Recommendation on childcare. A guide to good practice. Supplement 5/96. Luxembourg, 1996

support for networks, conferences, seminars and other ways to promote co-operation and exchange.³⁴

While measures taken in the 1970s and 1980s arose from ideas of justice, i.e. equal opportunities for men and women, a substantial shift in thinking took place in the 1990s. Economic arguments have been foregrounded concerning the importance of labour participation and employment of women, but also, for example, childcare as a new growth industry and a source of employment. Nowadays, work-family policies have become an integral part of the social and economic policy of the EU, and it could even be argued that the discussion of women's employment as it relates to family responsibilities has contributed much to the integration of social and economic policy at the EU-level.

This chapter explores the historical development and context of work-family policies in the EU. The role of the Union and plans concerning work-family policies in the future are also considered. The question as to what extent the European Union has actually contributed to an improvement of the possibilities for reconciling work with family life is answered in the last section.

2. From equal pay to equal treatment: the 1970s

Initially, the only action undertaken to promote equal opportunities for women was the inclusion of article 119 in the Treaty of Rome (1957), concerning equal pay for men and women. The article was adopted to alleviate the French government's fears that lower pay for women would prove to be a competitive advantage for the other Member States (Roelofs, 1995).

In the early 1970s, more scope was created for joint social policy, of which equal opportunities was (not yet an integrated) part. There was more money available and there was political support. One consequence was the founding of the Equal Opportunities Unit, under

³ The EC Childcare Network and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities, 1986-1996, A Decade of Achievements. DG-V, Brussel, 1996.

⁴ Beside these instruments the European Commission also stimulates research, exchange and action projects to accelerate developments. For that, a network of experts have been set up to advise the Commission. The first network in this area was founded in 1983: Women and Employment. Other networks are for example the Network on Childcare (see section 3) and the European Network of Women (ENOW). The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has founded a women's committee as did the agricultural organization COPA. And there are networks on affirmative action in companies, on diversifications of occupational choices, on equal opportunities in education, on equal opportunities in radio and television, and so on. In 1993 the Black Women in Europe Network was founded.

the Directorate-General of Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DG-V). The Equal Opportunity Unit is responsible for the so-called Equal Opportunities Action Programmes (see section 3). Another measure was the establishment of an ad hoc advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for the European Commission (Commission Decision 82/53/EEC).⁵

In 1974, the Social Action Programme of the EC focussed attention on the disadvantaged position of women. The lack of adequate facilities for working mothers was considered one of the major causes of the unequal position of women. And so the proposal in the Social Action Programme was formulated as follows: "to give immediate priority to the problems of providing facilities to enable women to reconcile family responsibilities with job aspirations" (Pot, 1992:60).

In the 1970s, a number of Directives concerning the equal treatment of men and women came into effect. Firstly, the EU adopted the Directive on equal pay for men and women in 1975 (Directive 75/117 of 10/2/1975, Pb 1975, nr. L45). The second Directive relating to equal treatment between men and women in the labour market was introduced in 1976 (Directive 76/207 of 9/2/1976, Pb 1976, L39). The principle of equal treatment is related to the accessibility of the labour market, to career opportunities, to the accessibility of vocational training and to terms of employment. The third EU-Directive is about equal treatment between men and women in the domain of social security (Directive 79/7 of 19/12/1979, PB 1979, L6). This Directive prescribes gradual implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in that domain.

3. The first two Action Programmes: policy in the 1980s

After the initiatives in the 1970s focusing on equal opportunities policy, which resulted in a number of directives, a different approach was chosen in the 1980s. The emphasis shifted from regulatory policy to process and action policy (Roelofs, 1995). The First four-year Action Programme for equal opportunities 1982-1985 focussed on the one hand on implementing and endorsing existing equal opportunities legislation, and on achieving greater equality in actual practice through Positive Action Programmes and other instruments on the other hand. The programmes and instruments did not include child-care facilities. Although the European Commission did recognize the link between care for children and equal opportunities, policy measures were kept limited. Yet a Recommendation on positive action

⁵ Since the 1st of January 1996 social partners also take part in this commission as full members instead of

was adopted on the 13th of December 1984. This Recommendation called on Member States to take away the existing inequalities in the professional lives of women and to promote mixed (i.e. men and women) employment through a policy of affirmative action. One of the activities mentioned is the redistribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women.

A Directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons, formulated in 1984, was vetoed by the United Kingdom. A second aim was to build up the network of public (child-care) facilities and services. This resulted in a report on services for children under the age of three.

The Second Action Programme (1986-1990) outlined that more concrete measures have to be taken. In this programme, the European Commission proposes recommendations for action in the field of daycare facilities. A network of European experts was installed in 1986 to advise the Commission. The first task of the Network on Childcare was to conduct a study of the different types of childcare available in the various Member States. This kind of information had not been available until then. The publication of the Network's report 'Childcare and Equality of Opportunity' (Moss, 1988) to a large extent provided the information needed.

The most important recommendations were that:

1. a global directive on childcare provisions should be drawn up (see section 4);
2. changes should be encouraged in organizations to make it easier to combine paid work and care for children, to be achieved via a system of leave provisions, for example maternity leave, parental leave and special leave to care for sick children.

Other tasks of the Network were to monitor developments, evaluate policy choices, to collect and circulate information and to draw up criteria for defining quality for childcare services. The Network was mainly focussed on childcare for children up to ten years. In 1991 the network was renamed the Network on Childcare and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities, to demonstrate the broader context of the reconciliation of work and family. The Network was dissolved in 1996.

Under the Second Programme, most Member States intensified their efforts in the field of childcare. Especially in the Netherlands, which always lacks behind in this field, the EU dimension functioned as an eye opener, and resulted in Stimulating Measures on Childcare.

In the 1980s, two Directives came into force: the fourth Directive on equal treatment in a company and sectorial measures with regard to social security (Directive 86/378 of 24 July 1986, Pb 1986, L225). The latter concerns social security measures for employees and self-
observers.

employed persons, who work in companies or branches of industry. The fifth Directive prescribes equal treatment for self-employed men and women (Directive 86/613 of 11 December 1986, Pb 1986, L359). The protective measures on pregnancy and motherhood of self-employed women are especially important for women who work in the agricultural sector.

4. Shift from specific to general policy: the Third Action Programme 1991 - 1995

The Third Action Programme 1991-1995 differs from the first two in that it is an attempt to create an interface with the Union's general structural and socio-economic policy. The ageing of the labour force will lead to a shortage of skilled workers. Therefore the European Union came to realise that it cannot afford to exclude women from the labour market. Women have to become better integrated into the labour process, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. This programme also focuses on the threats a unified European market poses to women.

Efforts to improve the position of women on the labour market are no longer seen as a specific and limited kind of policy. Equal opportunities policies started to become an integrated part of the social-economic and structural policy of the European Union. Key concepts are the co-ordination, complementation and integration of policy, at the European, national and regional levels (Roelofs, 1995). For the first time the concept of mainstreaming is mentioned in reference to the World Women Conference in Beijing.

Explicit attention is focussed on measures to reconcile work and family life. One of the most important pillars of this Action Programme is New Opportunities for Women (18 December 1990). This structural fund targets training and employment projects for women.

The Third Action Programme has three main aims:

- to implement and develop legislation;
- to integrate women in the labour market, and to undertake activities whose purpose it is to make it possible for women to reconcile their domestic and professional obligations;
- to improve the social position of women.

Partnership (more responsibilities for social partners: see, for example, the Directive on Parental Leave to be discussed below) and regular evaluations of the implementation of the programmes and the actions taken are first becoming the basic principles of implementation.

Under this Action Programme, the Recommendation on Childcare was approved of by the Council of Ministers (in 1992) and a code of conduct was drafted as part of the Action

Programme set up to implement the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, and point 16 in particular: "measures should also be developed to enable men and women to reconcile their occupational and family obligations."

The principles and objectives of the Recommendations on Childcare are: affordability; access to services in all areas, both urban and rural; access to services for children with special needs; combining reliable care with a pedagogical approach; close and responsive relations between services and parents and local communities; diversity and flexibility of services; increased choice for parents; coherence between services; basic and continuous training appropriate to the educational and social value of work.

