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Family policies. Concepts, goals and instruments

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Abstract

Family policies are a comparatively late addition to social policies and they have been developed mainly within Europe. Public, state intervention into family matters, through different kind of legal norms concerning marriage, filiation, inheritance, schooling obligations, working age and so forth - however, has a much longer and broader history. The goals, as well as the instruments, of family policy change over time and across countries. Focusing on social family policies only, in this paper the concept of (social) family policies itself and the main dimensions of such policies will be analysed, with particular regard for the distinction between goals and outcomes, between different kinds of instruments and their possible interplay and to whether it is possible to identify specific family policy patterns that distinguish clear country clusters. Following this, the main instruments of family policies are presented and discussed from a comparative perspective, in particular with regard to policies addressing the presence of children and those addressing the presence of frail old family members. The focus is in on the EU, with occasional reference to the US and also to developing countries.

Key words: family, gender, public policies, familialism/defamilization, intergenerational obligations

Introduction

With some important exception (e.g. France, whose pro-natalist policies date back to the beginning of the Twentieth century), family policies as a specific set of policies explicitly aimed at supporting socially desirable behaviours – i.e. with regard to fertility, or the gender division of labour and power within households, or, more recently, mothers' labour force participation – are relatively recent. Yet, families, their resources, options and constrains, the gender and intergenerational specific obligations within them, have been shaped to a large degree by public policies well before the concept of family policies has been introduced in policy making and also in countries where such a policy space has not been explicitly identified as such. Governments' intervention in family matters, regulating what constitutes a family and what obligations family members have to each other, dates back to the formation of nation states, when these started to compete with kin, churches, local communities and traditions for the power to regulate this sphere of life and relationships. Access to marriage, the conditions of its dissolution, the distinction between what is a family and what are acknowledged family relationships, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate (later "natural") filiation, gender and intergenerational obligations, whether and how contraception and abortion are allowed, intra-family violence condoned or on the contrary persecuted - all these became matters of regulated by law. In addition, norms concerning school age, age at labour market entrance, children's and women's labour have been powerful tools through which states have regulated the family and its internal gender and intergenerational obligations and relationships (Saraceno 1997). The focus of this chapter on social family policies should not be mistaken as a way of reducing policies concerning families only to tis level of intervention.

Public policy goals have changed and change over time and across countries (Gauthier 1996; Saraceno et al. forthcoming), and so have the instruments. Kaufman (2002) and Bahle (2008) identify a variety of possible motives for family policy. Concern for ("too low" or "too high") fertility and demographic reproduction is among the main reasons for states' intervention, although they have motivated quite different policies over time and across countries: e.g. from supporting stay at home mothers to supporting working mothers, from vetoing contraception and abortion to legalizing it (and even enforcing it in countries, such as China and India, where "too high fertility" has been the concern in the past). Also poverty among families with children has been an important concern for public policies. And it is becoming the main concern of both anti-poverty and family policies in many developing

countries. In the developed countries, supporting mothers to work and work-family conciliation issues have been added to the family policy agenda, more or less in combination with the traditional concerns for (low) fertility and child poverty. Support for the family as an institution is another possible concern, as it is gender equality. A radical change in goal witnessed in many OECD countries concerns the role of women and more generally of gender relations. While at the origins of the welfare state social policies as well as legal norms directly or indirectly supported the male breadwinner/family carer model, in recent years family policies have been argued as a means to support the dual earner and in some case also the dual earner/dual carer model, supporting both mothers' participation into the labour market and, although to a lesser degree, fathers' participation in child care.

In the following sections, first the concept of (social) family policies itself and the main dimensions of such policies will be analyzed, with particular regard to the distinction between goals and outcomes, between different kinds of instruments and their possible interplay and to whether it is possible to identify specific family policy patterns that distinguish clear country clusters. Then the main instruments of family policies, as conceptualized above, will be presented and discussed from a comparative perspective, also with regard to the explicit or implicit gender and intergenerational arrangements and obligations they support, or assume as given. The concluding section will synthesize the main issues discussed in the chapter.

