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**Observatory for  
Sociopolitical Developments  
in Europe**

# **Father Involvement in Family Work How European States Promote Equal Partnership in Families**

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## Abstract

One of the important issues in the German debate on family policy is how to achieve a more equal partnership in families' work-life balance. Throughout Europe the goal of giving fathers "more time for the family" has increasingly gained importance on the political agenda. The EU wants to promote this with its so-called work-life balance package as a first step towards delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The issue here is about redistributing family work between the partners: on the one hand, encouraging and supporting the active role of fathers in family work, and on the other, relieving mothers of family work and allowing them to more easily pursue gainful employment.

Parental leave is one family policy instrument that allows more time for the family. It gives parents a legal right to time off from work with protection against dismissal and, in the ideal case, compensation for lost salary.

The following questions will be answered in this report on the basis of concrete examples in eight European states:

1. Which policy measures and instruments effectively promote a greater involvement of fathers in family work?
2. Which instruments have already been implemented in the European states to actively promote the involvement of fathers in family work?

The report shows among others the following results:

- In order to accomplish a more equal sharing of family work between the partners several factors play a role: financial resources, norms and values as well as the family policy framework.
- Father-specific leave may serve as a door opener as it addresses a very specific moment in the life course: the birth of the (first) child that causes a sudden spike in the amount of family work parents have to face. At the same time it is mostly the mother who assumes responsibility for most of the childcare duties and family work during the first months while the father continues to work outside the home.
- Many European states have introduced father-specific leave policies with good results. Some earmark a certain amount of the leave individually both to the father and the mother. Sweden introduced financial incentives for a more equal sharing of parental leave but abolished its gender equality bonus in 2017. Austria on the other hand has recently introduced such a policy. Germany is the only country that financially supports part-time parental leave in order to accomplish a near full-time employment of both parents.

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# 1 Introduction

The German debate on family policy is currently dominated by the issue of how to achieve a more equal partnership in families' work-life balance. This concept of an equal partnership in families mirrors the wish expressed by many families for employment and family work to be shared nearly equally so that – in the case of childcare – both parents have time for family and career (BMFSFJ 2015). The fundamental questions arising in the political debate are therefore:

- How can employment and family work be organized so that women and men – especially mothers and fathers – can participate equally in both employment and family work<sup>1</sup>?
- How can parents be supported in their efforts to share career and family work more equally between them?<sup>2</sup>

The debate is triggered by the trend in Germany, as in many other European states, towards an approximately equal participation of women and men in employment. This represents a shift from the male breadwinner model towards the so-called dual-earner model (Daly 2005; Lewis 2009).

Many European states are supporting the trend towards dual-income households by supporting the reorganization of care work between the state, the market and the family.<sup>3</sup> By publicly funding childcare, states help redistribute childcare duties partially from the family to private or public childcare institutions. With regard to care work, a concept that covers all activities involving nursing, attention and providing for oneself and for others (Rudolph 2015: 105), it is becoming apparent that there is still a difference between the daily amount of time women and men invest in care work. This difference is illustrated by the gender care gap (Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017).<sup>4</sup>

In addition to their efforts concerning reorganization, an increasing number of European states also hope to impact the intra-family distribution of care work by setting incentives for a redistribution of care work. These incentives highlight the role of fathers for care work: on the one hand fathers are encouraged to get actively involved in family work,

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1 Cf. Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung (2017) [Expert Commission on the Second Gender Equality Report].

2 Cf. in particular OECD (2016).

3 As proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999), state, market and family are seen as the three key players in the production of welfare. However, states differ in the manner in which care is defined and organized in [their] societies (Beckmann 2014: 116).

4 The double burden of women – especially mothers – resulting from employment and care work is also worthy of focus in this context (Beckmann 2014). It is only partially resolved by the reorganization.

and on the other, their increased participation in childcare is better supported by government measures.

The European Union's work-life balance package, published in April 2017, also constitutes an important stimulus in this regard. The European Commission proposes a directive in order to introduce four month of individual, paid parental leave earmarked for each parent as well as a paid paternity leave of ten days as minimum standard throughout Europe.

Indeed, it is the explicit wish of many parents to split employment and family work between them in approximately equal shares. At the moment, however, there are only very few families who manage to do this (IfD Allensbach 2015; Müller et al. 2013). We therefore need to look at the factors that hinder a more equal sharing of employment and childcare duties. Those responsible for shaping family policy must ask themselves how these obstacles can be removed so that family work can be shared more equally.