Reconciliation of work and family life is recognised as a shared responsibility between men and women, but also as a responsibility of national and local government, of social partners, and of individual services. Reconciliation has to be approached in a broad sense; measures have to be taken with regard to services, leave arrangements, the workplace, and greater involvement of men.

In the same period, the Directive on Maternity Leave and the Directive on Parental Leave were also adopted.

The ETUC (European Trade Union Committee) Women's Committee started the lobby for the Directive on Maternity Leave. It proposed a paid leave of sixteen weeks. The European Commission announced a draft directive on this subject in 1990, which was presented as part of the Social Action Programme and as an elaboration on the Framework Directive on Health and Safety, in accordance with the ETUC's recommendations. But after consulting the social partners, the Commission opted for a directive that, in fact, only established minimal norms, which the member states were free to supplement if they so desired. The minimum provision was to be fourteen weeks of paid leave. In the end, the political decision-making process resulted in a fourteen-week leave, but not in full payment of wages. Instead employees received the same benefit they would receive on sick leave. The Directive was finally adopted on 19 October 1992.

In June 1996, a Directive on Parental Leave (OJ L145 of 19.6.1996, p.4) was adopted by the Council of Ministers. This Directive rounds off a discussion ongoing since 1983 (see section 3), when the Commission put forward proposals for a legal instrument relating to parental leave. In December 1995, negotiations between trade unions and employers led to a Framework Agreement on Parental Leave which involved ETUC, UNICE and CEEP (the united European employers organizations). Pursuant to Article 4 of the Agreement on Social

Policy⁶, the signatory parties requested the Commission to put forward a proposal for a Council act implementing the agreement (COM (96) 26 final of 31.1.1996). This was the first collective labour agreement at the European Union level. The social partners also decided to open negotiations on flexibility in working time and security for workers, which led to the framework agreement on part-time work (see section 6).

In the Directive on Parental Leave, the minimum requirements for parental leave provisions for the European Union (excluding the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland) are outlined. According to Clause 2, the parental leave provision entitles women and men to an individual right to parental leave on the grounds of birth or adoption of a child to enable them to take care of that child for at least three months, until a given age of up to eight years to be defined by Member States and/or social partners. This right should be granted on a non-transferable basis.

In addition to parental leave, workers should be entitled to time off from work, on the grounds of force majeure for urgent family reasons such as sickness making the immediate presence of the worker at home indispensable (Clause 3). The Member States will have two years to implement the Directive which states that all matters relating to social security are for the consideration and determination of individual Member States and lets all contentious areas such as payment to workers on leave pass.

5. Mainstreaming work-family policies in the social and economic policy of the EU

During the first half of the 1990s, the concept of mainstreaming was actually realized. The Treaty of Maastricht (1992), the Social Action Programme 1995-1997 with its supplemental guide to good practice concerning work and childcare, and the Green and White Papers on European Social Policy all reflect this mainstreaming principle. But it was not only equal opportunities policies that became an integrated part of social policy. Social policy also came to be recognized an essential part of good economic performance; social policy contributes to economic productivity instead of generating a loss of income. Thus, equal opportunities policies and social policy became an integrated part of the economic policy of the European Union.

The contribution that social policies make to economic performance and to achieving the

⁶ This Agreement on Social Policy states that, when a draft Directive is obstructed by lack of unanimity between the Member States, the Commission can ask the social partners to 'take over' the subject. When they come to an agreement, the Council of Ministers can be requested to turn this agreement into a stringent Directive.

economic and social objectives of the Union, is set out in Article 2 of the Treaty of Maastricht; "The Community shall have the task (...) to promote throughout the Community a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable and non inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and the quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States" (SDU, 1993).

In the protocol on social policy of the Maastricht Treaty, which is mainly based on agreements between the social partners made the previous year, Article 6 relates to the position of women on the labour market. This Article incorporates the text of Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, and supplements it with a statement that each Member State can take measures to facilitate women to practise a profession or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in their career (Article 6, p. 3). This statement has a broader meaning than the Recommendation on Positive Action of 13/12/1984 as it includes not only actual employment, but also refers to the past and future labour market situation (see also Devroe and Wouters, 1996).

