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Preferences for improved parental leave and higher child allowance

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1 INTRODUCTION

The paper addresses two family policy measures: parental leave and child allowance. The aim of our analysis was to find out to what extent the improved parental leave arrangements for working women and a substantial rise in child allowance are favoured and considered as priority family policy measures to be implemented by the national governments. The results are explained in the context of policy arrangements in the early 2000s. We were also interested in the determinants for considering each of these improvements as a priority in the family policy development.

The focus on these particular measures is justified by their importance for families with children and their prevalence in the national family policies. It goes without saying that the parental leave is essential for the child's well-being in the first months or year(s) of its life. Furthermore, this leave is a prerequisite for attaining equal position of sexes in the labour market.⁴ The extent to which it manages to fulfil its role is dependent on the characteristics of available arrangements and the readiness of fathers to share parental responsibilities.⁵ Another measure under consideration, child allowance, is aimed at partly overtaking the costs of children by the society. It is a means for horizontal redistribution of income from people without children to those raising children.⁶

In section 2 we briefly describe the data and method used. Evaluation of the duration of parental leave, preferences regarding modes of taking this leave, as well as the attitudes towards the amount of child allowance are analysed in section 3. The support to each of the measures is the subject of section 4. In section 5 we compare the countries according to frequency of considering the improved parental leave arrangements for working women and a

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⁴ Impact of parental leave on female employment and hours of work was investigated e.g. by Rønsen (1999) and Merz (2004).

⁵ See, for instance, Leira (1999) and Rost (1999).

⁶ See Redmond (2000) for the analysis of impact of child allowances on poverty alleviation.

substantial rise in child allowance as priorities to be implemented by the national governments. The determinants for considering each of these two improvements as a priority in the family policy development are presented and discussed in section 6. Section 7 concludes.

2 DATA AND METHOD

Empirical analysis is based on the International Population Policy Acceptance Survey (IPPAS) database. It standardized the national databases of the second round of the Population Policy Acceptance (PPA2) surveys conducted in the years 2000-2003 in fourteen European countries. For our analysis, a subsample of respondents aged 20-49 years was formed comprising 23,345 persons. Due to significant within-country variation, Eastern and Western Germany were treated as two separate units of observation.

We have also profited from the basic information about the policy arrangements (particularly in the non-EU countries) and other contextual information collected by the DIALOG project ⁷ (WP 4 and WP 7).

Descriptive statistical methods were used for basic analyses. Correlation between dependent and explanatory variables was estimated using the binary logistic regression method. The regression models are described in sections 3.3.2 and 6.1.

3 EVALUATION OF AVAILABLE ARRANGEMENTS

This section focuses on some characteristics of the family policy measures under consideration: duration and modes of taking parental leave, and the amount of child allowance. The presentation of arrangements available at the time of national PPA2 surveys is followed by the evaluation of these arrangements by the respondents, and the analysis of determinants of their attitudes. As for parental leave, we partly refer to our previous work (see Stropnik, Sambt and Kocourková, 2006), while the analysis of the amount of child allowance is new and thus more exhaustive.

3.1 Duration of parental leave

3.1.1 Available leave

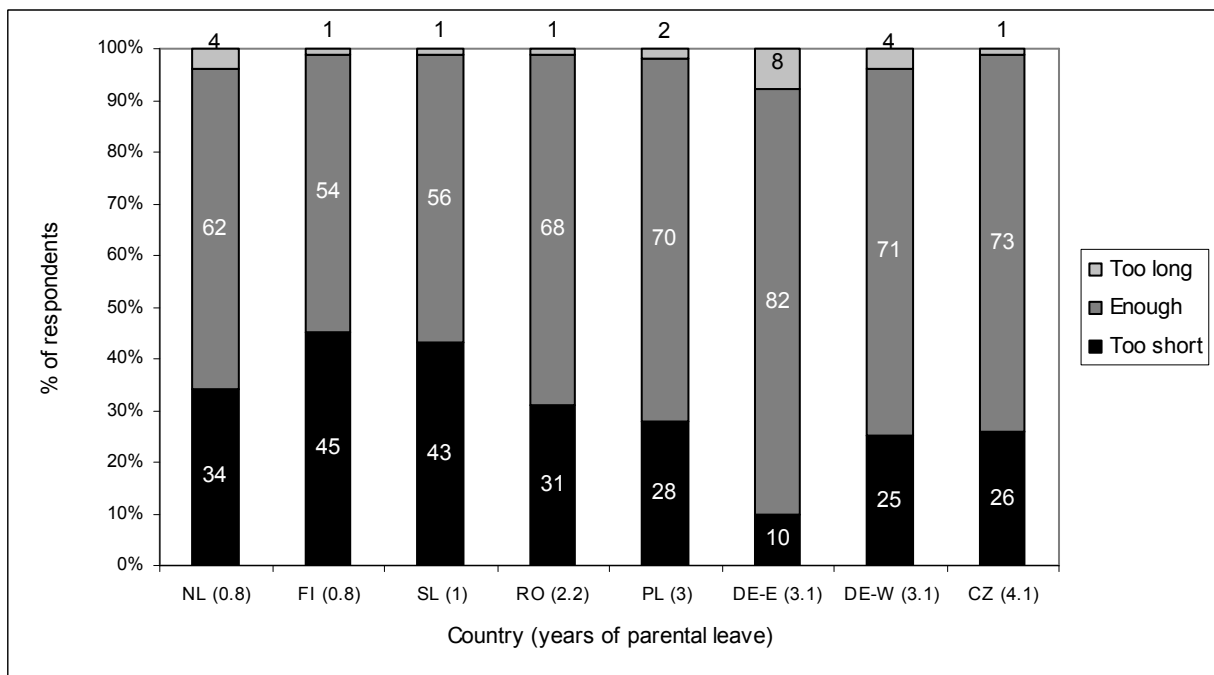
At the time of the national surveys, the whole childbirth related leave was the longest in the Czech Republic, where it lasted 214 weeks: 6 weeks before delivery and till the child's age of four. It was paid, but job security was only guaranteed till the child's age of three. In Germany, Finland and Poland, the leave lasted till the child's age of three (162, 161 and 158 weeks, respectively). In Poland, it was normally paid till the child's age of two. The leave lasted 113 weeks (till the child's age of two) in Romania, 52 weeks in Slovenia, and 42 weeks (of which only 16 weeks could be taken as full-time leave) in the Netherlands.