The present report examines how states can support families who "dare to share" (OECD 2017) and how fathers can be addressed more directly with regard to their responsibility for family work. The following questions will be answered on the basis of concrete examples in various European states:

1. What policy measures and instruments effectively promote a greater involvement of fathers in family work?
2. What instruments have already been implemented in various European states to actively promote the involvement and participation of fathers in family work?

The focus here is on (paid) leave periods designed especially for fathers, so-called father-specific leave. When couples transit to parenthood, these leave periods can be a "door opener" at a crucial moment in their relationship (Gärtner 2012: 16).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the distribution of duties after the birth of children is especially important for how mothers and fathers share employment and care work in the further course of their lives.

This report offered a common starting point for the European Expert Meeting, which was hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe in Berlin on 29 and 30 May 2017. In light of the work-life balance package of the European Commission, this Expert Meeting provided the opportunity for a Europe-wide exchange about instruments, experience and possible success factors to encourage more father involvement in family work.

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5 At the transition to parenthood, a change that causes a surge in care work, we often observe a return to traditional gender roles, "especially when mothers rather than fathers take time off or reduce working hours to care for young children" (OECD 2017: 14).

## 2 Towards more equal partnership in families

If we want to foster more equal partnership in families, we particularly need to understand the obstacles to more equal sharing of family work. These obstacles highlight the areas where families need support and incentives for a redistribution of family work. They also show how fathers can be effectively addressed so that they can then assume responsibility and participate in family work.

### 2.1 Factors contributing to a gender-based division of labour: money, social norms and the family policy framework

The scientific literature provides different explanations as to why parents often split employment and family and care work unevenly among them – contrary to what they profess to prefer.<sup>6</sup> The main factors are money, values and norms as well as the general framework created by family policy.

#### Money – household economics and negotiation

The new household economics approach sees employment income as a key factor in decisions regarding the division of labour. According to this theory, the partner with the higher income concentrates on paid employment while the lower-paid partner focuses on unpaid care and housework. This distribution of labour reflects a desire to maximize economic utility for the entire household.<sup>7</sup>

The negotiation perspective assumes that individual income determines the bargaining power of the partners when it comes to deciding how to distribute employment and family work (Bianchi et al. 2000). Structural factors to the disadvantage of women in the employment market, such as lower pay and fewer opportunities of advancement, often make it appear rational from a utility-maximizing perspective for men to be the ones to pursue paid employment (Hipp/Leuze 2015). From the negotiation perspective, women who take (longer) parental leave after the birth of a child and then work part-time have less bargaining power in deciding how employment and care work are distributed within the family. The distribution of parental leave is itself part of the negotiation process: if parental leave is family-based, parents are free to decide on their own how they want to divide it between themselves (OECD 2017).

#### Norms and values

Social norms and values define what is considered appropriate and desirable behaviour in a society. These include a society's views about how employment and care work

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6 A good overview and appraisal of the various theoretical models is provided by Hipp/Leuze (2015) and Fahlén (2015).

7 Cf. Becker's specialized human capital perspective (1993). Cf. also Geist (2005) and Gupta (2007).

should be distributed between the genders. Gender regimes therefore impact how employment and care work in general and parental leave in particular are distributed within families (Pfau-Effinger 1998; Coltrane 2000; Haas 2005; Budig et al. 2012; Beckmann 2014; Edlund/Öun 2016). The intra-family decision as to where care takes place and who provides it is therefore influenced by social norms and values to the extent that the partners – at least unconsciously – strive to meet the expectations of society. As a result, social norms and values are reproduced by a family's behaviour (Oláh/Richter/Kotowska 2014: 17). At the same time, as recent studies show, public support measures such as the parental leave in Germany contribute to the process of changing social norms (Unterhofer et al. 2017).

