

USING PROACTIVE MEASURES TO PROMOTE
EQUALITY IN DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDCARE
RESPONSIBILITIES

THE HUNGARIAN AND SPANISH EXAMPLES

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The purpose of the comparative
approach

- Facilitate critical assessment of the ability of
different measures to contribute to the redistribution
of childcare responsibilities between sexes
 - identify the extent to which different models use
different proactive measures to achieve this goal
 - asses their capacity to achieve this goal

Why Hungary and Spain?

- How different social backgrounds effect models of
procreative measures?
 - different historical, cultural, political and legal
backgrounds – different limitation faced by the models
- Important connection: dominant social position of the
traditional family model

Focus on the distribution of childcare responsibilities

- Disproportional distribution of childcare responsibilities one of the central sources of labor market inequality between sexes.
- The effectiveness of different models of proactive measures significantly depends on their ability to:
 - 1) Redistribute the traditional distribution of childcare responsibilities between the sexes;
 - 2) Properly reward the childcare efforts as socially beneficial work.

The Hungarian model: responsibility

- Legal position of the proactive measures:
 - In principle not legally mandated – strong commitment to formal equality.
 - Contingent on the initiative of private actors.
 - Exceptions:
 - Duty to inform employees of flexible working time opportunities.
 - Public employers required to develop Equal Opportunities Plans.
 - Questionable effectiveness.

The Hungarian model: the cornerstone

- The “family friendly workplace” or ‘women friendly workplace’ competitions.
 - The evaluation criteria:
 - training, offering choices between work-time patterns, part-time employment or other forms of flexibility, adjusting vacation leaves to childcare responsibilities, etc.
 - education and training opportunities adjusted to different stages of person's life or opportunities for tele-work and project development/implementation during pregnancy and childcare leaves.
 - Implied effect: competition seems to favor those measures that can accommodate women's role as primary care-providers (and not substantially undermine it).

The Hungarian model: the cornerstone

- Employers' response:
 - Most frequent measures: wide range of medical and social benefits for women; so called "young mammy" training programs; work-time flexibility; adjusted leaves.
 - Correspond to women's needs as primary care-givers.
 - Small number of employers offer measures such as the childcare services or fully paid paternity leaves.
 - Absence of effective monitoring system.

The Hungarian model: the childcare leaves system

- Merely 5 days of paternity leave.
- The parental leave:
 - rather long;
 - reasonably flexible;
 - sensibly supported;
 - parents allowed to work during the parental leave and still receive the allowance.
- Questionable effectiveness due to:
 - the issue of affordable childcare services ;
 - existing pay-gap between sexes
- Consequently, the system tends to perpetuate the existing gendered distribution of childcare responsibilities

The Spanish model: responsibilities

- In principle, proactive measures are legally mandated.
 - Obligation to develop proactive measures preventing sexual or gender harassment.
 - Equality Plans for employers with 250+ employees.
- Attractive incentives for private initiative.
 - The so called equality labels.
- Established systems of monitoring the implementation.

The Spanish model: the cornerstone

- Equality Plans:
 - Purpose: identify and proactively address the disadvantage
 - Obligations:
 - Assessment based on data from several important areas
 - Develop concrete and appropriate measures
 - Negotiate with social partners
 - Establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation

Equality Plans

- Employers' response - significant variety:
 - Measures aiming to prevent inequality: the bias language screenings; gender diversity of selection committees; screening of promotion criteria to prevent direct and indirect discrimination; restructuring of the job classification system and the salary formation system (especially the role of bonuses).
 - Measures aiming to achieve equality: affirmative action in recruitment or promotion training programs.
- Limited effectiveness of Equality plans in facilitating redistribution of childcare responsibilities:
 - Measures aiming to accommodate women's role of primary care-providers: awareness measures that aim to reveal stereotypes and promote joint parenthood responsibility; flexibility of working hours (starting or finishing hours, part-time options, reduced hours options); adjusted leave options.
 - Measures aiming to counteract negative implication of women's role of primary care-providers: professional training to parents is during working hours, promotion criteria are screened for their effects on those with family duty; shorter working days due to family obligations are counted as full days; performance bonuses for those on childcare leave are calculated proportionally.
- Tension with the existing Equality Plans
 - Measures aiming to achieve equality lack a proper support from the measures aiming to counteract negative implication of women's role of primary care-providers

The Spanish childcare leaves system

- Implies a will to move away from the traditional family model
- 16 weeks of childbirth/adoption leave
 - 6 mandatory weeks + 10 "transferable" weeks
 - Decision regarding 10 weeks rests with a mother
- 4 additional weeks of parental leave
 - Offered to fathers or to the "agreed" parent
 - Available after or simultaneously with the childbirth leave.
- Both leaves fully compensated.
- Encourages parents to share childcare responsibilities.

Concluding remarks

- Both models contain similar limitations:
 - Do not insist on measures challenging traditional distribution of childcare responsibilities within a family.
 - Frequently rely on measures that perpetuate women's gender role of primary caretakers.
- Why Spanish model seems to be more effective:
 - unrestrained by the formal notion of equality
 - legally mandated – clear distribution of responsibility
 - involvement of social partners
 - monitoring system
 - willingness to allow greater freedom in family relations
