



ASSESSING FAMILY POLICIES AROUND THE WORLD: A FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

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Family Policies in Eastern Europe: Ensuring Work-Family Balance



- *Maternity, paternity and parental leave* to care for a biological or adopted child are important parts of family policy
 - It is recommended that family policy promote *universal* family assistance practices, directed at every family with no exclusions
 - States should recognize and promote the family and, therefore, support all families and not be exclusively welfare based, aimed only at disadvantaged families. Income-tested benefits have been replacing the universal benefits in some countries, where the higher income families are excluded from receiving the leave benefits (Rostgaard, 2004)
- Paternity leave has started to be introduced in the region, although it is shorter than the two-weeks recommended length
 - In Bulgaria paternity leave is 15 days, in Latvia 10 days, in Romania 5 days (plus 10 more days if the father takes a child care course), in Poland and Hungary 5 days, Moldova 3 days (European Alliance for Families, 2010)
- Slovenia: Parenthood Protection and Family Benefits Act (2006) - one of the most generous
 - 105 days for maternity leave (full salary)
 - 260 days of parental leave (or 530 if half-time leave) (full salary)
 - 90 days of paternity leave (15 days full salary; then social security)



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- Child benefits in Eastern Europe
 - 47 Euros (€) per month in Hungary
 - 26€in Slovenia, 25€in Lithuania, 24€in Romania
 - 19€in Estonia, 18€in Czech Republic, 15€in Poland to 11€in Bulgaria and 10€in Slovakia (IPF, 2008)
- While sometimes the benefits for the subsequent children remain constant (such as in Slovakia), in most countries the benefits for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th child increase
- Average of family financial benefits provided by family policies
 - Slovenia - 278€per month
 - Hungary 222€
 - Czech Rep. 172€
 - Slovakia -131€
 - Estonia -125€
 - Latvia -74€, Lithuania -72€
 - Poland – 54€
 - Romania -50€
 - Bulgaria -30 €

Family Policy in the World (IPF, 2008)



| Benefits per child (e) (2005) | 1st | 2 nd | 3rd | 4th | Income Limit |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------|
| Luxemburg | 210 | 255 | 302 | 392 | Universal |
| Germany | 154 | 154 | 154 | 178 | Universal |
| Sweden | 110 | 127 | 155 | 211 | Universal |
| France | 0 | 139 | 217 | 238 | Universal >1 st child |
| United Kingdom | 112 | 75 | 75 | 75 | Universal |
| Hungary | 47 | 55 | 75 | 59 | Universal |
| Lithuania | 25 | 25 | 31 | 20 | Universal |
| Romania | 24 | 25 | 27 | 28 | Universal |
| Estonia | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | Universal |
| Slovakia | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | Universal |
| Latvia | 11 | 14 | 18 | 21 | Universal |
| Slovenia | 26 | 31 | 36 | 36 | 14,300e/year |
| Czech Republic | 18 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 11,400e/year |
| Poland | 15 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 4,752e/year |
| Bulgaria | 11 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 3,672e/year |



Family Policies in Eastern Europe: Ensuring Work-Family Balance



- In Eastern Europe, extended family members, especially grandmothers and grandfathers, are very involved in the *childrearing* of their grandchildren.
- When available, families prefer to involve the grandparents in childrearing due to trust, convenience, and financial reasons, but also to strengthen family ties and to increase the child's attachment to his/her grandparents
- It is strongly recommended that financial allowances be provided to support the care provided by grandparents, increasing thus the opportunity for social protection and intergenerational solidarity
 - Hungary - child home care allowance for parents and grandparents caring for children under two
 - Bulgaria parental leave can also be taken by one of the grandparents until the child is two (European Alliance for Families, 2010)
- Since 2000 Hungary has a family-friendly workplace award to give recognition to companies that support a family-work balanced life (about 11,250 EUR) paid by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Labor (European Alliance for Families, 2010).

Policy Recommendations



- Eastern European countries need to develop explicit family policy frameworks
- Decision makers should develop evidence-based family policies
- Given that in Eastern Europe policymaking and implementation occurs within a context of limited resources, it is important to understand what works, at what costs and with what results
- Stimulating economic growth in the region is necessary so that people can find employment
- It is recommended to increase awareness of the impact of social policies on all family members and to prioritize policy measures and reach all age groups, including children
- While provisions of direct income support to families with children are common throughout the region, the level of expenditure is low and should be increased
- Provision of more generous and better targeted child benefits and an increase in the material support provided to families with children, and investment in children's human capital are recommended
- In order to prevent child abandonment, States need to encourage families to keep the child by providing financial assistance to families at risk and education and social support through social services.
- Governments need to develop programs to assist young couples with having independent housing
- Policies and support programs targeting immigrant families need to be developed, with specific modules for the migrants themselves, as well as for the family members left



Policy Recommendations



- Maternal benefits are paid in the countries in the region but most of them are linked to formal employment and not received by unemployed mothers, and as such, the benefits should be universal
- Paternity leave and family friendly work policies (e.g., flexible hours) should be introduced in every country
- Financial allowances should be provided to support the care provided by grandparents, increasing thus the opportunity for social protection and intergenerational solidarity
- Family policies monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to identify the most effective use of available resources and identify the practices that are not performing
- Results-based approaches should be used to examine not only the governments' capacity to implement policies but also the effectiveness of these policies and whether they produced the intended results
- Governments need to be open in disseminating the evaluation results to promote credibility and transparency
- It is recommended to follow up after the evaluation and examine how the evaluation findings and recommendations are used by policymakers and how they influence decisions and actions