### **The family policy framework**

A family's decision on how employment and care work should be distributed is also embedded in the institutional background: it is influenced by government support measures such as paid parental or care leave, opening times of childcare facilities or options for part-time work (Korpi 2000; Fahlén 2015; Hipp/Leuze 2015). The economic situation of household members and the norms and values that are important for individual decisions interact with existing institutional framework conditions (Hipp/Leuze 2015; Edlund/Öun 2016). Family and gender-equality policies in particular can, for instance, promote certain family models by offering different (support) services (Korpi 2000). The reorganization of care work between the state, the market and the family has thus been instrumental in opening up the possibility for partners to be employed simultaneously. An example of this is the provision of universal childcare. In addition, family and gender-equality policies and instruments can set incentives for mothers and fathers that encourage an intra-family redistribution of care work and thus contribute to a gender-equal sharing of employment and care work.

In their interplay, the factors money, norms/values and family-policy framework constitute suitable starting points to promote a more equal sharing of employment and family and care work between women and men. This report will focus on family and gender-equality policy measures and instruments. With regard to family work, the focus will be above all on measures and instruments that effectively strengthen fathers' involvement in family work.

## **2.2 Father-specific leave as a door opener for an equal sharing of family work**

For most couples, the birth of a first child is a crucial turning point (Bühlmann et al. 2010, Grunow et al. 2012). With transition to parenthood, many couples, for the first time in their relationship, feel the skyrocketing burden of unpaid family work. This often means that the earlier life model in which both partners were employed in roughly the same proportion is no longer self-evident. One important aspect of the change is that it is mostly women who take time off at the birth of a child and that this temporary role – the mother

shouldering the bulk of the family and care work while the father is still employed – often ultimately consolidates the intra-family distribution of labour (Grunow 2014).

The gender-based division of labour resulting from the birth of the first child is therefore a critical factor at a critical period – but it can also be used to set a long-term pattern for an equal division of employment and care work. Father-specific leave kicks in at precisely this crucial moment and can serve as a “door opener” for a gender-equal distribution of family and care work (Gärtner 2012: 16). There are in fact indications that a temporary interruption of a father’s employment has a favourable impact on childcare and family work in the long term.

The number of countries where men can take father-specific leave is increasing (OECD 2017). Father-specific leave constitutes a legal entitlement to time off from gainful employment for childcare and child-raising. This includes parental leave that is “reserved exclusively for fathers (“daddy quotas”), or sharable parental leave that is effectively ‘reserved’ for fathers, as it must be used by the main leave taker’s partner (usually the father) if the family is to qualify for bonus weeks” (ibid.: 91). An example is the German model of 12 plus 2 months (see below). Paternity leave as known in some European countries is also understood as father-specific leave.

Recent studies show that father-specific leave positively impacts gender-equal division of labour (Hook 2010; Li et al. 2015). Li et al. (2015) have found that fathers who interrupt their careers for a parental leave of several months while their partner is employed are later more involved in family work. How men perceive their role as fathers is decisively influenced by whether they are alone during parental leave or stay at home with the mother (Kvande/Brandth 2017).

### 2.3 Family policy instruments to foster fathers’ involvement in family work

The design of father-specific leave policies may strongly impact on the equal sharing of family work. Four essential instruments have been identified. These are policies that promote a greater involvement of fathers in family work:

- (1) **Paternity leave:** Fathers can take (paid) leave around the time of birth of a child.  
**Effect:** The earlier fathers assume responsibility for caring for and raising their children, the more likely they will continue to be active fathers (Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017). Paternity leave can therefore help to ensure that fathers are permanently involved in family work.
- (2) **Parental leave – Individual, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave with financial benefits:** Parental leave periods are earmarked for mothers and fathers and therefore not transferable.



**Effect:** It has been shown that family work is distributed more equally within the family if both parents take parental leave (Kotsadam/Finseraas 2011). Longer non-transferable leave periods have an additional positive effect on the participation of fathers (Hook 2006; Boll et al, 2014.). Especially financial benefits during parental leave have proven to be decisive. There is therefore a positive correlation between the amount provided and the participation of fathers in childcare and child-raising (ibid.).<sup>8</sup>

(3) **Financial incentives for a gender-equal distribution of transferable parental leave:** Financial incentives are offered to encourage mothers and fathers to share transferable parental leave as equally as possible.

**Effect:** This instrument has had mixed early effects in the states where it has been implemented (cf. Sweden and Austria).

(4) **Additional financial support for part-time parental leave:** Financial benefits are provided for parents who share employment and childcare duties equally and both work part-time – so that mothers and fathers have equal time for childcare duties and family work.