The Social Action Programme 1995 - 1997 states that equal opportunities should be promoted in all relevant policies affecting employment, with particular emphasis on de-segregation of the labour market and reconciliation between family life and paid work. The labour market participation of women is seen as an important factor in international competition. The Action Programme is supplemented by 'Work and childcare: a guide to good practice'. This guide is meant to stimulate initiatives on childcare in all Member States and gives detailed suggestions towards implementing the Recommendation on Childcare. Not only childcare but also leave arrangements, the environment, the structure and organisation of work and the workplace and the role of fathers are taken into account.

The globalization of trade and production, the huge impact of new technologies on work, society and individuals, the ageing of the population and the persistent high level of unemployment were all challenges addressed in the Green Paper on Social Policy (1993). The Green Paper also gives explicit attention to the reconciliation of work and family life: "there is now a broad consensus that, given the aspirations of women themselves, an ageing workforce and expansion of the service sector, women will constitute an increasingly crucial component of the workforce at all levels. The question of their rights and opportunities is thus vital for the future of the economy" (p. 24). And: "it is primarily women who are faced with conflicting employment and family responsibilities. This can result in women failing to

realize their full potential. Social and labour market structures continue to operate on the assumption that women are primarily responsible for home and childcare while men are responsible for the family's economic and financial wellbeing. This conflicts with the new reality. Dual income and lone parent families are increasingly common, while the number of sole breadwinner families has declined dramatically. The gender-based division of family and employment responsibilities not only constrain women's lives but also deprives men of the emotional rewards resulting from the care and development of children" (p. 25).

The Green Paper points out the necessity of a combined labour market and social policy to develop the rights and opportunities of women. Promoting equal opportunities for women and men in a changing European society implies "that the highest priority should be given to measures which will enable individuals, men and women, to achieve a better balance in their private and their working lives" (p. 57). Measures to be taken are:

- encouraging more flexibility in careers and working hours;
- promoting innovative ways to combine household and working responsibilities;
- promoting the provision of childcare facilities;
- eliminating direct and indirect discrimination in the labour market, including that concerning lay-offs and part-time work;
- giving increased attention to women's labour market difficulties in the context of the social dialogue.

The mainstreaming of policies to develop and promote the rights and opportunities of women in all relevant policy areas is also mentioned in the White Paper on European Social Policy. For the first time, attention is given here to the diversity between women. Regarding work-family policies, the White Paper says (p. 42): "the growing participation of women in the economy has been one of the most striking features of recent decades, suggesting that there is now an urgent need, in the interest of society as a whole, for working life and family life to be more mutually reinforcing. (...) Changing demographic trends makes that the responsibility for elderly dependants is moving up the social agenda, although childcare is still the major problem for working parents in many Member States. New social infrastructures are needed to support the household and the family, and the question of how families can be helped to carry the costs remains to be addressed. Progress towards new ways of perceiving family responsibilities may slowly relieve the burden on women and allow men to play a more fulfilling role in society. However, greater solidarity between men and women is needed if men are to take on greater responsibility for the caring role in our societies."

The White Paper issues a warning that flexibility in employment should not lead to new

pressures on women to return to the ranks of the non-salaried population or to be obliged to accept paid work at home away from the community.

Drawing on the experiences of Member States, and with a view to fostering greater co-operation, the European Commission will:

- follow up the Childcare Recommendation by assessing the implementation of the Recommendation, establishing baseline data on childcare infrastructure and services in the Member States, and looking at ways of addressing the issues of stereotypes roles of the sexes in society;
- undertake an economic assessment both of the job-creation and reflationary potential of child and dependent-care infrastructures and services. In the light of this assessment, the Commission will make appropriate proposals.

The White Paper also relates to atypical forms of work, such as part-time work. This type of work is coming to be seen more and more as a way of combining work and family life, although it does not provide the same rights and protection as standard full-time work. A draft Directive on part-time work was vetoed by the United Kingdom. The developments in the field of atypical work led to the conclusion that new measures were needed and had to take account of the principles of the ILO Convention on part-time work adopted in June 1994. If no progress was made in the Council, the Commission would initiate consultations with the social partners under the Agreement on Social Policy (see also section 4). This is exactly what happened (Social Europe, social dialogue - the situation in the community in 1995, 1995).

