Back to the Hearth?

Family Policy and Gender in Postsocialist Poland and the Czech Republic (1990-2004)

By

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List of acronyms

AWS	Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność, Election Action Solidarity (Poland)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CZ	Czech Republic
CSSD	Česká strana sociálně demokratická, Social Democratic Party (Czech Republic)
CSSR	Czechoslovakia
CZK	Czech crown
ECCE	early childhood care and education services
EC	European Council
ECSR	European Committee of Social Rights
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labor Organization
KDU-CSL	Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová, Christian Democratic Union – Czech People' s Party (Czech Republic)
KLD	Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny, Liberal Democratic Congress (Poland)
LPR	Liga Polskich Rodzin, League of Polish Families
KSČM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, Communist Party (Czech Republic)
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (Czech Republic)
MONEE	Monitoring Eastern Europe Project ("Public Policies and Social Conditions: Monitoring the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States") at UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, Florence
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Občanská demokratická aliance, Civic Democratic Alliance (Czech Republic)

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ODS	Občanská demokratická strana, Civic Democratic Party (Czech Republic)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OKP	Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny, Citizen's Parliamentarian Caucus (Poland)
PC	Partia Centrum, Centre Party (Poland)
PChD	Partia Chrześcijańskich Demokratów, , Christian Democrats Party (Poland)
PiS	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Party Law and Justice (Poland)
PL	Porozumienie Ludowe, Peasants Agreement (Poland)
PLN	Złoty, Polish currency
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, Polish People's Party/ Peasant´s Party (Poland)
SD	Stronnictwo Demokratyczne, Demcratic Party (Poland)
SLD	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, Alliance of the Democratic Left (Poland)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UP	Unia Pracy, Labor Union (Poland)
USD	US Dollar
US-DEU	Unie Svobody–Demokratická unie, Freedom Union–Democratic Union (Czech Republic)
UW	Unia Wolności, Freedom Union (Poland)
ZChN	Zjednoczenie Chrzescijansko-Narodowe, Christian National Union (Poland)
ZSL	Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe, United Peasants' Party (Poland)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I. Family Policy, Gender and the State in Postsocialist Europe

During the past two decades, family policies have undergone dramatic changes in both Western and Eastern Europe.[1] By reforming state instruments for family support, European countries have responded to labor market developments (such as increases in women's labor force participation, but also losses of employment opportunities and mass unemployment), social changes (such as an increasing variation of family forms), changing norms and values (e.g. an increasing tension between women's greater professional and personal aspirations and traditional gender role assignments), and demographic trends (such as declining birth rates). These developments have been embedded within broader shifts that have taken place within welfare states and mounting critiques of social policy arrangements that have emerged in the wake of global economic and political change (Pierson 2001). In this context, family policy has come to be looked at as a measure of state income support, as well as an instrument to influence population

[1] I consider family policy as a combination of policies, programs and laws targeted at families. My main focus is on state support for families with children, in particular measures addressed at families with children from birth until primary school age (normally 5 or 6 years). Further details on the types of benefits included in my analysis are provided in Chapter 2.

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growth and the supply of labor, particularly in relation to women. In all aspects, family policy is closely intertwined with gender policy.[2]

While family policy reforms have happened throughout Western and Eastern Europe during the 1990s, I consider the experience of postsocialist countries to be especially instructive for understanding contemporary family policy reform dynamics and trends, and their gendered implications. How did countries adjust their benefits and services for families while transforming their entire economic and political systems after 1990? Did state policies toward the family respond to the repercussions of the economic transition on families' living standards? How did postsocialist state policy toward the family reflect new assumptions about the roles of women and men, families, the state, and the market that came with the transition to market economies?[3]

Four factors have played key roles pushing for post-1989/90 Eastern European family policy reforms: reforms were regarded as necessary consequences of the changing "postsocialist" political and socio-economic framework after 1990, which resulted in rising poverty rates and increasing unemployment. Population politics also played a role,

---

[2] I understand gender policy to be state interventions that directly or indirectly influence gender relations and the social and individual category of gender in societies (see also Marx Ferree 1993: 4). Understood so broadly, gender policy can hardly be analyzed in isolation; instead, its effects come about in connection with other state policies. In my case, I will look at the connection between family policy and gender policy, understanding family policy measures as directly influencing gender relations in and through the family.

[3] I understand families as households in which members of at least two generations live together, sharing income, mutual responsibility, and emotional ties. I consider the key characteristic of a family the existence of economic and emotional dependence and co-responsibility for children. Kinship or biological parenthood are not necessary preconditions for a household to be considered a family.

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as birthrates were rapidly declining and concerns about ageing societies dominated social policy agendas. International, particularly European, trends in family policy and gender equality policy shaped some of the reform processes in postsocialist countries. And shifting family policy discourses reflected the fact that norms, values, and cultural practices around gender roles and the family turned away from the previous state-proclaimed emphasis on the equality of women and men.

As demonstrated here, using case studies of substantial family policy reforms undertaken in Poland and the Czech Republic between 1989/1990 and 2004[4](Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009b), postsocialist Central European welfare states shifted the main responsibility for family well-being away from the state and onto families. They reduced state assistance to families and increased the burden on families - de facto, on women. In both cases, familialization implied continued gender inequality and a reinforced gender role division. Poland moved toward a liberal-individualist family policy model, whereas the Czech Republic moved toward a conservative-statist family policy. This dissertation documents and analyzes this trend, while explaining the variation in both countries' trajectories.

I call this process *familialization,* following the lines of feminist welfare state research (Leitner 2003, Szikra and Szelewa 2009, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006).

---

[4] I.e. between the fall of the iron curtain and both countries' accession to the European Union in 2004. The period before 1993 discussed here refers to Czechoslovakia, which then split into two independent states, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Together with six other countries, Poland and the Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004. The others were Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.

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However, both countries differ in the nature and degree of "familialization" achieved by 2004, a difference which mainly concerns the extent of state engagement with the family. Poland's *liberal-individualist familialism* offers very limited state support to families, instead leaving solutions to individual families and the market. In the case of Poland, the *absence of state support* leads to a reinforced stereotypical gender role division in the family. In turn, Czech *conservative-statist familialism* offers significant state support, but still assigns the main responsibility of social provisioning to the family, and notably to women in the family. In doing so, *the presence of the Czech state* also solidifies a traditional distribution of gender and care relations between women and men.