**Effect:** This incentive is intended to encourage mothers to work more hours and fathers to take more time off for family work (cf. Germany). It aims for a near-full-time employment of both partners and thus goes beyond leave measures. Little is known so far on the impact of this instrument.

European states use a wide range of instruments to promote father involvement in family work. The following section will offer an overview of what instruments have already been implemented in selected European countries and how these instruments are designed. Focus will be on central aspects only, as no extensive overview can be provided within the scope of the present paper. It is hoped that the paper will serve as a starting point for discussion about what has been the experience in the various states and what reforms could be envisaged.

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8 The total loss in household income is lowered if fathers, having generally a higher income than mothers, have most of their income compensated for by an income-related allowance while being on parental leave. In line with the utility-maximizing approaches mentioned above, this means that the barrier for fathers to take-up leave is lowered considerably.

### 3 A look across Europe: Policy measures and instruments to promote fathers' involvement in family work

#### 3.1 Germany

**Instruments:** (2) Individual, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave with financial benefits; (4) Additional financial support for part-time parental leave

For many years, West Germany was characterized by a strong male-breadwinner model with family work being done mostly by women (Adler/Lenz 2016, Esping-Andersen 1990). The one-and-half-earner model in which the man works full-time and the woman short part-time hours is now widespread, especially among couples with children (OECD 2017). In the former East Germany, on the other hand, the dual-earner model was supported mainly by government programmes (Adler/Lenz 2016). These welfare state tendencies continue to be partially reflected in various empirical findings for western and eastern Germany.<sup>9</sup>

The change in gender role models has been accompanied by a growing need for more equal distribution of employment and care work (Eigenmann et al. 2016: 26). According to the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, “some 60 percent of parents with children under three believe the realm of the ideal is where they both spend equal amounts of time with the family and at work” (BMFSFJ 2015: 10). However, only 14 per cent of parents live up to this ideal in their everyday life (Müller et al. 2013: 3).<sup>10</sup>

In Germany, parents are entitled to 12 months of paid parental leave (parental allowance). Two additional months are reserved for the other partner (12 + 2 model) and lapse if they are not taken. Since 2007, the income-related scheme replaces generally 65 per cent of lost income up to a ceiling of 1,800 Euro with a minimum rate of 300 Euro. Parents can split parental allowance flexibly, and they can also take paid parental leave together. However, the maximum either parent is entitled to is 12 months' full allowance. Parents may extend their parental allowance by taking so-called “plus months”. It is half the amount of the full allowance when the parent does not have income after the birth. In this case, each parental allowance month becomes two parental “plus months”.

In 2015, so-called partnership bonus months were introduced. Parents working between 25 and 30 hours per week can both apply for four additional “plus months”. For example,

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9 Cf. for instance, the differences in public acceptance of early childhood childcare in eastern and western Germany (BMFSFJ 2015).

10 Data from the survey *Familien in Deutschland / Families in Germany* show figures for married parents. Here an equal sharing is assumed if either both parents work full-time (more than 35 hours weekly) or both part-time (1 to 35 hours weekly).

fathers are encouraged by this policy to reduce their working hours and take over family work.

In the summer of 2016, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth proposed the concept of “family working time” to help parents of younger children share employment and family work more equally (BMFSFJ 2016). If both parents worked 80 to 90 per cent of a full-time job, i.e. about 28 to 36 hours per week, following the concept, they would be eligible for a family allowance of 300 Euro for up to 24 months –150 Euro each for mother and father. The concept is currently being discussed.

### 3.2 Estonia

#### **Instruments:** (1) Paternity leave

In Estonia the dual-earner model is widespread, while at the same time family work continues to be taken over by women, along traditional gender-based lines (Klenner/Leiber 2009: 22). Karu and Kasearu (2011: 24) characterize Estonia as a “dual earner/state & female carer model”.

Estonia offers paid parental leave, but without a non-transferable entitlement to parental leave for fathers. Financial support during parental leave is very good. One hundred per cent of lost income is replaced for a period of 62 weeks. The parental leave model thus fulfils an important feature of an equal sharing between mothers and fathers by providing income replacement (cf. Dearing 2016).<sup>11</sup> Parents cannot take paid parental leave at the same time. The actual use of parental leave shows a different picture and reflects the aforementioned “dual earner/state & female carer model”: in 2016, only 9.3 per cent of recipients of paid parental leave were fathers, and 90.7 per cent were mothers (cf. Pall 2017).