2. Concepts and dimensions

While there is general a consensus on the possibility to identify a specific social formation defined the "welfare state", notwithstanding its many cross country and cross-time variations, the debate is open whether a specific subset of policies may be identified as constituting "family policies" or "policies for families", and if these are all the relevant policies affecting families. A case in point are housing policies, rarely considered as part of family policies both in policy research and in policy debates, although housing is such a crucial good for families. Furthermore, although a number of countries, particularly, but not exclusively, in Europe have policies addressing similar issues – the cost and care needs of children, for instance – not all of them identify these as family policies, or not consistently over time.

Kamerman and Kahn (1978; see also Kamerman 2010), propose to distinguish between explicit and implicit family policies. Explicit family policies are deliberately designed to achieve specific objectives with regard to individuals within families and/or the whole family.

Implicit family policies include actions taken in various policy domains for non-family-related goals, but which nevertheless have important consequences for children and families. Kaufman (2002) uses this distinction to identify not so much policies as between countries that have an explicit family policy, i.e. those that explicitly formulate policies aimed at influencing how families are organized and behave, and countries that have no such explicit goal in mind when formulating their policies. In his view, France and Belgium are typically explicit family policy countries, while English-speaking countries are typically implicit ones. Boundaries between these two groups are not clear cut however, and many countries lie rather in between . Furthermore, some country may shift from one group to the other not so much changing its policies as in redefining the already existing ones. It has occurred, for instance, when maternity and parental leave have been discursively moved from being labour market policies to being family policies (and back).

A second conceptual debate concerns the target itself of family policies: the family/ families. The issues at stake here are at least two. One is whether policies address the family as a unit or the needs of individual family members and only indirectly the family as such. Are, for example, childcare policies intended for mothers, for children or for the family as such? Another issue is whether only specific family arrangements are targeted, while others are excluded (e.g. only legal families based on marriage or also cohabiting heterosexual and homosexual partnerships, only families with children or also other families and so forth). While many authors seem to consider only families with children as the proper target of family policies, others point out that they are also, to a large degree, gender policies, addressing in particular women's family roles, and most recently also men's (fathers' ones). Still others underline that also policies addressing the frail elderly may be defined as family policies, in so far they address and partly shape intergenerational obligations within families (e.g. Saraceno and Keck 2010).

These three conceptual debates - implicit/explicit, family vs families and family vs individuals are not only conceptual, but also value debates. At the same time, they are located on shifting ground, since the terms of the questions and the perceptions vary over time and depending on the actors' perspective. In this chapter, instead of taking a straightforward and univocal stance on these issues, the choice is made to use an operational definition of family policies. Included are all those public policies that are explicitly designed to affect the situation of families or individuals in their, gender and intergenerational, family roles and thus have clear, though possibly unintended, consequences for such families and individuals: direct and indirect income transfers designed to support the cost of children and/or of a dependent

spouse, services and cash transfers aimed at dealing with the caring needs of young children or other not fully self sufficient family members. Financial and caring responsibilities within families, between generations and between partners are, in fact, the main areas of family policy intervention, even if in different ways across time and space.

In analysing policies, sector, goals and instruments must be kept analytically distinct. The caring needs of a small child (sector) may be, in fact, answered both by providing services and by supporting parents (usually the mother) to provide all necessary care, through various kinds of income transfers. Whether one or the other instrument is used, depends on the specific goals of the policy and on the implicit or explicit behavioural norms it wants to promote.

Typologies of family policies differ depending on the criteria used as a identifying base as well as on the number and type of countries considered. Anttonen and Sipilä (1996) have clustered (Western European) countries according to the degree to which the state (at the time of their analysis) assumed care responsibilities for the welfare of children and the frail elderly. They have identified four distinct groups focusing on indicators that capture de-familialisation: service coverage that is (a) generous to the elderly but not to children, as in The Netherlands, Norway and Great Britain; (b) generous to children but not to the frail elderly, as in France, Belgium and Italy; (c) generous to both children and the frail elderly, as in Denmark, Finland and Sweden; (d) generous to neither children nor the frail elderly, as in Portugal, Greece, Spain, Ireland and Germany. In a later work, however, the same authors, together with Baldock (2003), have concluded that it is not possible to construct a typology, since care policies are a mixed package and include services alongside different kinds of leaves of different length and with different levels of compensation. Bettio and Plantenga (2004) and Bettio et al. (2006) also develop a typology of what they define caring regimes, which includes the market and pays particular attention to migrant care labour.