II. Main Arguments of the Dissertation

Family policy reforms were a reaction to external as well as internal conditions in both countries. Indeed, over the course of the 1990s, and thereafter, all postsocialist European countries enacted family policy reforms. Previously high levels of support for women's employment and motherhood via family benefits and services were reduced across the board (Paci 2002). While all postsocialist countries conducted family policy reforms, they varied significantly in both degree and scope. How can we explain the variation of reforms witnessed between postsocialist transition countries - and in particular, in Poland and the Czech Republic, the two cases under study here?

Poland and the Czech Republic are appropriate cases for comparison for a number of reasons. They both share a legacy of state socialist family policy which combined a

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high labor force participation of women with state-provided care services and cash benefits (Deacon 1992, Deacon 1983, Castle-Kanerova 1992, Millard 1992). Both underwent a process of rapid transformation to market economies and liberal democracies, leading to EU membership in 2004.

Both countries are widely considered "successful" reformers in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), because they managed to combine political stability and democratic governance with structural economic reforms and privatization. However, the economic and political transitions of both nations had a number of negative impacts as well, including rising unemployment and poverty, in particular poverty of families. Gender differences also increased in several aspects. For example, women were more affected by long-term unemployment and many were pushed out of the market because of their limited employment perspectives (Lohmann and Seibert 2003, Marksová-Tominová 2003).

Both Poland and the Czech Republic gained EU membership after a rapid adjustment process of barely a decade. Both were able to ensure formal compliance with the EU acquis communautaire and became part of the EU policy discourses and "soft" law coordination mechanisms in social policy, such as employment policy and gender equality.

While sharing similar policy legacies, economic reform trajectories in both countries differed significantly. Poland, early on, chose a rapid economic transformation strategy ("shock therapy"), prioritizing the quick and radical liberalization of markets

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over state intervention (Kornai, Haggard, and Kaufman 2001, Lavigne 1995, Sachs 1992). In the Czech Republic, the policy *discourse*, as well as many initial reform measures, were similarly liberal, but in the end a mix of neoliberal and social-democratic elements of reforms were effectively combined into a "social liberal strategy of reform" (Orenstein 2001:7).

Grounded in the two case studies of Poland and the Czech Republic, this dissertation advances four main arguments:

The politics of post-1990 family policy reforms were as much a struggle over ideas and norms, as they were the problem-solving interactions of political actors. This struggle is best reflected in family policy discourses. Differences in the family policy discourses of key political actors in both countries - in particular, the normative content of family policy discourses - are central for explaining variation in reform outcomes. The interaction between elected representatives, political parties, organized religious and civil society groups (namely women's organizations), and state bodies was conditioned by family policy discourses. Ideas and proposals about state-family relations, the shape and generosity of the postsocialist welfare state, and normative assumptions about the family played important roles in change in family policy. At the same time, neoliberal ideas about a reduced role of the state and increased individual responsibility also served as an impetus to transform the economy and the welfare state, and were reflected in proposals for increased targeting of family benefits.

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In both countries, a resurgence of family-oriented norms, values, and cultural practices could be observed. Once the Communist Party's rhetorical commitment to gender equality and the instrumentalization of family policy in the service of the planned economy were obsolete, "family values" and (mostly conservative) social norms came to bear more directly in the new democratic Poland and Czech Republic. Yet the reform discourses in both countries were different.

In Polish family policy debates, two main lines of family policy discourse clashed. A preference for Catholic family values was widespread across party lines. However, populist calls for welfare state generosity on the one side, and calls for welfare state austerity and individual responsibility on the other side, divided the postsocialist party spectrum. Despite the strength of Catholic family values in postsocialist Poland, general state family support was not expanded. Instead, the main attention was focused on restricting access to abortion and birth-related benefit schemes.

In the Czech Republic, family policy debates focused on social democratic calls for state engagement on the one hand, and neoliberal demands for a state withdrawal from public spending for social matters on the other hand. Here, the Christian Democratic Party took on a mediating role in the conflict, a position which was largely absent in the Polish debates. Drastic cuts in family benefits were therefore avoided and a moderate level of universality for family allowances was maintained.

In both countries, however, national family policy debates were dominated by calls for a family policy model which transitioned the main responsibility for family well-

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being onto the families themselves – hence my use of the term "*familialist"* throughout the study. In fact, in both contexts, familialism implies increased responsibilities for women and a reinforcement of traditional gender relations through family policy, because the promotion of gender equality within families was not a reform goal.

Policy traditions inherited from state socialism or coined even before state socialist times had a significant impact on post-1990 reform choices. Post-1990 family policy in both countries upheld many family policy traditions which had been instated both prior to and during state socialism. Continuities were strong, for example, regarding the organization of childcare services and eligibility criteria for cash family support: care services for children under three years of age, in the Czech Republic, for example, continued to be under the administration of the Ministry of Health (where they had been during state socialist times), whereas services for those older than three, classified as "educational," were under the Ministry of Education. Because of significantly less political attention to the "care" services for smaller children, their negative reputation, and increased pressure to cut spending for these more expensive services, the number of institutions and places available for small children declined significantly. Another example for institutional continuities is the tradition, in Poland, of providing family benefits specifically for those deemed to be in "greatest need." The state socialist tradition of income testing to determine entitlement to family benefits was

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maintained, allowing for more direct influence over the number of entitled families through changes of the cut-off income.

The specific character of family policy as a social policy field made it difficult to link the family policy positions of political actors with their positions on other economic and social policy matters, as well as their preferences regarding the promotion of gender equality. In fact, family support and gender equality promotion were treated as two different dimensions of consideration and interests by almost all of the involved actors.[5] Because of the specific constellation between family support and the promotion of gender equality, gendered assumptions about the family and family-state relations cut across political affiliations and party lines that explained the politics of welfare state reforms in other policy fields. Neither Right/Left divisions nor religious/secular divides therefore are able to directly explain family policy reform outcomes.