A framework agreement on part-time work was established on the 14th of May 1997 after months of difficult negotiations between the ETUC on the one hand and the UNICE/CEEP on the other. In this agreement, part-time work is seen as a contribution to the overall European strategy on employment.

The agreement sets out the general principles and minimum requirements relating to part-time work, and voices the intention to do the same for other types of atypical work in the future. Outlines are:

- to ban discrimination of part-time workers;
- equal treatment between part-time and full-time workers;
- to improve the quality of part-time jobs;
- to assist the development of opportunities for part-time work on a basis acceptable to employers and workers;'

- if an employee refuses to switch from part-time work to full-time work or vice versa, this can never be a reason for dismissal;
- if possible employers will take into consideration a request by an employee to reduce or to increase working time;
- the social security system has to be adapted to suit part-time work, in order to protect workers engaged in such work.

The consulting process of the social partners in each of the Member States has started.

6. The Fourth Action Programme 1996 - 2000

The Fourth Action Programme emphasizes the exchange of information and experiences regarding good practice in the field of equal opportunities for men and women. Together with the struggle against unemployment, the promotion of equal opportunities is mentioned as a priority of the Union and its Member States. Again it is stated that equal opportunities policies must be a part of all relevant policies, and mainstreaming is the key word. The results from the other three Action Programmes have to be consolidated and developed even further, because inequalities between men and women still exist in the European Union, especially in the area of employment and wages. The role of the social partners is emphasized more and more. But other partners such as local governments, NGOs, and public and private institutions are also mentioned. Partnership is another key word in this Fourth Action Programme.

One of the main aims of this programme is to reconcile work and family life for women and men. Action fields are the organization and the flexibility of professional life, and the combination of responsibilities. Measures aiming at setting higher standards for the care of children and other dependents will be proposed by the Commission, possibly within a framework directive.

The supporting text relates to other, linked areas as well. For example, there are references to the influence that "fiscal incentives and obstacles for dual earner households" might have on women's care strategies. Other issues mentioned are: career breaks policies, policies on working time, and the social infrastructure and care provision. The Fourth Action Programme also suggests a basis for the use of Structural Funds to finance "efforts aimed at reducing constraints on women (care services)".

The discussion on the Fourth Action Programme has resulted in the inclusion of articles

related to work-family policies in the Treaty of Amsterdam (16/17 June, 1997). In the chapter on social politics, Article 118 states that the Member States will be supported in realizing equal opportunities for and equal treatment of women and men on the labour market. More specifically, Article 119 states that each Member State can take measures to facilitate the underrepresented sex to encourage them to practise a profession or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in their career (see also Article 6, p. 3 of the Treaty of Maastricht). Member States have to strive first of all to improve the situation of women in professional life (Article 119: 4).

7. Future plans

The EU continues to evolve its reconciliation policy, both as an integral part of its economic strategy, and as a key component of family and equal opportunities policy (Large, 1997).

Work-family policies is an area in which the European Union has built up a lot of creative thinking and experience. The EU can provide a framework as well as the means to explore new and radical approaches to reconciliation which could be used (more) by Member States (Moss, 1997).

The monitoring and reviewing of the implementation of policies are placed high on the agenda. Nowadays partnership is a key feature of the method the Commission uses to bring forward proposals in the social field. Especially the role of the social partners, i.e. the social dialogue, is being emphasized more and more. Networks and cross-national components in the NOW programme are also widely used. Apart from the benefits to knowledge, increased cross-national exchange, collaboration and comparison may have a cumulative powerful effect by raising expectations (for example, see section 3: the developments in childcare in the Netherlands) and in speeding up the dissemination of new ideas, policies and practices (Moss, 1996: 28).

The reconciliation of work and family is placed in a broader perspective. Good childcare is not the only important issue. Other care needs, like the care for elderly dependents, are also recognized. In addition, the role of fathers is getting more attention.

Other new items could be: the costs and benefits of different public and workplace policies; action research on initiatives to encourage more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women; and the exploration of implications for reconciliation employment and family life of the economic, technological, demographic and social changes that are sweeping through all European countries (Moss, 1996: 33).