The 10-day paid paternity leave was claimed at least partially by half of the fathers entitled to it in 2015. Paternity leave has been reformed several times in recent years. A financial allowance was introduced in 2008 and take-up rate increased up to 50 per cent. It was abolished in 2009, but figures have increased again since its reintroduction in 2013 towards figures around 50 per cent. Paternity leave is currently paid at 100 per cent of the father’s previous income (Pall 2017).

The government measures that promote leave-taking by fathers partly contrast with prevailing social attitudes, which are based on traditional gender roles (Karu/Kasearu 2011). Estonian family and gender equality policies are in flux, and a public debate has been triggered on the role of fathers and on gender stereotypes (Järviste 2009).

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11 After maternity leave and the 62 weeks of income-related parental leave, parents can take additional unpaid parental leave until the third birthday of the child.

### 3.3 Iceland

**Instruments:** (2) Individual, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave with financial benefits

In Iceland, the intra-family distribution of family work has been in flux for some time: fathers are gradually investing more time in family work. How family work is distributed has meanwhile become the subject of negotiations within families rather than family work being automatically assigned to mothers from the outset (Arnalds et al., 2013).

As early as the 1990s, social and political actors began expressing their intention to improve the possibilities for fathers' involvement in family work, because Icelandic fathers wanted to reduce their working hours in order to have more time with their families (Gíslason 2007).

In 2000, parental leave was extended from six to nine months. Three months are currently earmarked as individual entitlement for each parent, and three months can be split flexibly between the parents (3 + 3 + 3 model). In addition, an income-related allowance of 80 per cent of previous income has replaced the low lump-sum benefit. Parental leave can be taken within the first 24 months of the child's life. Parents can take their parental leave together, and parental leave can be taken in several blocks. As a result of individual parental leave entitlement, significantly more fathers have been taking advantage of the system. Nowadays about 80 per cent of fathers take parental leave. On the average, Icelandic fathers take roughly the number of days earmarked for them. In 2013, for instance, fathers took an average of 87 days of parental leave<sup>12</sup> while mothers, in addition to their individual entitlement, took the preponderant portion of the flexible parental leave, averaging 181 days of leave altogether (Gíslason 2017). More recently, a negative development has been observed with regard to fathers' uptake of leave.

Since 2001, the income-related allowance has been 80 per cent of previous income, with no fixed ceiling. As a result of the financial crisis, a ceiling was introduced in 2008, and it was lowered twice, in 2009 and 2010. Due to this, "the actual proportion of earnings received by the average earner fell from 80% in 2008 to just under 60% at its lowest point in 2012" (OECD 2017: 94). This trend contributed significantly to the decline in fathers' use of their entitlement (Gíslason 2017).

Icelandic society has a predominantly positive view of fathers using three to six months of available parental leave (85.4 per cent approval in 2003, 88.6 per cent in 2012). Most employers are generally neutral or positive in their attitude towards male workers taking parental leave (ibid).

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<sup>12</sup> Before the economic crisis, 90 per cent of fathers took an average of roughly 100 days of parental leave.

In 2014, a commission was set up by the government to review the parental leave scheme. In March 2016, this commission recommended a restoration of the original ceiling for income-related allowance and an extension to 12 months of parental leave, five of which should be earmarked for the mother, five for the father and two to be taken flexibly by either parent. The current centre-right government seeks to restore the economic compensation to the original level while an extension of leave is currently not being debated (Eydal/Gíslason 2017).

### 3.4 Norway

**Instrument:** (1) Paternity leave; (2) Individual, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave with financial benefits

In Norway, the ideal of a family in which both parents combine employment and family work<sup>13</sup> plays an important role (Kvande/Brandth 2017).

Fathers in Norway are entitled to two weeks of paternity leave after the birth of a child. However, this leave is paid only if compensation has been regulated in individual or collective agreements with the employer. This applies to the majority of employed fathers (Brandt/Kvande 2017).

Since 1993 fathers have had a non-transferable entitlement to parental leave, which policy-makers regard as an important encouragement for the involvement of fathers in family work. This non-transferable share of parental leave has contributed to the development of the social norm that fathers should take advantage of their entitlement to parental leave and actively participate in childcare (ibid.).