European social policy and gender equality standards mattered for family policy reforms in both countries, but less than the forceful dynamic of policy adjustment in countries that were preparing to enter the European Union would

[5] I thank D. Plotke who pointed me to Zolberg's conceptualization of coexisting dimensions of considerations and interests in one policy field (immigration policy in his case), which he imagines as "cross-cutting axes, each with positive and negative poles, providing for a continuum of alignments from 'for' to 'against'." (Zolberg 2006)

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suggest. Instead, this study shows that the domestic politics of family policy in both countries were more important than the process of adaptation to European policy norms. The relative weakness of binding European standards on family support and the limited attention to social policy commitments during the accession negotiations resonated with the marginal place of family policy on the national social policy reform agendas. "Family policy Europeanists" as one could call them (e.g. women's groups, social democratic women) were in clearly marginal positions within both countries.

III. The Conceptual Framework:

III.1. Liberal-Individualist versus Conservative-Statist Familialism

In different forms, familialization is the general outcome of family policy reforms in both countries. Since the term "familialization" is at the core of the conceptual framework used for comparing the two country cases, it deserves more detailed presentation. After discussing it, the broader analytical framework for analysing the main actors and processes by which familialization has emerged in these two case studies is presented. I suggest that both the discussion of "familialization" as a key term, and the framework via which it emerges, can potentially be useful for the study of family policy reforms in other postsocialist countries. It may, indeed, be useful for thinking about changes in Western European family policy reforms as well – but I leave any discussion of this contention for my conclusions.

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Through their family policy reforms, both Poland and the Czech Republic have diminished and transformed state benefits and services in significant ways – despite the fact that both countries differ significantly in the extent of state involvement in family support. Both countries have increased the responsibilities for care and social welfare assigned to the family unit – i.e. *familialization*.[6] As feminist welfare state research has emphasized, the trend of increasing the burden on the family comes with a de facto increase in the burden placed upon women and a solidification of traditional gender roles, particularly if the promotion of gender equality is not explicitly included among the goals of policy reforms (Leitner 2003, Szikra 2010)

While both countries share a trend toward familialization, their reforms after 1990 diverge in important ways. Both countries do not offer the same the level of family benefits, the degree of state commitment to family support is not the same, and the normative undertones in family policy debates are quite different. As a result of these family policy changes and outcomes, I refer to the Polish model of family policy as *liberal-individualist familialism*, whereas the Czech family policy model is referred to as *conservative-statist familialism*.[7]

---

[6] Some feminist welfare state research speaks of *familialism* (Leitner 2003, Szelewa 2006).

[7] My terms are similar to those used by Leitner, Szelewa, Saxonberg, or Szikra, for example. They refer to Poland's move to reinforce familialist traditions of family policy in combination with an added dimension of a postsocialist liberal welfare state as "implicitly familialist," while calling the Czech Republic's explicit support to the primary role of the family in child rearing, and to a traditional gender division of labor in caring, *explicitly familialist* (Szelewa 2006, Szelewa and Polakowski 2008, Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007, Leitner 2003) Feminist welfare state research adds a third type, "optional familialism," or "choice-oriented" familialism (Leitner 2003). It refers to a policy of state-support for women's efforts to reconcile employment with

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In Poland, fifteen years of reforms have considerably decreased the available state support for families, and reproductive/care work is largely considered a private matter - de facto to be solved by women within the family. During the 1990s, family benefits entitlements were restricted significantly. The purpose of family benefits shifted from facilitating the combination of work and family life of women, to providing relief from the social impact of transition (Fultz and Steinhilber 2004). A marked move to means-testing of family benefits took place; today in Poland, eligibility for nearly all family benefits is income-tested (Wóycicka 2003).[8] Only a birth grant is paid universally and has been increased over time. The number of affordable childcare services declined steeply. The number of places in childcare services is very low by Western European standards, for children of all ages, but particularly for children below three years of age.

The reductions in family support stand in clear contrast to a strongly pro-family discourse in the country. Governments of different political *couleur* have strongly emphasized the importance of the family as a pillar of society and of the mother's role in the family – all while most families fail to receive direct support from the state. Thus, families face a serious risk of poverty, even those families who are in greatest need and are entitled to cash family benefits (Förster and Toth 2001).

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family responsibilities, for example through accessible childcare services. Hungary is referred to as an example of choice-oriented family policy (Szelewa and Polakowski 2008).

[8] In other words, only those families with an income below a certain amount are entitled to benefits. Only maternity benefits and the child care benefit, a short-term payment for those who leave work to temporarily care for a sick child remain wage-related.

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Moreover, Polish family policy debates have not acknowledged the positive link between family support and gender relations. Instead, gender equality has been constructed as serving to undermine the functions of the family.

At the time of its accession to the EU, family benefits in the Czech Republic were more widely available than in Poland, as family support combined targeted and universal elements in a multi-layered structure (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003). In comparison with Poland, the shift toward income testing of family benefits was less pronounced. Income testing was applied to some but not all benefits in a manner that was not as highly restrictive. And parental leave was extended, becoming one of the longest in Europe (3-4 years). As the availability of childcare services declined during the same period, the main responsibility for care has been shifted to the family, effectively the mother.[9]

The Czech system of family support includes a (relatively low) general family allowance, based on an income-test, as well as a birth grant and a four year parental allowance which are both paid without regard to a family's income. Three years of parental leave with employment protection is widely utilized by mothers.[10] Many remain outside the labor market for up to four years on parental benefits. Maternity leave and cash benefit are employment-related, as is the sick-child benefit. The use of institutional

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[9] In line with the regulations on parental leave, the decline in services affected institutions for small children much more than children above 3 years of age.

[10] They are available to fathers as well, but are used by only very few of them.

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childcare services increases steeply for children older than three years, but is very low for younger children.

Though it took a decade of reforms, in the Czech Republic (unlike in Poland), family policy debates started to recognize the interdependence of gender equality and family policy. Demands for the development of work-family reconciliation policies have grown stronger over time, and succeeded in some reform measures introduced after the turn of the century.

III.2. Postsocialist Family Policy Reform Options

As highlighted above, my goal is to explain variation in family policy reforms in Poland and the Czech Republic. I regard policy reforms as the outcome of the interplay of different goals, interests, and constellations of various actors, and the reform process as being mediated by strongly gendered values embodied in welfare regimes and political institutions.

By explaining how two postsocialist European countries with similar background conditions can differ in their family policy outcomes – while still adhering to a shared familialization path - my study provides broader insights for understanding the dynamics of European family policy making and for grasping the gender politics of family policy.