Gender arrangements are at the basis of numerous typologies of family policies. The concept of gender regimes was first developed by Orloff (1993), who elaborated on Esping-Andersen's concept of decommodification by including a gendered notion of social citizenship, that is the degree to which policies support women to access to paid work and balance it with family life , rendering them financially independent from the relationship with a man. Lewis (1992) based her classification on the degree to which policies support or on the contrary weaken the male breadwinner model. Korpi (2000) categorized 'gender policy models' contrasting public care services and income transfers.

Work–family reconciliation issues are at the basis of specific typologies, more or less loosely linked to gender based ones. Gornick et al. (1996, see also Gornick and Meyers 2004) have classified countries according to their support employment for mothers of children under school age. Bahle (2008) constructs his typology (which includes 25 EU countries) on the basis of the degree of state support for the family–work relationship (in the form of maternity/parental benefits and childcare services) and family income (*via* family/child allowances). This results in five country clusters, ranging from the most generous and universal to the least. According to his interpretation, cross cluster differences in the way in which the needs of families with children are addressed may be the outcome of historical differences in the relationship between states and churches in particular.

The well being of children is at the basis of Bradshaw's (2006) typology, which includes fifteen European countries and focuses on the generosity of the provision of cash benefits, tax credits and services for children in different family situations.

Daly (2010) distinguishes family policy profiles on the basis of the strength of particular underlining motivations and the diversity of national philosophical orientations, which shape distinct family-market-state relationships. Focusing on a selected number of countries, she therefore distinguishes between a) countries , such as France and Belgium, with a pro-natalist and pro-family orientation, linking together fertility, family and national interest; b) countries, such as post war West Germany which on the contrary the state should interfere as little as possible in families and should support their autonomy mainly through income transfers; c) states, such as the Scandinavian ones, whose goal is egalitarianism between men and women, but also among children, and therefore underplay the role of the family as an economic and redistributive unit while assigning the state a the role to support individual autonomy; d) states such the UK, the US and Australia, where policies are intended not to support families as such, but to contrast poverty.

Kaufmann (2002) distinguishes four family policy profiles ('families of nations') within Western Europe on the basis of their overall generosity, that is of the level of financial (cash benefits) and infrastructural (services) support they offer to families, irrespective of the explicit or implicit goals. These profiles range from the most generous in terms of both benefits and services (the Nordic countries and France) to the least generous (Italy and the other Southern European countries).

Leitner (2007), Saraceno (2010, with Keck 2010) have proposed to categorize policies on the basis of whether they relieve family members from some of their financial and caring obligations or support them in performing them by giving them money and/or time. They

distinguish between a) familialism de facto, when or by "default", when supports are minimal or non existent; b) supported familialism, when policies, usually through financial transfers (including taxation and paid leaves)   support (specific) family members in keeping up their financial and care responsibilities; and c) de-familization , when policies reduce family responsibilities and dependencies, shifting them more or less partly to the public sphere. These different policy approaches have also a different impact on the gender division of labour in families. In particular, both familialism by default and supported familialism tend to crystallize the gender division of labour, while defamilization helps reduce it (Korpi 2000). Yet, supported familialism may be also intended as an instrument to acknowledge the desire to care and to change the gender division of labour, as in the case of specific quotas of parental leave allocated to fathers (e.g. Leira 2006). While single policies may be assigned to one or the other category in the familialisation-defamilization continuum, the overall package of a given country's family policies results from a combination of all three approaches, cross country variation deriving from the relative incidence of each in one or more areas. Based on the public/private divide and on the degree of institutionalization of policies, Hantrais distinguishes between four types of family policies. In particular, she distinguishes between "traditional" familialism, which in her view is typical of Mediterranean countries, and re-familialisation, which would be typical of the former communist countries.

This synthetic overview of attempts at developing typologies testifies not only to the different dimensions involved in family policies, but also to the different goals they may be perceived to (have to) address. Within the EU and OECD countries, however, in recent years there has been a growing convergence in explicit goals, also because of the active role played by these two national organizations, and particularly the EU, through its directives (e.g. the 96/34 parental leave directive), recommendations and jointly agreed targets (e.g. the target concerning women's labor force participation or that concerning childcare coverage for pre-school children). In particular, the joint goal of increasing women's labour force participation and supporting work-family conciliation has taken first place, in a more or less coherent conjunction with that of supporting fertility and investing in children. In this perspective, in all countries, the family has become a more explicit target of policies, whether or not they are called "family policies". Country specific policy packages remain however different.