Total parental leave, currently 46 weeks, is designed as an income-related allowance of 100 per cent of previous income.<sup>14</sup> Until 2014, the individual and non-transferable share of fathers' entitlement (often referred to as the "father's quota") was until 2014 continually expanded from 4 to 14 weeks. This resulted in an increase in fathers' uptake of parental leave. However, in 2014 the non-transferable parental leave entitlement of fathers and mothers was cut back from 14 to ten weeks each in order to increase the proportion of flexible parental leave to 26 weeks. The stated reason for this change was to give parents greater flexibility (ibid.). The Norwegian Ministry for Children and Equality has commissioned a White Paper. It recommends to divide the parental leave equally between the partners and suggest to earmark 20 weeks to each partner (NOU 2017). This suggestion is currently being discussed by the political parties (Brandt/Kvande 2017).

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13 Cf. for instance the *earner/carer model* described by Gornick/Meyers (2003).

14 Alternatively, paid parental leave of 59 weeks with 80 per cent income replacement is also possible. In addition to the 46 or 56 weeks, there is a three-week period of maternity leave before birth. In Norway no difference is made between maternity leave and parental leave.

Parents can take parental leave at the same time (“double leave”). With the extension of non-transferable entitlement, the amount of leave time taken together has decreased, usually to avoid creating a gap between parental leave and institutional childcare. Since 2007 parental leave can be taken flexibly over a period of three years. It can also be combined with part-time work or taken in smaller blocks (Kvande/Brandth 2017).

Overall, Norwegian parents view parental leave and the father’s quota in a positive light. The advantages of the father’s quota are, in the first place, it does not depend alone on intra-family negotiation who takes up parental leave; besides, fathers’ non-transferable parental leave entitlement makes it easier for fathers to justify their desire to get involved in family work, for example, vis-à-vis their employers. As a result, 90 per cent of fathers use a share or all of their parental leave entitlement. In 2013, they took 46 days on average, and 49 days in 2014 (cf. Kvande/Brandth 2017, Moss 2015: 43).

### 3.5 Austria

**Instruments:** (2) Individual, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave with financial benefits; (3) Financial incentives for a gender-equal distribution of transferable parental leave

Austria, like Germany, was long regarded as a country where the male-breadwinner model dominated, with the overwhelming share of family work being done by women (Esping-Andersen 1990). In the meantime, however, the one-and-a-half-income model has spread, although most family duties are still being largely borne by women (OECD 2012).

In 2010, Austria reformed its Childcare Allowance Act [*Kinderbetreuungsgeldgesetz (KBGG)*] thereby introducing income-replacement for paid parental leave (*parental leave plus childcare allowance*), which now exists alongside various lump-sum options. One of the aims of the new law was to encourage a higher uptake of parental leave by fathers (Eurofound 2015). Another reform of the KBGG followed in 2017 (see below).

Parental leave (*Elternkarenz*) can be taken in the first two years after birth. There is no parental leave earmarked specifically for fathers: entitlement is family-based. Parents cannot take paid parental leave at the same time. The childcare allowance as a financial benefit during parental leave and periods of childcare at home is as such independent from the uptake of parental leave. In one of the available options, childcare allowance can therefore be claimed longer than parental leave (see option 1 below). This also means that parents can be employed while they receive the childcare allowance. There is, however, a ceiling to what they are allowed to earn in this time.

In February 2017, the childcare allowance was available in four flat-rate and one income-based options:

1. € 436 per month for 30 months. A bonus of six months was granted if both parents applied for childcare allowance (30 + 6).

2. € 624 per month for 20 months (20 + 4 with bonus).
3. € 800 per month for 15 months (15 + 3 with bonus).
4. € 1,000 per month for 12 months (12 + 2 with bonus).
5. 80 per cent income replacement for 12 months (12 + 2 with bonus) (Rille-Pfeiffer/Dearing/Schmidt 2017).

In March 2017, the four lump-sum options were made more flexible. Families no longer have to choose one of the four options: they can freely decide between a minimum of 365 (+ 91 bonus) and a maximum of 851 (+ 212 bonus) days of childcare allowance – giving them a so-called childcare account. The amount paid depends on the total length of uptake; in the shortest option it is 33.88 Euro per day (approx. 1,030 Euro per month) and in the longest 14.58 Euro per day (approx. 450 Euro per month). A time bonus of 20 per cent is available if the other parent also claims childcare allowance. This bonus can in fact be seen as a non-transferable entitlement of fathers (or mothers) and as such it encourages fathers' involvement in family work. The income-related option of the childcare allowance, including bonus months (option 5), continues to exist. The reform also introduced a financial partnership bonus as well as a family-time bonus for fathers, both intended to promote a more equal sharing of family work (BMFJ 2016).