Although family policy can be regarded as a social policy area in its own right (Wilensky 2002), reforms in family policy have taken place, and need to be analyzed, within the context of overall welfare state reforms. The state, market, and family are

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considered key dimensions of the welfare state, and, by extension, of family policy regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990). In particular, feminists have highlighted the role of distribution between the three as representative of the variation of welfare states (for a summary of feminist contributions, see Sainsbury 1996). Ongoing family policy reforms have provoked intense national and international debates about the best ways for the state to support families (Ferrarini 2006, Gauthier 2002, Gornick and Meyers 2003, Hantrais 2004, Pfenning and Bahle 2000, Rostgaard 2004, Leitner, Ostner, and Schratzenstaller 2004).

Family policy reforms in Europe have to be considered in the context of growing European integration and policy coordination between states. While the EU's legal framework does not explicitly cover family policy, certain EU instruments have instigated some convergence of family policy: among the EU Directives, for example, EU law sets out minimum requirements on parental leave and time off from work (Directive 2010/18/EU). In addition, in the 2002 Barcelona targets, member states agreed to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90 per cent of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33 per cent of children under 3 years of age.

At the beginning of the 1990s, however, postsocialist countries were faced with fundamental reform questions. Basic reform options in the field of family policy are shown in chart 1. Theoretically, they included: leaving family policies unaltered, strengthening the existing familialist elements in family support ("familialism"), or developing a new family policy that would combine a commitment to the promotion of

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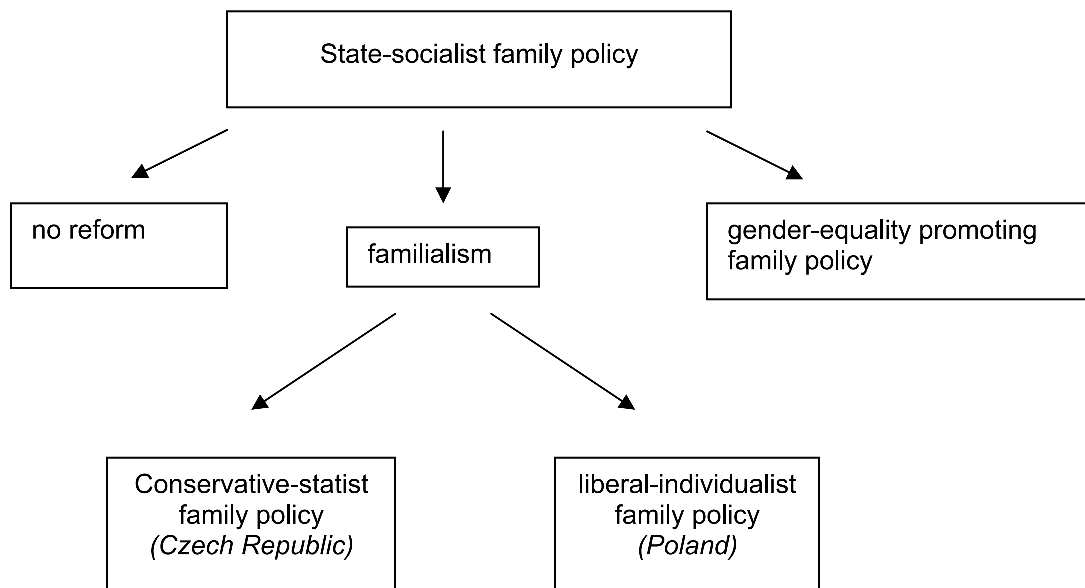
gender equality within a market-economic system ("gender-equality promoting family policy"). Within the familialist option, the two basic choices were – in my terminology - between a conservative-statist family policy (as reflected in the Czech Republic), and a liberal-individualist model (as reflected in Poland).

Figure 1 Postsocialist Family Policy Reform Options



Postsocialist countries were faced with multiple reform pressures, arising from changes in the national political, economic, and institutional frameworks, as well as from exposure to international legal and political frameworks. As a result of these multiple influences and the strong push for reforms in all policy areas, and in light of the strong interrelation of state socialist family policy and economic reform pressures, opting to not

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reform family policy and instead maintain the costly and multi-faceted system of family benefits was not a choice that postsocialist Poland and the Czech Republic could seriously consider.

The transformation of the economic and political systems in both countries shifted prevailing notions of the role of the state in social provisioning. This clearly resonated with debates about state support for families: the strong role of the state and state-owned enterprises prior to 1990 was put under scrutiny. Budgetary pressures influenced debates about the "generosity" of family benefits. Political and electoral dynamics determined institutional responsibilities for family policy and the political leverage of the actors involved.

Gendered social norms, ideas, and expectations of political actors regarding the role of the state and the family, as well as institutional and policy legacies, and behavioral continuities, constituted important push factors in favor of familialist policy choices in both countries.[11] Once the Communist Party's rhetorical commitment to the equality of women and men, and the instrumentalization of family policy in the service of the planned economy were obsolete, older as well as newer variants of "family values" and (mostly conservative) social norms came to bear directly on family policy discourses.

Gendered norms and values favored a more traditional gender division of labor in care and family work and counterbalanced external influences in favor of gender equality

[11] My use of the notion of policy legacy is adopted from the "classic" piece of historical institutionalism "Bringing the State Back In" (Dietz 2003).

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(Gal and Kligman 2000b). The international legal and political framework supported policy reforms that would promote gender equality, including through the reform of family policy. The international gender equity-related framework mainly consisted in the European Union's acquis communautaire, and, though less important for the two cases under investigation, other international commitments such as the Convention Against all Forms of Discrimination against Women, or the UN policy framework on gender equality expressed in the Beijing Platform for Action.

III.3. Influential Actors and Factors during Policy Reforms

My analysis of the family policy reform processes considers policy choices as an outcome of the interactions between key actors - political parties, organized religious and civil society groups (namely women's organizations), and government bodies – and push factors for policy reforms. The key factors influencing policy reforms in both countries are summarized in Figure 2.