3. Areas, and instruments of family policies

Areas and instruments differ depending on the specific goal. And usually each country presents both a mixture of goals and a mixture of instruments.

We may distinguish policies on the basis of their goal, their target and of whether they are in income (financial transfers) or in kind (time/services).

*3.1 Policies concerning the presence of and responsibility toward children*

A first group of policies addresses the presence and cost of children. Children cost both as consumers of goods and as consumers of time. The first type of cost is usually addressed through direct or indirect (tax allowances) financial transfers. The second kind of cost is addressed both through time allowances and financial transfers, as in the case of paid maternity and parental leaves, and through services. In the first case we might speak of supported familialism, in the second case of – more or less extended – de-familialization, in so far part of the caring time is provided outside the family.

In all EU countries, but not in all the OECD or the developing ones, we find all three instruments. But there is a wide cross-country variation in the generosity of direct and indirect income transfers aimed at relieving the cost of children as consumers of goods as well as in whether they are means-tested – as in Italy, Spain, Portugal and all the former communist Eastern European countries - or whether the amount differs with the rank and/or the age of the child or in particular household cases (e.g. lone parent, or disabled children). Given the complexity of these different rules and of their interaction with the taxation system, it is difficult to compare the overall generosity of child-related income countries. Some system, in fact, is more generous towards lone parent households, others towards poor households, other towards households with more than one child and so forth. Substantial variation exists also in the second set of measures. Statutory in all EU countries and targeted to working parents, both maternity and parental leaves differ in a) who among workers has access to them (exceptions may concern short term workers, the self employed as well as all irregular workers); b) in duration and c) whether they (particularly parental leaves) are paid and with what degree of substitution of lost wages. A further difference concerns whether there are specific incentives for fathers to take up a portion of the parental leave. These incentives are present in all Nordic countries except Denmark, in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal. They usually consist in a "take it or leave it" reserved quota, which however appears to be efficacious only if the level of compensation is substantial (e.g. Unicef 2008). Important cross

country differences exist also in the coverage rate offered by publicly financed services for children under school age and particularly for those under three.

Fig. 1 offers a graphic description of how these different instruments are combined within the EU, as well as the degree of caring responsibilities left to the family. Where leaves are comparatively short and services scarce, as in Italy and other Southern European countries, the proportion of caring time and responsibilities left to the family, de facto mostly to the mother, is high. But this happens also when leaves are long and well compensated, but after they expire (typically after a year), services are not available, as it happens in many Eastern European countries.