The White Paper, the Fourth Action Programme and the Network on Childcare more

specifically mention measures to be taken in the field of childcare:

- to improve and increase co-ordination between two Directorate-Generals: DG V and DG XXII (education);
- to develop standards for childcare services and infrastructure in the Member States;
- to introduce a second NOW initiative to provide more funding for childcare services;
- to evaluate the qualitative and quantitative aims for the improvement of childcare services;
- to use this evaluation as a contribution to the development of the labour market policy.

However, a more integrated and co-ordinated approach is needed, not only in relation to childcare, but also in relation to all issues concerning work-family policies. The White Paper suggests a framework directive covering the issues of reconciling professional and family life, and proposes setting higher standards for the care of children and other dependents. This directive should combine the current directives and recommendations with new initiatives, in order to cover the whole field of work and family life. Employment policy, social policy, reconciliation policy and care policy should all be linked. This is one of the biggest challenges facing the European Union in the future.

8. Conclusions

The European Union is characterized by a long-standing interest and increasing involvement in the relationship between paid and unpaid work: the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities (Moss, 1996). In 1957 the principle of equal pay for men and women was already set out in Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. Since the 1970s, this principle has been expanded with a number of Directives about the accessibility of the labour market, about education and vocational training, about terms of employment, social security, etc. The promotion of equal opportunities was realized through Action Programmes, Directives, Recommendations and Funds.

In the last decade, the European Community has become more and more active in promoting the reconciliation of work and family. While anti-discrimination measures in the 1970s arose from ideas of justice, i.e. equal opportunities for men and women, a substantial shift in thinking took place in the 1990s. Economic reasons were foregrounded concerning the importance of the labour participation and employment of women, but also, for example, childcare as a new growth industry. Efforts to improve the position of women on the labour market were no longer seen as a specific and limited type of policy. Equal opportunities

policies started to become an integrated and full part of the social-economic and structural policy of the European Union. The Fourth Action Programme 1996 - 2000 continues in this line towards mainstreaming.

It is only recently that more attention is being given to the link between different fields of policy. New proposals cover a wide range of measures and conditions that enable and support reconciliation, and include terms and conditions for employment, working hours, tax and social security, leave arrangement and childcare services. The need for family responsibilities to be shared more equally between men and women is also recognized (Moss, 1996).

The increased labour participation of women has led to a change in the structure of the labour force. This has required social transformation on an enormous scale. Family life has been altered. A change in women's working status has demanded a change in the role that men perceive themselves as having within the family. It demands a whole new social contract (Large, 1997, p. 5; cf. OESO, 1991).

The question is to what extent the European Union is contributing to this social transformation. When it comes to an obvious structural improvement in the position of women at the macro-level, the results achieved in the majority of member states by the Union's equal opportunities policy are meagre. The wage gap between men and women in the EU has changed slightly. The same can be said about segregation on the labour market. Women still do the more unpaid work, in spite of the enormous increase in their labour market participation.

EU law has given women more legal instruments, but the equal opportunities policy has a restricted scope. This is largely a result of the decisive role which the Member States themselves play in the Union's decision-making process. As long as decisions have to be taken unanimously, it is highly unlikely that the EU will ever be able to achieve more than the least progressive Member States have. The networks play a vital role, but they are not very effective, mainly because of the very limited financial resources available.

Nevertheless, some measures have functioned as an eye opener, particularly in the Netherlands. The Recommendation on Childcare in particular laid the foundation for the two Stimulation Measures on Childcare taken by the Dutch government. Also, the Netherlands have integrated the activities of the NOW Initiatives into their domestic employment and training programs.

In the southern Member States, where until recently nothing had been arranged in the field of work-family policies, the European Union has provided a framework within which they can operate.

One of the most important points to emerge from this discussion is the notion that equal opportunities policy, social policy and economic policy are intertwined. This notion is also reflected in the current emancipation policy of the Dutch government. It opens new ways that provide room for reconciliation of work and family policies and, because the economic necessity of this process has come to be recognized, the social basis for reconciliation measures is growing.