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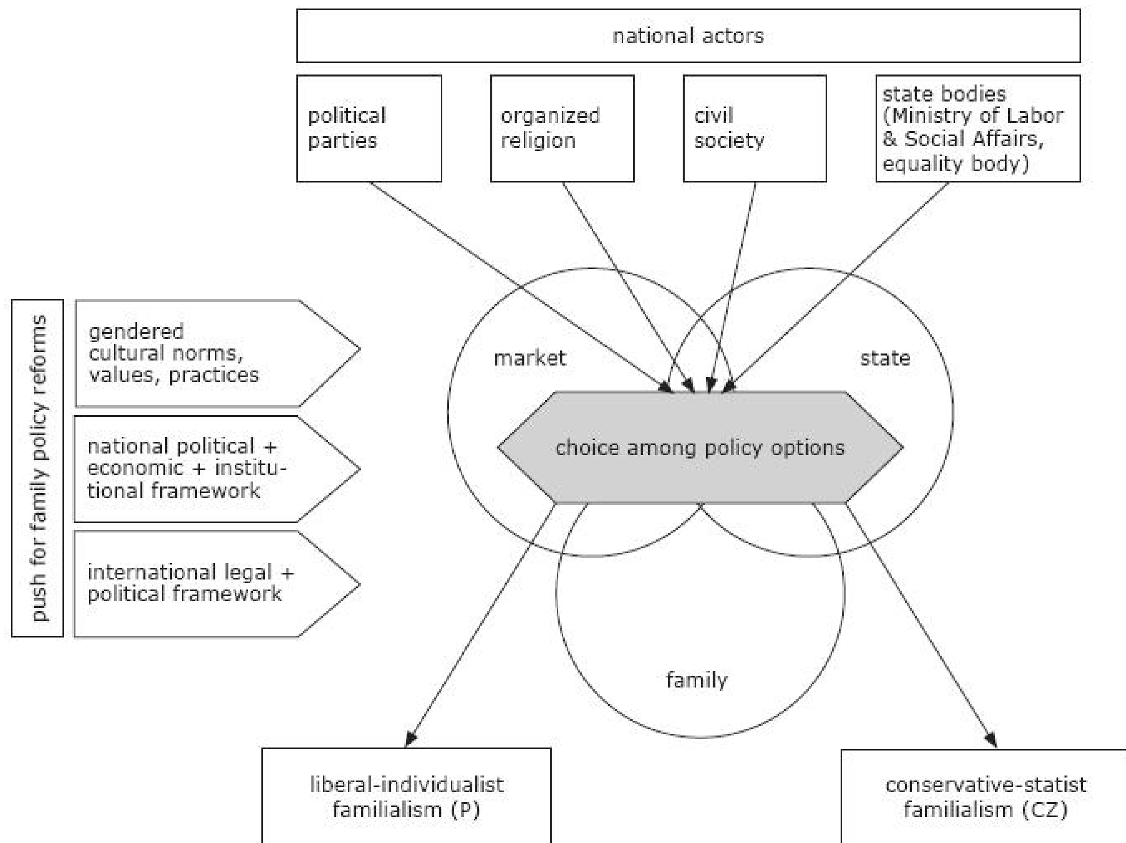
Figure 2 Influential Factors in Family Policy Reforms



The main groups participating in family policy reforms were similar in both countries. Among the political parties who were actors in family policy reform, three broad groups were most important: postsocialist center/right-wing parties, such as the post-Solidarnosc parties and alliances in Poland, or the Civic Democrats, as well as the Christian Democrats in the Czech Republic. Secondly, left-wing parties in both countries

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have included the reformed Socialists (SLD in Poland), as well as the Czech Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party.

And the third group, – partly overlapping with the previously mentioned two but not grouped into one party – consisted of social policy reformers that advocated for a stronger market-orientation of social policy, a progressive withdrawal of the state from social provisioning, and a strengthening of individual responsibilities for the well-being of a family. While a preference for the (re-) familialization of family responsibilities has therefore united neoliberal reformers in Poland and the Czech Republic, specific policy proposals have differed depending on the strength of the advocates of the market. Polish Left welfare state reformers strongly called for means-testing of benefits, and in fact, were largely successful. Conversely, Czech neoliberals were contained by Social Democrats and Christian Democrats in family policy, the compromise being a model of explicit familialism and a powerful discourse of "choice" for families regarding their caring models.

Organized religious groups took a keen interest in promoting familialist policy choices, but the degree of their influence is key to gaining an understanding of the specific familialist policy pattern. In Poland, religious groups clearly left their stamp on family policy, mainly through the influence of the Catholic Church in affiliation with other actors such as the Law and Justice Party or the League of Polish Families. In the Czech Republic, religious groups did not play a central role in family policy: faith-based family policy arguments were mainly brought into the political process through the

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Christian Democratic Party, for example, through the use of arguments for the protection and support of traditional family models, as well as references to motherhood.

Women's organizations and organized voices of families also played critical roles, alongside a less organized community of experts and activists. At the beginning of the 1990s, independent Polish and Czech women's organizations were only just developing, as evidenced, for example, by the development of women's groups. Similarly, women's political representation was weak and no state institution was dedicated to representing women's interests. While over the course of the decade women's organizations in both countries grew, most of the time the topic of family policy was considered a "women's issue" by political decision-makers. At the same time, the agendas of women's organizations were shaped by other priorities.

In Poland, for example, the debate about the country's very restrictive anti-abortion legislation marginalized all other topics in gender-related debates for much of the 1990s, and captured the energy of the growing women's movement. In the Czech Republic, debates about women's unequal political participation and reproductive rights largely superseded debates about diminished state support for families.

Nevertheless, women's organizations were among the protagonists of the political project of Europeanizing family policy, or rather, the progressive expansion of work-family reconciliation policies. In turn, family organizations played a more ambiguous role, trying to balance a maternalist/familialist approach with calls for state-support for families, including in the field of women's employment integration and work-family

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reconciliation. These challenges are reflected in developments such as the Czech mother's centers, which were an important grassroots movement comprised of women and families.

On the side of the government and public institutions in both countries, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs played a leading role in family policy development. In addition, the Equality Body[12] was the other main actor on the side of the government; or rather, it *should have been*, because it was non-existent for long stretches of the time under consideration in Poland, and was only created late in the decade in the Czech Republic as well.

III.4. Policy Preferences of Key Actors

Polish and Czech models of familialism differ crucially with respect to the relative priority placed on the state's versus the market's role. Poland's liberal-individualist familialism offers very limited state support to families in general, whereas the Czech conservative-statist familialism offers significant state support that serves to solidify traditional gender and care relations while assigning the main responsibility of social provisioning to the family. A more detailed discussion about the basic tenets of the different policy models is provided in Chapter 2.