Figure 1: Effective parental leave time * and childcare coverage for children aged under three**
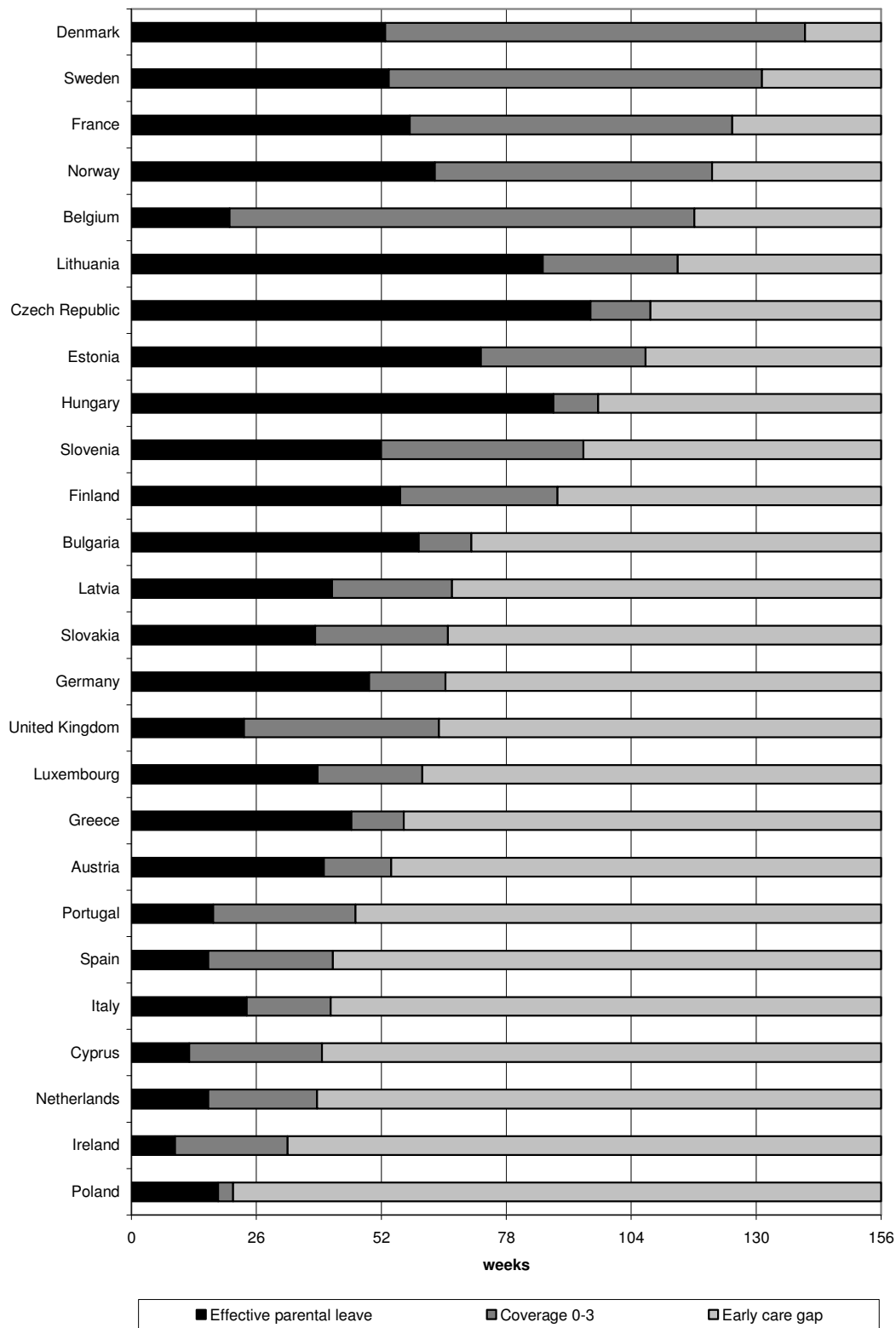
Source: Multilinks Database and Saraceno and Keck 2010.

Notes:
* Including the portion of leave reserved for mothers after childbirth, which in most but not all countries is often a separate kind of leave, usually defined as maternity leave.
** in weeks per child on the total population of children under three

In the Nordic countries in recent years family policies have increasingly supported allowing (both) parents to care for their infant children through generous parental leaves, while also providing a good coverage through services (Leira 2006). It is the specific combination of these two measures which is important, on two different grounds. First, from the perspective of non exclusively family care and education resources offered to children and therefore of equal opportunities among children. A growing literature has pointed out that early childcare and education is an important means of reducing social inequalities among children in cognitive development (Mahon 2006). Childcare and education services, therefore, have been increasingly conceptualized in terms of social investment in children. In this perspective, not only accessibility, but quality of care, best balance between family and non family care are the main focus of policies. This focus, however, may be in partial tension with that linked to another policy goal: that of increasing women's, and particularly mothers' labour force participation. Within the latter, in fact, if child care is defined only in terms of constraint on mothers' time, matters of quantity and cost may take precedence over those of quality and organizational and time adequacy to children's needs (see e.g.Mahon 2006), particularly where working time is long and where childcare services are perceived by policymakers as a way of taking two birds with one shot: providing cheap child care while creating low paid jobs in them for unskilled women. Also whether child care services are defined as being mainly health or education related makes a difference in terms of childcare services quality. However, while services for children over three are generally defined as educational services, in many countries services for the under three are defined either as social assistance, or health ones, or both (Moss 2010).