The partnership bonus provides for a financial payment of 500 Euro per parent if they share the childcare allowance between them in a ratio of at least 60 to 40. Each parent must claim childcare allowance for a minimum of 124 days.

The family-time bonus for fathers is a financial support scheme that can be claimed by fathers taking 28 to 31 days of unpaid leave at one time. This must be done during the first three months following the birth of the child. Fathers then receive a lump sum of 22.60 Euro per day to partially replace their income loss during their leave. However, the scheme does not offer dismissal protection for the leave period – in contrast to parental leave. The benefit is also offset against later childcare allowance claimed by the father (BMFJ 2016).

### 3.6 Sweden

**Instruments:** (1) Paternity leave; (2) Individual, non-transferable right to parental leave with financial benefits; (3) Financial incentives for a gender-equal distribution of transferable parental leave (2008-2017)

In Sweden, the dual-earner/dual-carer model has been the basis of family policy instruments since the 1970s (Eigenmann et al., 2016: 41). The goal is to put women and men in a position to shape society and their own lives equally (ibid.: 43).

In Sweden the father or second parent is entitled to paternity leave or leave around the time of the birth. They can thus take ten days of leave with an income replacement rate of 77.6 per cent in the first 60 days after birth.

In 1974, Sweden introduced a six-month paid parental leave that could be split flexibly between the parents (OECD 2017). One of the aims of the scheme was to encourage fathers to assume more responsibility for family work (Axelsson 2014). At present, parental leave is eight months (240 days) per parent, whereby six and a half months (195 days) are paid at 77.6 per cent of the previous income, and a lump sum (currently 19 Euro per day) is paid for another one and a half months (45 days). Parts of the paid parental leave can be transferred to the other parent (Duvander/Haas/Thalberg 2017).

Individual, non-transferable parental leave is intended to encourage fathers to take a larger share of parental leave. In 1995 the so-called father's quota was introduced. One month of parental leave was reserved exclusively for fathers. In 2002 this was increased to two months, and in 2017 to three months (Duvander/Haas/Thalberg 2017). In principle, parents cannot take parental leave together. Since 2012, however, they can take up to 30 days of paid parental leave at the same time in the first year of the child's life ('double days'). However, individual, non-transferable parental leave entitlement may not be used for this purpose. Double days therefore need to be taken from the flexibly divisible family entitlement. This is intended to promote a smooth transition regarding the familial care of the children (Haas/Duvander/Hwang 2017).

As an incentive for an equal division of the flexible parental leave, a Gender Equality Bonus was introduced in 2008; this scheme provided financial incentives for couples who split their transferable parental leave nearly equally (at least 40:60). A 5 Euro tax deduction was granted to both parents per day to encourage equal sharing. This meant that parents were entitled to up to 1,122 Euro tax-free for dividing parental leave equally between them (Haas/Duvander/Hwang 2016). However, the gender-equality bonus proved not to have the hoped-for effect, as it did not result in a more equal sharing of parental leave (Duvander and Johansson 2012). It was abolished as of 1 January 2017.

Overall, the Swedish parental leave scheme grants parents a high degree of flexibility: parental leave can be taken as full-time or part-time leave, up to one hour per day. Additional unpaid parental leave up to the 18<sup>th</sup> month of the child's life is also possible. For children born after 2013, up to 96 days of paid parental leave can also be taken between the child's 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> year of life (Duvander/Haas/Thalberg 2017).

Since the introduction of the father's quota, almost all fathers take at least part of their parental leave. They also take relatively long parental leave, with an average of 91 days (Haas/Duvander/Hwang 2017).<sup>15</sup> The involvement of fathers in family work has become the norm (Duvander/Haas/Thalberg 2017). "The proportion of parental leave taken by fathers has gradually risen – from 5% in 1980 to 10% in 1995 and 24% in 2012" (OECD 2017: 93f). Each increase in fathers' quotas led to a higher uptake of parental leave by fathers, though this effect was more dramatic with the introduction of the first month

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15 Mothers take an average of 342 days of leave.