⁷ Please see the acknowledgement in the end of the paper.

3.1.2 Evaluation of the duration of parental leave

In Figure 1, the countries are sorted according to the duration of the total childbearing-related leave (in years) at the time of the national surveys. This was the way to standardise the results since in some countries the parental leave lasted till the certain age of the child, while in other countries it was expressed in the number of days following the maternity leave. It is well evident that the respondents' evaluation of the duration of leave is not very much dependent on the actual arrangements.⁸ The shares of respondents who considered the parental leave as too short are considerable also in the countries with the leave longer than two years: 25% in Western Germany where the leave lasts 3.1 years, and 26% in the Czech Republic where the leave lasts 4.1 years.

Figure 1: Evaluation of the duration of parental leave, by country (% of respondents aged 20-49)



Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

Note: The Finnish respondents were asked to evaluate the duration of what is called parental leave in that country, and not also of home care leave that lasts till the child's age of three.

3.1.3 Determinants of attitudes

The logistic regression analysis has shown significantly higher likelihood that the parental leave was evaluated as too short (rather than long enough) by:

- women (then by men),
- respondents aged 20-24 years (compared to those aged 34-49 years),
- those who intended to have a child in the future (compared to those without such intention),

⁸ This was also proven by a similar analysis by Stropnik, Sambt and Kocourková (2006).

- those employed part time (compared to those employed full time),
- those who (or their partners) had had parental leave (compared to those who had not had it) (Stropnik, Sambt and Kocourková, 2006).

3.2 Modes of taking parental leave

3.2.1 Available modes

At the time of the PPA2 national surveys, only full-time parental leave was available in Poland and Romania, and only part-time leave in the Netherlands. In Slovenia, both modes of taking parental leave were possible.

3.2.2 Most preferred modes

In the Netherlands, about half of the respondents who were in favour of parental leave, preferred the available mode of taking it (Table 1). A third of the respondents would rather have had a flexible arrangement. The support to the available arrangements was the highest in Slovenia (some 93%), and this was only to a lesser extent due to the fact that both full-time and half-time leave were available. Also in Poland the majority was satisfied with what they had. However, large proportions would have been more satisfied with a half-time or flexible leave. The Romanian respondents were the least satisfied with the available arrangement: only 5% of the respondents have selected full-time leave. About a quarter of the respondents would have preferred half-time leave, and as many as 71% would have been most happy with a flexible leave.

Table 1: Most preferred mode of taking parental leave (% of respondents aged 20-49 who were in favour of parental leave)

Country	Most preferred type of parental leave			
	Full-time leave	Half-time leave	Flexible leave	Total
The Netherlands	17.0	49.6	33.4	100.0
Poland	57.0	18.5	24.4	100.0
Romania	5.1	24.0	71.0	100.0
Slovenia	81.6	11.6	6.8	100.0

Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

3.2.3 Determinants of attitudes

The logistic regression results have shown significantly higher likelihood that part-time or flexible parental leave were preferred over full-time leave for:

- men (than for women),
- those with at least higher secondary education (than those with below higher secondary education),
- those employed part time (than those employed full time),
- those who (or their partners) had never had parental leave (than those who had had it) (Stropnik, Sambt and Kocourková, 2006).