Whatever the specific national context, policies addressing the caring needs of children increasingly overlap with those addressing a second policy aim, that of supporting mothers' labour market participation, in so far they may be framed also (if not prevalently) as "work-family conciliation" policies. The policy goal to increase women's labour force participation through work family conciliating policies has multiple grounds. One is the concern for equal opportunities between men and women. Another is to increase the proportion of contributors to the social security system in ageing societies. Still another is that of reducing poverty among lone mother households and therefore also among children, reducing also their dependency on social assistance. Since the turn of the century, work-family conciliation policies are often argued from the perspective of supporting fertility in the OECD countries, where fertility rates have become positively related to women's labour force participation ones, although the link with policies is far from being clear and univocal (OECD 2011).

Fertility, in fact, is higher in the US than in Europe, notwithstanding the former have much less generous and institutionalized work-care policies (as well as child related income transfers) than all EU countries. And it is also higher in France than in Sweden, notwithstanding the higher women's labour force participation rates and stronger tradition of work-care policies in the latter.

Whether simple participation by women in the labour market may be equated with gender equality or even equal opportunities is debatable and debated. Furthermore, in order to be achieved, this goal would need changes in many areas, not only at the social policy level. From the point of view of family policies, however, promoting a family model where all adults are (also) in paid work represents a radical shift in the state's intervention in family and gender arrangements. For a long time, in fact, policies have, directly or indirectly, supported mothers to stay at home, either through supporting the male breadwinner household (e.g. through a favourable taxation such as the splitting system in Germany or the family quotient in France or generous tax allowances for a dependent spouse, as well as survivor pensions), or through acknowledging motherhood and mothers' caring responsibilities as an autonomous entitlement to benefits, particularly in the case of income support for the poor. Even where policies in favour of the male breadwinner were not particularly generous, as in the Southern European countries and the US, this normative model was the implicit legitimizing ground for not providing services and for considering working mothers as an exception to be treated as such. The innovation is so radical that someone (e.g. Daly 2011) has argued that family policy is becoming *de facto* mainly labour market policy and that policies have shifted from a "maternalist" (but also wifehood) focus to considering mothers (and wives) mainly as earners, with or without adequate service support (see also Orloff 2006). Countries, however, differ not only in the degree to which they actively support this model through policies, but also in the radicality with which they try to implement it, particularly in the case of couple's households. Thus, in countries such as the Netherlands or Germany social security protected part time (mainly for women) is actively supported as a way of balancing paid work and care, incentiving a one and a half earner and carer household model rather than a dual earner one (e.g. Lewis et al. 2008). It should be noted that the availability of part time work, its reversibility, its social security status, is both an important means of work-care conciliation and of cross country differentiation (Fagan and Walthery 2011).

Work-care conciliation policies are overall less generous and institutionalized in the non EU OECD countries, where maternity and parental leaves have been introduced later, are generally shorter and often unpaid. In the developing countries, the presence of a large

informal economy sector renders it difficult not only to finance, but to implement a generalized system of leaves, since many women do not have formal contracts nor pay contribution (Beneria 2008).

The shift from maternalism to considering mothers as breadwinners is particularly evident in the case of poor lone mothers asking for social assistance. Countries, such as for instance the UK, the Netherlands and the US, which either had particular programs for them or exempted them from the requirement to be available for work, out of a concern with "welfare dependency" have reduced or eliminated this special treatment, pushing these mothers to become breadwinners in addition to being carers, while incentiving them through some kind of earning tax credit.

Encouraging mothers to work while subsidizing low income earners, rather than simply providing income transfers, has become the most preferred policy choice in the case of poor lone mothers and generally of poor households since the turn of the century, through the "activation rhetoric". This approach configures an indirect family policy for the poor, through a mixture of incentives and deterrents (for an overview see OECD 2011). Its extreme form is represented by the 1996 TANF reform in the US, where it is also explicitly coupled with attempts at "normalizing" the moral behaviour of poor (and often black or Latino) lone mothers discouraging them from having further children and promoting marriage (see Smith 2006). But a similar approach with regard to "making work pay", or "welfare to work", stressing the breadwinning responsibilities of poor lone mothers may be found in the new Labour "new deal for lone mothers" approach in the UK and even more in the working tax credit, in the former French *prime pour l'emploi*, now substituted by the Revenue Social d'Assistance (RSA), and in the 2003 German Harz reform of social assistance.