(Haas/Duvander/Hwang 2017). It remains to be seen what the effect of the 2017 extension by a further month will be. Parental leave uptake by fathers continues to be different from the situation of mothers: fathers tend to take their parental leave in several smaller blocks rather than in longer, contiguous sections (Duvander/Haas/Thalberg 2017). The proportion of couples who share parental leave nearly equally (at least 40:60) is slowly increasing; in 2010 it had reached about 13 per cent (Duvander/Johansson 2016).

### 3.7 Slovenia

**Instruments:** (1) Paternity leave; (2) Individual right to parental leave with financial benefits (however: shares transferable)

In Slovenia, the dual-earner model has become quite common. A traditional gender-based division of labour continues to be the rule with regard to family work. One reason for this is the fact that traditional role models continue to be widespread in society (Stropnik/Humer 2017).

In Slovenia, fathers are currently entitled to paternity leave with 90 per cent income replacement. The scheme is gradually being changed. In 2016 a total of 70 calendar days of paternity leave were available, and income replacement was paid for the first 20 days. For the remaining 50 days, the state paid social insurance contributions at the level of the minimum wage.<sup>16</sup> In 2017, fathers are entitled to 50 days of paternity leave, 25 with income replacement. Thirty days with income replacement are planned for 2018. The well-paid portion of the paternity leave is therefore extended while the total duration is reduced. Due to the economic crisis, the ceiling of income replacement has been greatly lowered in order to save costs. As a result, many fathers actually receive less than 90 per cent income replacement. With economic recovery, however, this ceiling is to be raised again.

Slovenia offers relatively long and very well paid parental leave for both parents. Both fathers and mothers can take 130 calendar days of parental leave at 90 per cent income replacement rate. With the exception of the 30 days reserved for the mother, a parent may, however, transfer his or her share to the other parent.

In 2012, 84 per cent of fathers took advantage of paid **paternity leave**, while 21 per cent also used portions of the remaining available unpaid days. Despite generous income replacement during parental leave, only seven per cent of fathers take advantage of this scheme. Along the transferability of the individual parental leave entitlement reasons for this are the traditional distribution of roles within the family, social role models, the absence of a positive image of men who assume childcare duties and the expectations of

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<sup>16</sup> The first 15 days of paternity leave can be taken within the first six months of the child's life; the remaining days until the child turns three.

employers on male workers. Some people are also not aware that parental leave can be split; paternity leave, on the other hand, is familiar to most (Stropnik/Humer 2017).

### 3.8 Czech Republic

**Instruments:** Reform plans for (1) Paternity leave around the time of the birth of a child and (2) Individual, non-transferable right to parental leave with financial benefits

In the Czech Republic unpaid parental leave until a child's third birthday is an individual entitlement of both parents. Financial support during parental leave and for childcare at home (childcare allowance) is as such independent from the uptake of parental leave. The childcare allowance cannot be claimed simultaneously by both parents. Entitlement is for 24 to 48 months and replaces up to 70 per cent of the last income (with an upper limit of CZK 11,500 per month, or 424 Euro). The maximum total volume of childcare allowance is CZK 220,000 (8,122 Euro). Until now, fathers have only rarely taken advantage of childcare allowance. Less than two per cent of persons receiving childcare allowance are fathers (Kokourcová 2017).

Fathers can, in theory, take over maternity leave entitlement from mothers from the seventh week after birth. In actual fact, however, this hardly happens. Maternity leave is 28 weeks in total, of which 20 to 22 weeks are earmarked for the period after birth (ibid.).

After the change of government in 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs set up an expert commission which in 2016 made proposals for improving the reconciliation of family and work life. The proposals include a one-week paternity leave as well as a three-month partnership bonus on parental leave if fathers choose to take parental leave. In addition, the childcare allowance scheme is to be made more flexible. Parents will be able to take shorter periods at higher compensation amounts, thus using their total budget more flexibly. The bill regulating paternity leave was passed by Parliament in early 2017 and is expected to come into force in 2018. The Parliament also adopted a flexibilisation in take-up. From 2018 it will be possible to take childcare allowance for less than 24 months, the shortest possible period being six months. The income replacement rate is 70 per cent with a ceiling of CZK 32,640 (1,241 Euro) per month (Kocourková/Štastná 2017).

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