3.3 The amount of child allowance

3.3.1 Available child allowance

Due to differences in the purchasing power of wages and child allowance arrangements in individual countries, the amounts of child allowances had to be standardised before comparison. In some countries, the amounts are dependent on family income (the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia), or the age of child (the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Austria), or the birth order (Germany, Hungary, Austria, Poland and Slovenia). We decided to express the relative value of child allowance as the percentage of national average wage. The lowest amounts for the first child were in the range from 1.4% of the national average gross wage in Slovenia to 5.3% in Austria (information for other countries is given in Figure 2).⁹

3.3.2 Evaluation of the amount of child allowance

The respondents who themselves, or their partners, were child allowance recipients at the time of the PPA2 survey, were asked to evaluate the amount of child allowance they were entitled to. The results are presented in Figure 2, where the relative amount of the lowest child allowance for the first child is used as the reference category.¹⁰

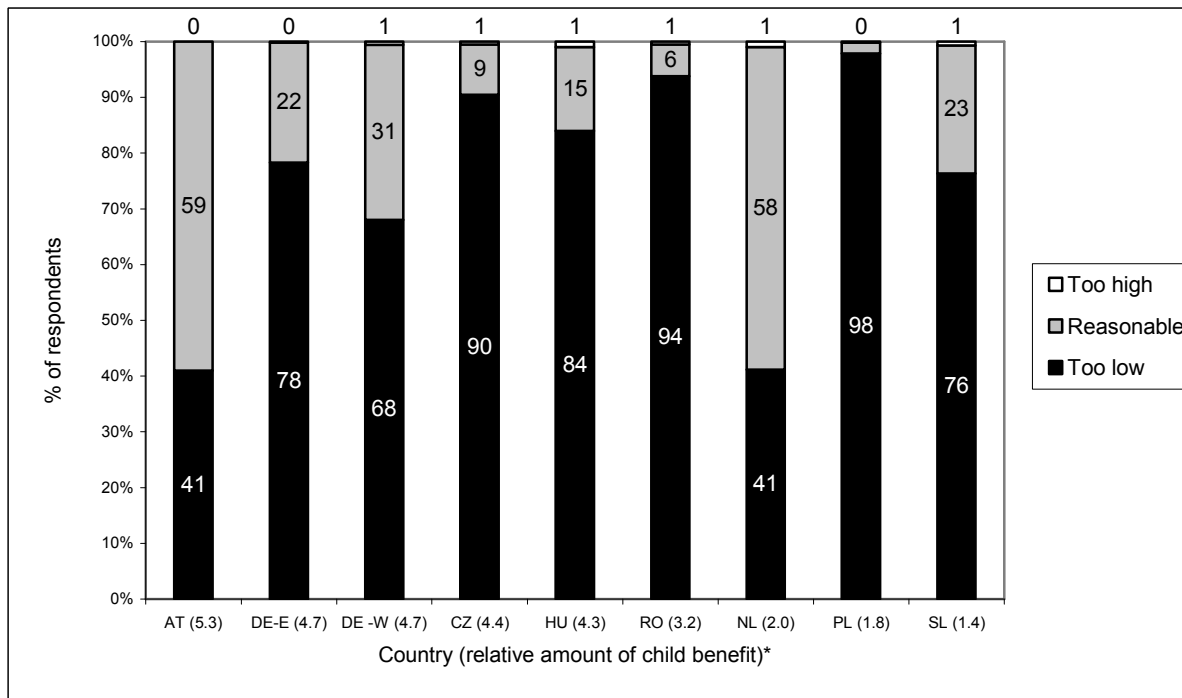
It is obvious that there is only a weak correlation between the relative level of the lowest child allowance for the first child and the attitudes towards the amount of child allowances the respondents were entitled to. Countries may generally be divided into three groups. In the Netherlands and Austria, about 60% of the respondents evaluated the amount of child allowance as reasonable, and only about 40% thought that it was too low. On the other hand, 84% and more of the respondents in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland considered the child allowance in their respective countries as too low. In the middle group of countries (Western Germany, Slovenia and Eastern Germany), the shares of answers »too low« were in the range from 68% to 78%.

It is most probable that the satisfaction of the Austrian respondents was due to the high level of child allowances in that country, which, however, cannot be an explanation in the case of the Netherlands. The PPA2 data proved that the Dutch people generally have rather low expectations regarding the state's support to families. Consequently, even relatively low child allowances were perceived as reasonable. It is also true that both Austria and the Netherlands are characterised by high GDP and developed welfare states.

⁹ The sources of information are Deliverables No.20/21, Appendix 4.1, WP 7, DIALOG Project, 2005. A more detailed presentation is not within the scope of this paper.

¹⁰ Of course, we would have obtained different order of countries, different relations between relative values of child allowance and consequently different conclusions if we had opted for some other reference category, e.g. the highest child allowance.