Family policies are being developed as explicit anti-poverty policies in various developing countries, with a specific focus on children (Fiszbein and Schady 2009). In such diverse countries as Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, South Africa and still others, minimum income transfers have been introduced for families with children below the poverty line, with the requirement that they attend school and have medical check up regularly. Mothers, rather than fathers, are the recipients of the benefit as well as the parent held responsible for implementing the required behaviour. This choice has caused a debate on whether it represents an empowerment of women or rather a further crystallization of their role as mothers (e.g. Molineux 2006). Another policy that is proving successful in developing countries in supporting poor households with children is the introduction of an old age pension, in so far usually the old are embedded in extended, three generational households

and their access to a secure income becomes an asset for all household members and particularly children..

In the rich countries as well, old age pensions may be perceived as indirect family policies, although in a partially opposite direction: granting the old an income of their own, they relive adult children from the obligation to support their old parents. Actually, survey data have found that also in developed countries the old transfer to the younger generation more often than being the beneficiaries of income transfers (e.g. Ogg and Renaut 2005).

*3.2 Policies addressing the presence and needs of the frail ol*d

Policies addressing the needs of the frail elderly may be defined also as family policies, although they are usually not framed explicitly as such by policymakers and even only rarely conceptualised as such in family policies research. Yet, similarly to what happens for children, the ways and extent to which the caring needs of the frail old are addressed by public policies are largely based on implicit or explicit assumptions concerning individual entitlements and family responsibilities (e.g. Saraceno 2010).

Three important dimensions of welfare state arrangements are relevant from this perspective. The first is whether support (not related to healthcare) is income-tested or universal. The second is the threshold of dependency above which one is entitled to receive support. The third is how much of the individual need is covered. These dimensions define who is entitled and under which conditions, and what is left to his/her own and family resources. Two other important dimensions of program design must be added: whether support is offered in kind or in money or via a combination of the two; and, when monetary support is provided, whether there are specific rules as to how it should be spent. These two further dimensions allow distinguishing between de-familialisation via publicly provided services, de-familialisation via market services supported by public money, and supported familialism. Fig. 2, based on different, unfortunately not always updated sources offers a very general idea of diversities in the degree as well as the composition of public efforts in the availability of publicly supported care services.

Fig. 2 Coverage through care services for the frail old (residential, home-based)
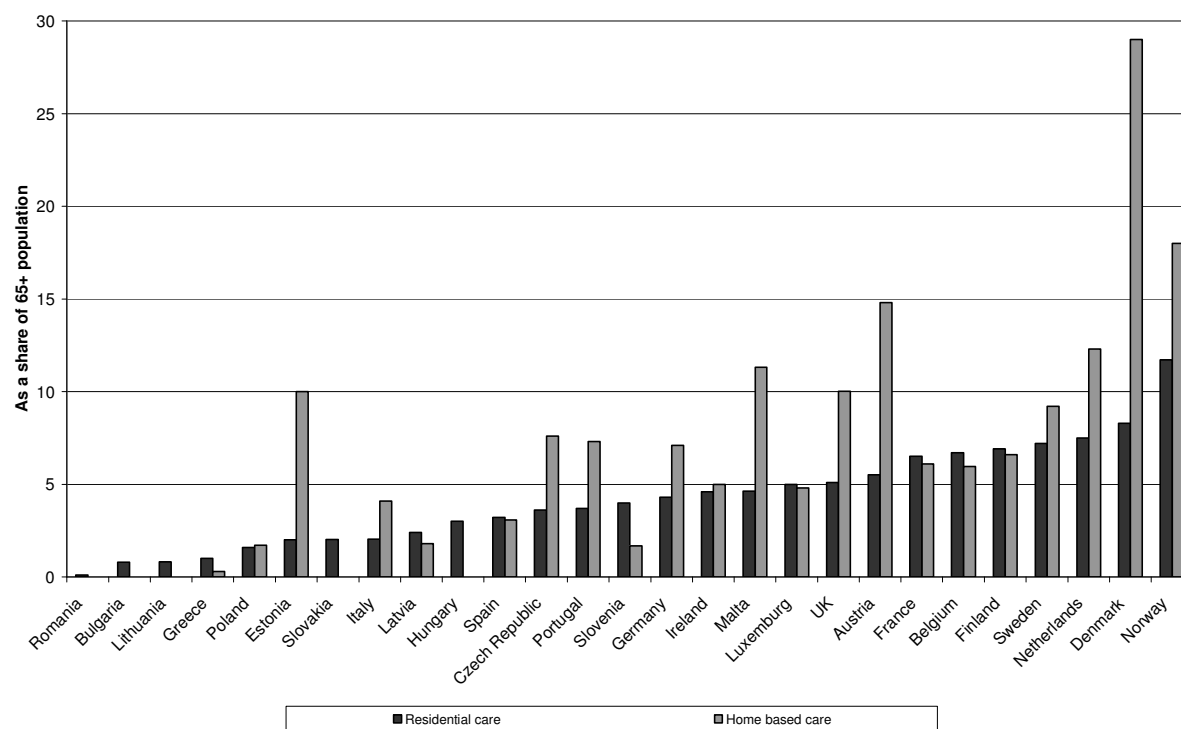
Source: Multilinks Database; Saraceno and Keck 2010.