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EPILOGUE: TOWARDS NEW PATTERNS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORK-FAMILY POLICIES?

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1. Differences in work-family arrangements

Are there differences between the work-family arrangements within firms in the various Western European countries and, if so, are these differences related to the way welfare states in Europe are institutionalised? This is the central theme of this book, worked out in chapters on the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sweden. The choice of these countries was based on welfare state typologies, as developed by Titmuss in the seventies and by Esping-Andersen later on. This typology was presented in Chapter 1.

To summarise briefly what has been said before, it is clear that work-family arrangements do differ. Probably, and that seems to be the first important conclusion, one could better speak of "packages" of work-family arrangements. Work-family arrangements consist of several measures, regulations, and facilities: minimal or substantial systems of public childcare; minimal or substantial possibilities for part-time work; minimal or substantial opportunities for leaves and career interruptions; minimal or substantial possibilities for flexibility in working times and tailor-made arrangements. Of course, at the national scale, firms do differ. Companies with many female workers are generally under greater pressure to develop facilities which meet the need for work-family reconciliation than firms which are dominated by men. In most countries, public organisations are more concerned about equal opportunity policies and work-family facilities than private firms are. But besides these different patterns within countries, countries themselves could be characterised by the way work-family arrangements are organised, made available and institutionalised. These institutionalised patterns reflect the basic assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas about gender roles and divisions of tasks between women and men on which welfare state regimes are based. During the last decade, many feminist scholars have challenged the gender-neutral approach in mainstream welfare state theories. By focussing on the gendered character of welfare states, they have improved and enriched the body of knowledge about welfare states.

What sort of packages of work-family arrangements have we met in the preceding chapters? The Netherlands is primarily characterised by a pattern of part-time work, in combination with minimal public childcare and few statutory leaves. The main strategy couples use to

cope with conflicting demands on time seems to be the "one-and-a-half-earner" model: men being primarily responsible for the family income and working full-time and women working part-time and primarily responsible for care at home. This model is becoming increasingly common and certainly more representative of the Dutch way of life than two full-time working partners in one family.

Germany could be characterised by long parental leaves in combination with few public childcare facilities. The Netherlands and Germany share the political view that responsibility for the upbringing of children is primarily a task for parents and not for the state. The institutions or lack of institutions in the work-family field, in both welfare states still reflect this basic assumption. Times are changing, however. The number of dual earner couples is rising rapidly in both countries. Work-family regulations and institutions are hardly able to keep pace with changes in the behaviour of (young) women and men.

Although historically there has been more economic pressure on families in Britain to earn two salaries than has been the case in the Netherlands or in Germany, government involvement in work-family arrangements is low. Family responsibilities are primarily seen as private, and state involvement is only provided when families appear not to be able to fulfil their tasks.

Entirely different is the picture in Sweden in this respect. Owing to a relatively long tradition of working women and dual-earner couples, the Swedish welfare state offers a broad range of statutory leaves and a substantial system of public childcare.

The pattern is the reverse in the Southern European countries Italy and Spain. It is only recently that the (official) number of working women in these countries began increasing. Work-family arrangements have not adapted to these new developments. The number of part-time workers is low, also among women, and childcare facilities for children under 3 are rare. Informal help, from families and grandmothers in particular, still fill these gaps, but this situation will undoubtedly change. We will return to this point later.

Opportunities of flexible work arrangements

An important development on the labour markets in Europe is flexibility. Flexibility has an ambivalent connotation in relation to the reconciliation of work and family life. On the one hand, increased workplace flexibility has the potential of giving employees more freedom regarding their work schedule, which can be used as a means to make paid work compatible with caring tasks. On the other hand, employers can use flexibility as a means to extend opening hours, to respond to changing market demands, and to employ people according to peaks in the workload.

There are different types of flexible work arrangements. Flexitime or flexible work hours consist of flexible starting and finishing times. In most cases, employees have to be on

the job during certain core hours but can vary the time they start or finish work. Core hours may be one period or divided into two periods, one in the morning and one in the afternoon with a flexible lunch period in between. The degree of variability differs between or within organisations. Some employers may prefer their employees to have a flexitime schedule that is permanent or at least fixed for a period of time. Others let their employees schedule their work hours on a daily basis. This may depend, among other things, on the type of work involved (Gottlieb et al, 1998).