Figure 2: Evaluation of the amount of child allowance;* by country (% of respondents aged 20-49)



Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

* Relative amount of the lowest level of child allowance for the first child (as % of the national average gross wage per month) at the time of national surveys (2000-2003) is given in parentheses (Deliverables No.20/21, Appendix 4.1, WP 7, DIALOG Project, 2005).

A higher share of the Eastern German respondents, as compared to the Western German ones, who evaluated the amount of child allowance as too low is surprising. Since the average German wage was used as a denominator, and since wages are by one quarter lower in Eastern Germany than in Western Germany (http://www.destatis.de/themen/e/thm_loehne.htm), the relative amount of child allowance is in fact higher in Eastern Germany. The obtained results may partly be explained by generally higher expectations regarding the government's support to families with children in Eastern Germany (most probably resulting from the practice during the former communist regime) and their higher need for such support.

Less than a quarter of the respondents - child allowance recipients at the time of the survey - in Slovenia were satisfied with the amount of child allowance. One may link it to relatively low child allowances for children from middle-income families (income per family member at 56% to 99% of the average wage, which is an income threshold).

In most of the former communist countries (except Slovenia), child allowances used to be a significant income source representing a kind of wage subsidy. For example, in 1990 in Hungary, child allowance for a two-child two-parent family was equal to approximately 40%

of the average male wage (Jarvis and Pudney, 1995).¹¹ The common pattern observed in most of the transition countries in the 1990s was the reduction in the value of child allowances, also due to inadequate uprating.¹² Before 1990, the child allowance for a two-child family accounted for 19%-25% of the average wage in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. By the mid 1990s, this ratio declined to 10%-11% in the Czech Republic and below 10% in Poland (Kocourková, 2001). Since 1995, there has been no increase in the relative value of child allowance in the Czech Republic (Kocourková, 2004). According to Tárkányi (2001), a substantial decline in child allowances (due to a more restrictive economic policy) was perceived by the Hungarians more negatively than the introduction of a means-tested scheme in 1995. However, by the end of the 1990s, a steady economic growth allowed for more generous child benefits in that country (Stropnik, 2003). Considering all this, it is not surprising that in Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary the highest percentages of respondents, unsatisfied with the amount of child allowance they were receiving, were recorded.

As expected, the more the respondents were satisfied with their household income, the higher was the share of those who evaluated the amount of child allowance as reasonable rather than too low. One would also expect the percentage of those who evaluated the current amount of child allowance as too low to increase with the number of children. However, the opposite was true in both Eastern and Western Germany. The shares of such answers were considerably higher in Eastern Germany, which is surprising, since same amount of child allowance in both parts of the country should have had a relatively higher value for those with lower income, i.e. Eastern Germans.

3.3.2 Determinants of attitudes: model and results

We have built a model for the evaluation of likelihood that child benefit is considered too low rather than high enough. Taking into account the availability of data, it uses:

- demographic variables: sex of the respondent, age (six five-year age groups), living arrangement (living with spouse/partner, living apart together, and no partner), number of children (0, 1, 2, and 3 and over), intention to have a(nother) child in the future, and attained educational level (below higher secondary, higher secondary, and post-secondary);
- an economic variable: employment status (full time, part time, casual work, and no job); and
- a country dummy.

We expected the likelihood of evaluating the amount of child allowance as too low rather than high enough to be higher for the respondents with more children than for those without a child - also due to the fact that only in a half of the countries under consideration child allowances

¹¹ This was a kind of compensation for the cuts in subsidies to children's goods and the introduction of the personal income tax.

¹² The social protection systems in these countries were scaled down, mostly as the result of the pressure from the international economic organisations (Avramov and Cliquet, 2003).

increased with the number of children. Our next assumption was that the more educated people have lower expectations regarding the state financial assistance for raising children, and tend to be more self-reliant in that respect, which should be evident from a lower likelihood for them than for people with below higher secondary education to select a substantial rise in child allowance as their priority measure. Taking employment as a proxy for income, higher likelihood was also expected for those not working full time. Similarly, the respondents without a partner were presumed to have higher likelihood than those living with a partner to be unsatisfied with the amount of child allowance. We assumed that the likelihood of evaluating child allowance as too low was positively related to the general intention to have a(nother) child in the future.

The results regarding the influence of the number of children and education on the people's attitudes are in line with our expectations (see Table 2). Contrary to our assumption, however, the likelihood to evaluate the amount of child allowance as too low rather than high enough was higher for those not intending to have a child in the future than for those without such intention. In addition to that, the results have shown that women were less likely than men to evaluate the amount of child allowance as too low rather than high enough. Age, living arrangement and employment status have not proven to be significant explanatory variables.