Only the Nordic countries and The Netherlands have comparatively high levels of both residential and home care, with Denmark and Norway being clear outliers in the degree of de-familialisation, followed at a great distance by The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Belgium and France. At the opposite, in most of the Central and Eastern European EU member states, but also in Greece, Italy and Spain, coverage is minimal and therefore the degree of familialism by default, with or without recourse to the market, is high. The market solution is substantial in the US.

Cash-for-care allowances exist in several countries, although under different conditions. In some cases, they are meant to substitute services, in others to pay for services of one's own choice; or, as in the case of Germany, an option may be given between receiving cash or services. Allowances may be more or less generous, flat rate or varying with the degree of dependence. In most countries, they are paid to the care dependent person, but in some (e.g., the United Kingdom) they are paid directly to the family carer (see, e.gPavolini and Ranci 2008). While cash for care allowances are quite widespread, the traditional instrument of supported familialism in the case of childcare – leave for the carers – is also provided in most European countries for caring for a dependent person, but it is far less generous in terms of length and compensation. There is a great heterogeneity with regard to who is entitled, what

kind and duration of leave is available and whether it is paid. Generally, however, while short leaves of a few days are compensated, long ones tend not to be compensated. Finally, some country, but in a smaller number than in the case of children, acknowledges spent in caring for a frail old relative through "fictious contributions" towards the old age pension. Overall, however, spending time to care for a frail old relative, although often expected by the policy design, is acknowledged as a less deserving behaviour than caring for a small child.

4. Conclusion

Goals and instruments of family policies differ over time and across countries. Also the degree to which countries actively try to influence family-linked individual behaviour and family arrangements varies. But what happens in families and what families are, or should be, for is not a marginal interest from a state's perspective. Actually, a large deal of policies addressing families are outside the realm of social policies and welfare state arrangements. They concern civil law and the way it regulates what is a family, what relationships create family ties and obligations and what these obligations are. The status of children born out of wedlock, whether or not it is possible to divorce, the status acknowledged to cohabitant heterosexual and homosexual unmarried partners, whether homosexual couples may marry, the rules governing inheritance, adoption and those governing contraception, abortion, reproductive technologies and so forth – all these are policies and politics of the family at least as much as social policies targeted to families which have been the specific focus of this chapter.

With regard to the social policies addressing families, within a continuing concern with fertility on the one hand, poverty, particularly children's poverty on the other hand, over time within the EU and OECD countries the ideal family model supported and expected by policies seems to have shifted from the male breadwinner/female carer one, to the dual or one and a half breadwinner/carer one. There has been, therefore, an increase in so called work-family reconciliation policies, also with some timid effort at rebalancing the gender division of unpaid care in the case of small children, through a mixture of income transfers and services, which varies greatly across countries. Marriage instability and population and kin aging, however, show the limits of policies that focus mainly on couple families and on the first phases of family formation.

Care for the elderly remains still largely unfocused within public family policies, notwithstanding kinship aging, increasing women's labour force participation and raising of

the pension age suggest an emerging risk of family overburden and caring deficit for the frail old.

In the developing countries, with their much younger population and high poverty rates, child poverty is the main driver of family policies, which show distinct, and to some degree original characteristics, compared both to the European and to the US ones..

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