Job sharing, as a type of part-time employment, means that two persons share the responsibility, salary, and benefits of one full-time position. It makes it possible to reduce work hours where there is a need for a full-time position.

Telework or flexiplace is an arrangement in which employees work at home for all or part of the workweek. Whether or not telework makes it easier to reconcile work and family life is not clear. It does help reduce commuting time, and employees are often free to schedule their work hours. But telework does not diminish the need for childcare (Gottlieb et al, 1998).

A compressed workweek is another example of flexible work arrangements. In the Netherlands, in those sectors that have implemented a 36-hour workweek (banking and the public sector), a four-day, nine-hour, workweek becomes a possibility. Although the extra day off can be used for caring tasks, long workdays can create difficulties in bringing and picking up children from childcare (depending on general opening hours).

Besides these flexible work arrangements, flexibility is also associated with fixed-term contracts and precarious employment. The increasing number of people with fixed-term or temporary employment are often not eligible for, for instance, parental leave or leave for family reasons. Furthermore, irregular work schedules, schedules that change on short notice or work at odd hours are difficult to combine with childcare facilities. Childcare facilities that are open 24 hours are rare and often children can only be placed there during regular working hours. The effect of flexibility in the workplace on the combination of paid and unpaid work depends in large part on the degree of employee control over their work schedules and compatibility with other work-family arrangements, such as childcare.

2. The relation between government policies and activities regarding work-family arrangements within firms

There is little research on the role of employers and organizational provisions in Europe. What data there is suggests that when the development of work-family arrangements are left to market forces, differences between industries and organisations emerge. Organisation

exceptional and related to peak periods in life and to temporary needs. This is in part due to still existing traditional stereotypes and values in the culture of the workplace. Ideas about what is "normal behaviour" at the workplace sometimes deny the claims of parenthood and turn care demands of children into non-issues within the workplace. Besides old cultural images, there are practical obstacles as well. Such factors as workload and responsibilities sometimes make it difficult to use the right to parental leaves. This specifically holds for managers, supervisors, so-called key persons, and experts, most of whom are male.

3. Concluding remarks

Comparative research among the member states of the European Union reveals that more statutory work-family arrangements are accompanied by less gender inequality in labour markets. In countries with a more extensive government policy regarding work-family arrangements, women have higher labour participation rates and the gender gap in wages is smaller (Den Dulk *et al.*, 1996). This evidence gives weight to the question whether future developments of work-family arrangements as a public policy can be expected in the near future within Europe. This will depend in part on the state of the economy and the employment situation. Countries with more economic growth and less unemployment, could in general afford better public facilities. This also holds for employers. In a growing economy with reliable prospects, employers will be more willing to create labour conditions that fit the needs of their workforce than in a declining economy. An economy of growth, moreover, is favourable to a more diverse workforce because many workers are needed. The more diverse a workforce is, the greater the pressure on employers will be to provide facilities which support the reconciliation of work and family life.

But this is not the whole story. It is not just the state of the economy which counts. Other developments are relevant as well, social developments which could lead to shrinking welfare state institutions, to the introduction of more market forces in social organisation, and to more personal responsibility for the citizens of the European Union to organise their private lives, their working lives, and their social security. Such developments are supported by a process of increasing individualisation and by a still increasing level of education for most European citizens. It could well be possible that governments in Europe become more inclined to turn public facilities which until now have been financed by public funds over to the marketplace. This process is already taking place, albeit - in line with different national traditions - more in some countries than in others. Regarding work-family arrangements, this could lead to more variety and liberty in options and to more tailor-made facilities that fit the particular needs of

people, depending on their stage in the life cycle. It could also imply, however, the danger of more social inequality among citizens. Increasing inequality between citizens will take its toll on the equality between women and men and among women as a group.

Whatever the direction of future work-family arrangements will be, the fact that more and more women have paid jobs seems to be irreversible in Europe. This fact in itself is creating a strong pressure to redefine the way in which work is organised. New forms of work organisation have to take into account that workers do have more responsibilities than their paid work alone.

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