As evident from Figure 2, the relative amount of the lowest child allowance for the first child was quite high in the Czech Republic (the reference country in the logistic regression analysis presented in Table 2). It is not surprising that the likelihood for the child allowance level to be evaluated as too low was smaller for Austria and Germany, where the relative amount of child allowance was even higher. Also the respondents in Hungary, where they had a similar relative amount of the lowest child allowance as in the Czech Republic, were less likely to be unsatisfied than the Czech ones. It was proven again that the Dutch respondents had low expectations regarding the state's support to raising children. As could be expected on the basis of Figure 2, the Polish respondents were much more likely than the Czech ones to evaluate the amount of child benefit as too low rather than high enough.¹³

4 STRONG SUPPORT TO IMPROVED PARENTAL LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORKING WOMEN AND A SUBSTANTIAL RISE IN CHILD ALLOWANCE

Countries do not differ very much according to the proportion of respondents who were (strongly) in favour of improvements in parental leave arrangements or child allowance. As regards the improved parental leave arrangements for working women, the percentages are in the range from 62.4% in Belgium (Flanders) to 97.8% in Romania. They are between 59.9% in the Netherlands and 96.8% in Romania for a substantial rise in child allowance (Stropnik and Sambt, 2005, Table 4).

The differences are more pronounced when only answers “strongly in favour” are taken into account, although the countries with extremes values mostly remain the same (see Figure 3). The percentages of such answers for improved parental leave are between 21.7% in Belgium

¹³ The result for Slovenia cannot be explained by referring to the relative amount of the lowest child allowance.

(Flanders) and 74.7% in Romania. For a substantial rise in child allowance, they are between 25.4% in the Netherlands and 82.6% in Hungary.

Table 2: Determinants of attitudes towards the amount of child allowance

Sex	Male	1.00
	Female	0.82 **
Age group	20-24	1.00
	25-29	1.13
	30-34	0.85
	35-39	0.81
	40-44	0.73
	45-49	0.91
Living arrangement	Living with spouse/partner	1.00
	Living apart together	0.93
	No partner	1.15
No. of children	0	1.00
	1	2.42 ***
	2	2.07 **
	3+	2.09 **
Intention to have a child in the future	No	1.00
	Yes	0.80 *
Education	Below higher secondary	1.00
	Higher secondary	0.78 **
	Post-secondary	0.60 ***
Employment status	Full-time	1.00
	Part-time	0.98
	Casual work	0.65
	Don't have a job	0.97
Country	The Czech Republic	1.00
	Eastern Germany	0.57 ***
	Western Germany	0.34 ***
	Hungary	0.71 *
	The Netherlands	0.09 ***
	Austria	0.10 ***
	Poland	6.67 ***
Slovenia	0.46 ***	
-2 Log Likelihood		4499.7

Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

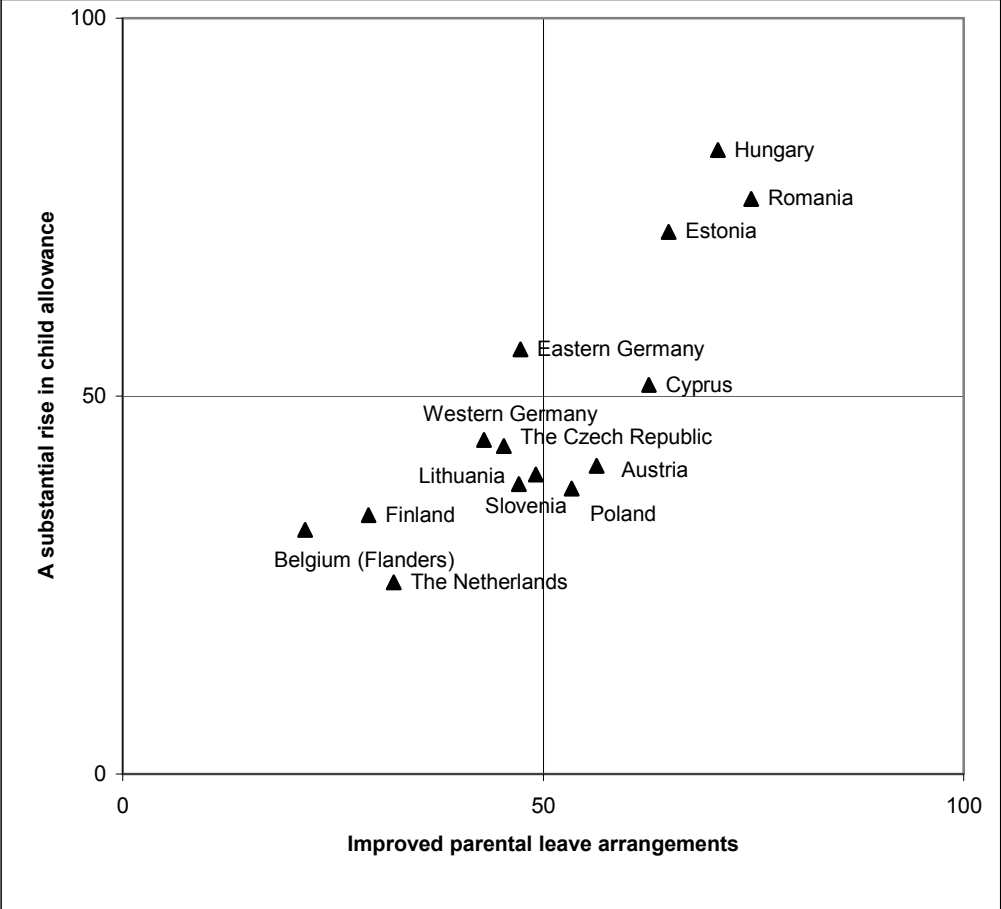
Note: Regression coefficients are expressed in odds.