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[12] This is the institution in charge of developing and implementing the national policy for women and gender equality, which all countries were required to create as per their signature to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome document of the UN World Conference on Women.

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In addition to being a product of the similarities of involved social actors, and of the similarities as well as differences in the national policy legacy and socio-economic contexts, the differences in family policy reforms are an outcome of the respective political processes and preferences of key actors for various policy models. Key actors' policy preferences are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 Policy Preferences of Key Actors

	Catholic Church	Christian Democracy	Liberal (free-market) parties	Social Democracy/ Reformed Socialism	Women's movement (maternalism/ gender equality activism)
Conservative statist familialism	++	++		+	++
Liberal-individualist familialism	+		++		
Work-family reconciliation familialism		+	++	+	+
Gender-equality promoting family policy			+	+	++

The table helps to clarify a number of points. First, it shows that national actors do not clearly prefer only one of the policy options. While they may have strong preferences at times (illustrated by ++), under certain conditions they may also advocate for other

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choices. Or else, groups may be divided in their opinion with respect to various policy models, as was the case, for example, with the Czech Social Democrats who did not have a unified position about the conservative-statist, choice-oriented, or gender-equality promoting policy models. Similarly, the unified group of "women's organizations" in both countries entails organizations that would clearly advocate the joining of gender equality policy and family policy, as well as maternalist women's groups that would opt for a conservative-statist policy model.

Second, while the table illustrates which actors preferred a certain policy model at the country level, actors' preferences in the field of family policy need to be looked at in light of the relative political leverage of groups of actors, as well as in conjunction with other factors such as institutional legacies, and broader economic and social policy reform trends. The analysis here attempts to combine both perspectives for understanding reform trajectories.

IV. Broader Debates and Alternative Explanations

The comparative analysis of family policy reforms in Poland and the Czech Republic illustrates the unique character of family policy as a social policy field. In terms of family policy, goals that are related to income redistribution and the compensation of families for the costs associated with raising children, to the labor market (specifically, attempts to influence the employment participation of women), and to the promotion of gender equality or the protection of traditional family relations are often in tension.

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Moreover, the more or less explicitly normative content of family policy permits, or even provokes, gut reactions from decision-makers, as well as the strategic or demonstrative use of family policy in the interest of pursuing other goals.

In approaching the study of family policy, I have drawn insights from the contributions of institutionalism in social policy research (e.g. Kitschelt 1995a, Weir, Orloff and Skocpol 1988, Flora 1986, Skocpol 1992, Pierson 1994). In particular, my interest in the connection between (gendered) norms and policies – as reflected in political discourses – has profited from Schmidt's insights into the role of ideas and discourse in politics (Kitschelt 1995a, Schmidt 2002). In addition, historical institutionalism has been an important inspiration for understanding the time-bound structural underpinnings of social policies and for thinking about the durability of institutions in times of postsocialist transition, as well as for identifying forces of change. While acknowledging the relevance of institutional approaches, my framework further develops them in its recognition of the specificity of family policy as a policy field, as well as in its focus on political conflict between groups of actors at the national level.

In its focus and explanatory model, my research contributes mainly to three fields of scholarship in comparative politics: comparative welfare state research, especially feminist welfare state research, comparative studies of postsocialist transition and policy reforms, and research on Europeanization in social policy.

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IV.1. Comparative Research on Welfare State Regimes

First, my study relates to the tradition of comparative research on welfare state regimes following Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen 1990, Esping-Andersen 1999). While Esping-Andersen has set important standards for comprehending Western welfare states, he has been less able to explain reforms in the postsocialist world (Auth 2009, Beckwith 2005:271). Therefore, new comparative research, including works on CEE countries, has applied and adapted Esping-Andersen's structural categories (Hemerijck, Keune and Rhodes 2006, Keune 2009), or focused on the political economy of policy reforms (Fultz 2002, Müller 1999, Götting 1998).

While related to the above studies, my dissertation neither seeks to further develop ideal types of welfare states, nor sets out to force countries into categories developed by others. Instead, in an approach quite similar to Cerami and Vanhuysse's (Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009b), my research illustrates the need for a detailed analysis of country-specific features as a precondition for explaining differences between countries that may be grouped into one category in existing typologies. This is also necessary in order to deepen an approach such as the one chosen by Keune (Keune 2009), who groups all new EU members into the category of minimal Bismarckian welfare states, while recognizing and elaborating upon the considerable differences between the countries.

Comparative welfare state research has emphasized the role of the political Left for the development and reform of welfare states, in particular Social Democratic parties and trade unions (classic: Korpi 1978, Esping-Andersen 1990, Esping-Andersen 1999).

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Some newer works in the spirit of the power resources approach also look at the role of the political Right/Christian Democrats (e.g. Fix 2001, van Kersbergen 1995). Both approaches, and my own, have also benefited from analyses of post-communist party systems and, in particular, from research highlighting the complications of Left and Right political orientations in postsocialism (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Grzymala-Busse 2002, Riishøj 2009).

While the analysis of family policy reforms in Poland and the Czech Republic confirms the importance of political parties as reform actors, their role and position in family policy discourses can neither be linked to their position on an assumed Left-Right axis on economic matters, nor to their position on the welfare state in general. Despite the immediate importance of family benefits and services for the citizenry, family policy cannot be considered a relevant element in the emerging socio-economic cleavage that has been used to explain Czech politics (and to a lesser extent Polish politics during the 1990s) (Kitschelt 1995a, Riishøj 2009). Instead, family policy was a secondary, and even supplementary or token, policy field. Political parties (and other non-party actors) used pro-family discourses selectively to either soften their more radical welfare state reform proposals, or to demonstrate their concern for the well-being of the population and their caring attitude.

Moreover, concerns for gender equality and family support were not necessarily aligned, and demands for welfare state "generosity" did not always come with similar demands for family support. Therefore Social Democrats, as in the Czech Republic, have

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not necessarily protected generous family benefits, and also cannot per se be assumed to develop progressive gender policies. Conversely, the Catholic Right, as in Poland, has not always opposed cuts in family benefits. It was even particularly resistant to prioritizing the employability effects of family policy for women through benefits to support the reconciliation of employment and family life.