ref (0): Enough (categories “too high”, “reasonable”, and “high”) 1: Too low

* significant at the 0.1 level, ** significant at the 0.05 level, *** significant at the 0.01 level

A positive correlation between the high support of improved parental leave arrangements for working women and a substantial rise in child allowance is evident from Figure 3. In Hungary, Romania and Estonia, more than 70% of respondents were strongly in favour of a substantial rise of child allowance and more than 60% of respondents were strongly in favour of improved parental leave. Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands can be found on the opposite end, with lowest percentages of high support.

Figure 3: Countries by support of improved parental leave arrangements for working women and a substantial rise in child allowance (% of respondents aged 20-49 who were strongly in favour)



Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

5 IMPROVED PARENTAL LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORKING WOMEN AND A SUBSTANTIAL RISE IN CHILD ALLOWANCE AS PRIORITY FAMILY POLICY MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

It can be seen from Table 3 that in about half of the countries higher proportions of the respondents selected improved parental leave for working women as their first priority measure to be implemented by the national governments, while a substantial rise in child allowance was more frequently selected in another half of the countries. As many as 26% of the respondents in Estonia, Romania and Slovenia would first of all have liked to have better parental leave arrangements. It is also evident from the last two columns of Table 3 that a substantial rise in child allowance quite frequently appears as the second or third priority, which is not the case with the improved parental leave.

Table 3: Improved parental leave arrangements for working women and a substantial rise in child allowance as priority measures; by priorities and countries (% of respondents aged 20-49)

Country	Improved parental leave arrangements for working women as ...			A substantial rise in child allowance as ...		
	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority
Austria	16	6	n.a.	4	7	n.a.
Belgium (Flanders)	3	6	n.a.	15	18	n.a.
The Czech Republic	14	5	4	12	15	11
Cyprus	19	5	5	4	5	2
Estonia	26	10	6	24	23	17
Finland	8	3	5	10	15	12
Eastern Germany	6	3	3	20	15	12
Western Germany	7	3	3	12	11	13
Hungary	6	4	3	18	21	15
Italy	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	21	26	22
Lithuania	14	4	3	10	14	11
The Netherlands	7	5	9	16	12	9
Poland	15	3	3	7	11	8
Romania	26	5	4	13	17	16
Slovenia	26	7	8	9	14	9

Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

In Figure 4, only the shares of respondents who selected the improved parental leave arrangements for working women, or a substantial rise in child allowance, as their first priority measures to be implemented by their respective governments are presented. For most of the countries there seems to be a negative correlation between the preferences for the two measures. People in Romania, Slovenia, Cyprus, Poland and Austria would give the preference to the improvement of parental leave arrangements, while in Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Belgium they would rather see a substantial rise in child allowance as the first measure to be implemented. Preferences for the two measures were more balanced in Estonia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Finland. We would like to point to the case of Poland, where almost all respondents (98%; see Figure 2) evaluated child allowance as too low, but it was the first family policy priority only for 7% of the respondents (for 26% it was one of three priorities; see Table 3).

6 THE DETERMINANTS FOR INCLUDING EACH OF THE TWO IMPROVEMENTS AMONG THE HIGHEST PRIORITIES IN THE FAMILY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