The two cases also show, however, that political parties are not the only relevant actors in family policy reforms. It is necessary, as I have done here, to look at actors outside the party spectrum and include civil society actors, such as women's groups and organized religion. In both countries, women's groups have been among the most adamant supporters of EU integration and have strongly pushed for an opening of the national family discourse through the use of international precedent. It is necessary to focus on political constituencies that form around existing policy arrangements or new policy proposals, and these may or may not be based in political parties. The role of organized religion, including Church authorities, as well as faith-based political and social organizations, and grass-roots organizations clearly needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis of family policy reforms.

My study also relates to feminist welfare state research. Despite a massive expansion of feminist criticism and the expansion of Esping-Andersen's ground laying work during the 1990s, feminists have been slow in integrating postsocialist European countries (Auth 2009). Auth highlights the absence of analyses of CEE countries from the typologies that were developed up until the beginning of the 21st century (Lewis 1992,

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Sainsbury 1994, Lewis 2001).[13] Comparative empirical and strongly policy-oriented research has also failed to incorporate much of the experience of postsocialist countries (a good example is O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999), for exceptions, see: (Makkai 1994), (Ferge 1997b), (Pascall and Manning 2000), (Pascall and Kwak 2005). The first systematic inclusion of CEE in feminist typologies was offered by Pascall and Lewis (Pascall and Lewis 2004), and an analysis of social reforms from a gender perspective was presented by Fultz (Fultz, Ruck, and Steinhilber 2003, Fultz and Steinhilber 2004).

IV.2. Postsocialist Reforms

A second distinct contribution of my analysis is to the growing research on postsocialist reforms. In its specific focus, my study relates particularly to the growing body of research that deals with post-communist family policies (Ferge 1997a, Ferge and Kolberg 1992, Hantrais 2004, Pascall and Kwak 2005, Pascall and Lewis 2004, Fodor et al. 2002, Glass and Fodor 2007, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006, Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007, Szelewa and Polakowski 2008, Aidukaite 2004a, Aidukaite 2004b).

A common focus of these studies is to assess developments in family policy in postsocialist Europe in their "defamilializing" or "refamilializing" effects. In other words, studies look at the impact of various family policy regimes on the strength and quality of intra-family dependencies. Defamilializing policies are understood as shifting the

[13] The edited volume by Razavi and Hassim can be considered an exception because of its inclusion of non-Western developing countries into feminist welfare state debates (Razavi and Hassim 2006).

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responsibility for care away from the family, while familialist policies do the opposite; namely, they strengthen the role of the family and the dependence of individuals on family ties (Lewis 1992, Leitner 2003, Hantrais 2004, Michael and Mahon 2002).

It is argued that family policy under socialism had a strongly defamilializing effect, thereby reducing intra-family dependencies. This was done, for example, by shifting the responsibility for care away from the family onto state-sponsored institutions. Conversely, some argue that the post-1990 reforms have started a process of refamilialization, whereby the state withdraws and shifts back responsibility for care and well-being to the family. The debate is open to what extent the process of refamilialization is a uniform feature of postsocialist welfare states. My study shares the research focus of these contributions, and particularly the recent trend toward recognizing and documenting the differences between countries from the CEE region (see especially Szelewa and Polakowski 2008, who observe four different kinds of policy regimes, two of which they regard as familializing).

However, in this still relatively new line of research, only limited attention has been paid to analyzing the policy process that brings about change in a specific political context, and to explaining policy variation by looking at the role of different actors, and actor-institution relationships (exceptions to this are Saxonberg and Szelewa, 2007). It is in this respect that my study complements ongoing debates about the gendered content of postsocialist welfare states in general and family policy in particular.

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IV.3. Europeanization and Social Policy

A third contribution of my study is to research on Europeanization and social policy (Sedelmeier and Schimmelfennig 2005, Mansfeldová 2005, Guillen and Palier 2004, Lendvai 2004, Potůček 2004). In a similar approach to the one highlighted by Guillen and Palier, my comparative analysis of family policy reforms also shows the need to differentiate between a change in procedures, policy tools, actors, and their roles on the one hand, and policy substance on the other hand (Guillen and Palier 2004: 204). While formal compliance with EU norms was achieved, my study shows that cognitive Europeanization - taken as the transformation of national and particular discourses, as well as the adoption of rules and practices in terms of EU perspectives - was very limited in both countries (Featherstone and Raedelli 2003).

I attribute this to the lack of political will to integrate family policy discourses into national debates, as reflected, for example, in the weakness of the institutions mandated with doing so. At the same time, the lack of cognitive Europeanization in the field of family policy must also be attributed to the lack of political clout wielded by women's groups and experts who were most keenly interested in bringing international evidence onto the national stages. The cases of Poland and the Czech Republic also show that adaptive pressures have not only come from the EU. In the case of gender equality policy, the United Nations has been a key influence on domestic policy institutions (by demanding the creation of a National Gender Equality Machinery and regular reports on international commitments).

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V. Sources

The argument advanced in this dissertation is supported by a variety of sources, including the analysis of policy documents, and records of the political process leading up to legal change in both countries during the years 1990 until 2004, when both countries became members of the European Union. Secondary analyses of the social policy reform processes in academic research and debates since 1990 were another referent and source of information. To supplement these written sources, I have conducted approximately 50 structured and semi-structured interviews in Warsaw, Krakow, and Prague between 2001 and 2005. Respondents in both countries included government officials responsible for developing family policy and/or gender equality policy, representatives of political parties, trade unions and women's NGOs, researchers, and social policy experts and activists. A list of interviewees in both countries is provided in the Annex.

VI. Organization of the Study / Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 summarizes key elements of the discussion about the relationship between the state, gender, and family policy in various economic and political regimes. It offers an overview of the historical and institutional legacies of the state socialist welfare state with respect to state support for families. In addition, the chapter describes the main family policy models in the West, which came to form the background of postsocialist

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family policy reform debates during the 1990. By outlining the main reform pressures and dynamics that influenced policymaking after 1990 in the two countries, the chapter serves as a preparation for the empirical analysis in the following chapters.