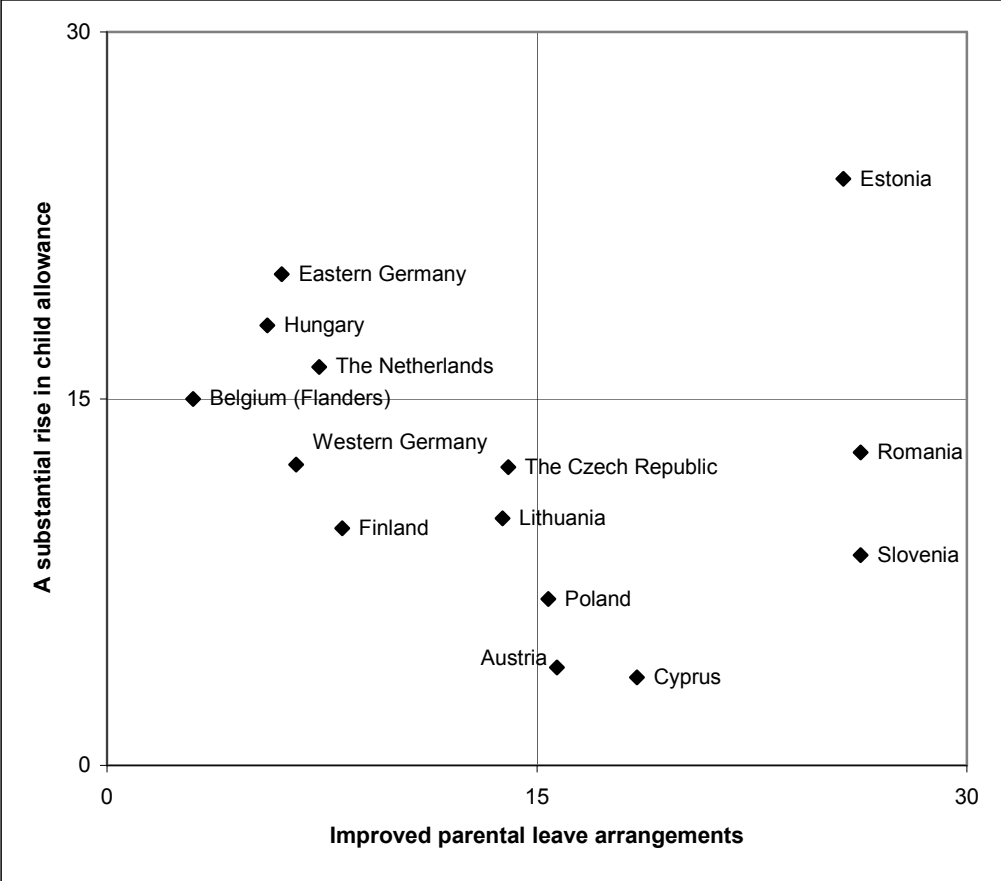
6.1 Model

The purpose of the model was to evaluate the likelihood that a certain improvement in family policy was selected as one of three (two)¹⁴ priorities to be implemented by the national government. Thirteen improvements/measures were suggested altogether. The same model

¹⁴ In Austria and Belgium (Flanders), only two choices were allowed.

was separately used to evaluate the likelihood for the improved parental leave for working women (1) and a substantial rise in child allowance (2) to be selected as high priority measures. This model includes the same explanatory variables as the one presented in section 3.3.2. Belgium (Flanders) and Germany were not included in the first logistic regression analysis because the question was limited to paternity leave in the former, and to maternity leave only in the latter.

Figure 4: Countries by shares of respondents who selected improved parental leave arrangements for working women or a substantial rise in child allowance as their first priority measure to be implemented (% of respondents aged 20-49)



Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

A higher likelihood for the improved parental leave arrangements for working women to be selected as one of three (two) priorities was expected for women, people in younger age groups, those living with a spouse/partner, those intending to have a child in the future, and those employed full time. We hesitated to predict the sign of the coefficients for the number of children and the educational level of the respondent.

The likelihood that a substantial rise in child allowance was selected as one of the priorities in the family policy development was assumed to be higher for the respondents with (more)

children, those intending to have a child in the future, those with below higher secondary education, as well as for those without a full-time employment.

6.2 Results

It is in line with our expectations that women were more likely than men to include the improved parental leave for working women among their priority measures to be implemented by the government. The same is true for people living with a spouse/partner, as compared to those living apart together or not having a partner; and for people intending to have a child in the future as compared to those without such intention. The number of children proved to have a highly significant influence: the more children they had, the less likely the respondents were to perceive improved parental leave for working women as a family policy priority, as compared to the respondents with no child.

Surprisingly, the age of respondent has proved not to have any significant influence (see Table 4). The same applies for the employment status: only the respondents without a job were less likely than those with full-time employment to select improved parental leave as their priority.

Only the respondents in Slovenia and Estonia were more likely than those in the Czech Republic to consider improved parental leave as a high priority. In Estonia, improvement was most probably understood as a higher parental allowance since the leave lasted till the child's age of three. In Slovenia, the opposite was the case: full wage was compensated, but the leave lasted only one year (1.7 years in case of part-time leave).

As expected, the likelihood that a substantial rise in child allowance was selected as one of the priority policy improvements was higher for the respondents with children than for those without any child, and it increased with the number of children. The influence of intention to have a child in the future as well as the influence of education and employment status proved to be in line with our assumptions, too. The higher the educational level, the less the respondents were likely to select a substantial rise in child allowance as their priority.

The likelihood was significantly lower for the respondents aged 30-49 years than for those aged 20-24 years, and it was decreasing with age. It was higher for those without a partner as compared to those living with a spouse/partner. Sex of the respondent was not a significant explanatory variable.

The respondents in all countries except Austria and Poland were more likely than those in Belgium (Flanders)¹⁵ to consider a substantial rise in child allowance as one of the priority family policy improvements. While this can be partly explained by higher child allowances for first children in Austria than in Belgium (Flanders), we cannot find any appropriate explanation for the attitudes of the Polish respondents.

¹⁵ The lowest amount of child allowance for the first child in Belgium (Flanders) was equal to 2.6 average gross earnings.

Table 4: Determinants for considering improved parental leave for working women and a substantial rise in child allowance as priority family policy measures to be implemented by the national governments

		Improved parental leave for working women	Substantial rise in child allowance
Sex	Male	1.00	1.00
	Female	1.13 **	0.99
Age group	20-24	1.00	1.00
	25-29	1.04	0.93
	30-34	0.99	0.89 *
	35-39	0.88	0.83 ***
	40-44	0.97	0.69 ***
	45-49	1.13	0.59 ***
Living arrangement	Living with spouse/partner	1.00	1.00
	Living apart together	0.83 *	1.08
	No partner	0.78 ***	1.15 ***
No. of children	0	1.00	1.00
	1	0.87 *	1.98 ***
	2	0.77 ***	2.31 ***
	3+	0.58 ***	2.68 ***
Intention to have a child in the future	No	1.00	1.00
	Yes	1.33 ***	1.09 *
Education	Below higher secondary	1.00	1.00
	Higher secondary	1.08	0.84 ***
	Post-secondary	1.13	0.58 ***
Employment status	Full-time	1.00	1.00
	Part-time	0.97	1.10
	Casual work	0.34	2.01 *
	Don't have a job	0.89 *	1.11 **
Country	Belgium (Flanders)		1.00
	The Czech Republic	1.00	1.75 ***
	Eastern Germany		2.16 ***
	Western Germany		1.42 ***
	Estonia	1.74 ***	3.55 ***
	Italy		7.80 ***
	Lithuania	0.70 ***	1.49 ***
	Hungary	0.53 ***	2.90 ***
	The Netherlands	0.81	1.73 ***
	Austria	0.80 *	0.48 ***
	Poland	0.87	0.82 ***
Slovenia	2.25 ***	1.30 ***	
Finland	0.51 ***	1.75 ***	
-2 Log Likelihood		11386.5	20127.7

Source: IPPAS database; own calculations.

Notes:

Priority means one of three priorities (one of two priorities in Austria and Belgium (Flanders)).

Regression coefficients are expressed in odds. The reference category for each variable has odds of 1.00.

* significant at the 0.1 level, ** significant at the 0.05 level, *** significant at the 0.01 level

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considerable proportions of the respondents were not satisfied with the duration of parental leave in their respective countries at the time of the survey. This was the case in the former communist countries, too, in spite of generally long leaves - most probably due to unavailable or non-affordable childcare for young children as a consequence of the economic transition. On the other hand, in most of the traditionally capitalist countries, an increasing female employment was not followed neither by appropriate improvements in parental leave nor by sufficient pre-school childcare facilities. Consequently, it was hard for many women in Europe to successfully reconcile their professional and family lives. At the same time, an increasing value has been attached to equal opportunities for both sexes, which the women would also like to experience in practice. They would like to have an option of a long and paid parental leave with job security (and the possibility for fathers to take this leave on an equal basis, we guess).

The amount of child allowance received at the time of the survey was evaluated as too low by (very) high proportions of the respondents, even in the countries with generous allowances. In the former communist countries (except Slovenia), the attitudes may have been also influenced by previous experiences of relatively high child allowances available till the end of the 1980s. In the observed countries, the perception of poor child allowances increased with the number of children and decreased with the attained educational level of the respondent.

Two extreme groups of the countries were identified according to strong support to improvements in both family policy measures under consideration. The first group, with highest support to the improvements in these measures, includes Hungary, Romania and Estonia. The second one, with lowest support, includes the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders) and Finland. This points to the still persistent differences between the former communist countries and the Western countries. On the other hand, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania and Poland appear to be more similar to Germany and Austria.

Estonia is the country with the highest shares of respondents who preferred either the improved parental leave arrangements for working women or a substantial rise in child allowance to be the first family policy measures implemented by the government. More than a quarter of the respondents in Estonia, Romania and Slovenia opted for the improved parental leave arrangements for working women as their first priority.

Improved parental leave was more likely to be one of three (two) priorities in the family policy development for women and those living with the spouse/partner than for men and those without a partner, respectively. People aged 20-24 years, those without a partner, those with below higher secondary education and those without a job were more likely to select a substantial rise in child allowance among their highest priorities, than those aged 30-49 years, those living with the spouse/partner, those with at least higher secondary education and those employed full-time, respectively. For both measures, the likelihood was higher for people who intended to have a child in the future than for those without such intention. Generally, the

preference for improved parental leave was decreasing with the number of children while the preference for higher child allowance was positively related to the number of children.

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