Chapters 3 and 4 are about Poland. Chapter 3 analyzes key reform trends and their impacts in the three central fields of family policy under study: maternity leave and benefits, parental leave and cash benefits for families, and institutional childcare provision. Chapter 4 develops the central explanations for the Polish reform trajectory. This chapter highlights the path dependence of Polish family policy after 1989, both in the institutional sense, as well as with respect to gendered cultural traditions reflected in day-to-day family decisions. The chapter also illustrates the impact of weak and politicized institutions on the side of the government, namely the Plenipotentiary for Equal Opportunities, which resulted in, among other effects, a wide gap between pro-family promises and little de-facto support. On the side of domestic politics, debates between market-liberal and conservative-populist welfare state reformers have shaped policy making, with the Left, somewhat surprisingly, often taking the lead in austerity policies. Most importantly, family policy has been crowded out by the politics and debates around the regulation of abortion, thus effectively blocking the development of progressive family policy reforms and consolidating the central role of the Catholic Church as a normative instance in family policy debates.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the Czech Republic. They follow the same organization as the preceding two: Chapter 5 analyzes the key reform trends in family benefits and

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their impact. Chapter 6 then focuses on the explanations for the Czech reform course. The chapter illustrates, similar to the Polish case, the importance of institutional legacies in benefits and services, as well as cultural legacies that shape practices and normative commitments. Preferences regarding care for small children, as well as gender role assignments in daily life clearly reflect these continuities throughout the 1990s. The Czech case also illustrates the strategic use of family policy reform in the interest of other policy fields, such as the labor market, as well as the instrumental role of family policy and gender equality in the EU accession process.

Chapter 7 summarizes my findings and synthesizes the main arguments that explain variation in the reform trajectories in both countries. In addition, it offers a comparative look at the dynamics of family policy in other postsocialist countries, as well as other industrialized countries. The chapter further suggests conceptual implications of the empirical analysis of the Polish and Czech cases for further research on gender and welfare reforms.

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Chapter 2

Family Policy in Capitalist and State Socialist Regimes in Europe

I. Introduction

What are the goals and motivations in policies toward the family? How do some of the key features of family policy regimes in Europe vary, particularly in relation to such factors as the extent of state intervention, types of benefits and extent of services provided, the extent of support for women's employment or men's caring roles? How do policy actors justify family policy reform proposals? Can the conditions and driving forces for family policy regime change be explained by factors beyond the country-specific?

Family policy is not a coherent policy field. Instead, as this dissertation argues, it has to be understood as a historically and politically specific combination of measures with often varying goals and priorities. Accordingly, Kamerman and Kahn define family policy as "what the state does by action or inaction to affect people in their roles as family members or to influence the future of the family as an institution" (Kamerman and Kahn 1978). Often family policy is guided by an economic rationale: it helps households with children to bear the costs associated with raising children. This is justified because the upbringing of children is considered beneficial from the state's point of view: families ensure the reproduction of human capital and thereby generate positive externalities

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(Biedenkopf, Betram, and Niejahr 2009). This logic illustrates the link between demographic developments and family policy (Berger and Kahlert 2006, Deacon 2002). Yet, economic and demographic considerations are not the only driving concerns in family policy, as this chapter further elaborates.

The chapter first discusses family policy as a social policy field. A working definition of family policy is elaborated, which is later applied in the empirical analyses of the Polish and Czech cases in the following chapters. Family policy is approached from a historical perspective and the various goals ascribed to family policy interventions are discussed. This is followed by an analysis of the relationship between family policy and gender equality policy, as well as of the role and positions of key policy actors.

Moreoever, the chapter reviews European family policy regimes and the reform environment of the 1990s, when Polish and Czech reforms were initiated. The nexus between family policy and the dominant economic model is discussed alongside other differences between various family policy models in the East and West. The influence of demographic developments is discussed, as well as the consequences of economic reforms and European, as well as broader international policy debates. In conclusion, the chapter sketches the policy reforms that developed in postsocialist Europe in response to existing reform pressures; thus, the chapter's conclusion prepares for the detailed analysis of policy reforms in Poland and the Czech Republic that follows in later chapters.

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II. The Logic and Dynamic of Family Policy as a Social Policy Field

II.1. Forms of Family Support through the State

Family benefits for households with young children typically take three forms, which are combined in nationally specific ways (Kaufmann o.J., Kaufmann et al., Bahle 1995, Gauthier 1996):[14]

- direct and indirect subsidies for parents such as family allowances, childcare benefits, vouchers, tax benefits, and deductions;
- provisions for early childhood care and education (ECCE) services through public institutions (such as public nurseries, pre-schools, and kindergartens) or subsidization of such services through private providers such as individuals, NGOs, enterprises, community ECCE (e.g. grants, tax benefits, credits and deductions);
- parental leave policy, such as maternity, paternity, parental, and child-rearing leaves.[15]

[14] My comparative study of family policy reforms in Poland and the Czech Republic focuses in particular on state support for families with children from birth until the official age for entering primary school (normally 5 or 6 years old). This focus has been selected for two reasons: When children are small, the various pressures on family members are particularly strong. On the one hand, every child changes a family's economic situation, thus creating a need to generate additional income, or adjust the family economy to a lower per capita income. On the other hand, a new family member demands attention and care, and thus prompts family members to renegotiate the pre-established division of labor and responsibilities and modify previous time arrangements. State benefits during this time period of intensive transformation are therefore particularly important. At the same time, benefits that hit during this time period have a lasting impact, as they impact the establishment of new family structures and interaction.

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A driving concern in family policy is to support families to bear the cost of raising children, to express the value of childraising through appropriate income redistribution measures and thereby ensure demographic sustainability, and to enable parents to reconcile employment and family life. However, strongly normative, and clearly gendered, considerations are also imbued in family policies. The socially shared, and normatively rooted, definitions of the proper roles of family members, in particular the gendered role assignments with respect to unpaid and care work on the one hand, and paid work in the national economy on the other hand, are both a precondition as well as an outcome of family policy (Fix 2001).

In their critique of welfare state policies, feminists have focused in particular on the division of roles and responsibilities between the state, the market, and the family as constitutive for family policy.[16] Feminists have regarded the division of roles and responsibilities as constitutive for the shifting boundaries of public and private spheres in welfare states, and as an indicator for the "women friendliness" of a welfare state regime (Knijn and Kremer 1997, Sainsbury 1999, Sainsbury 1994, Sainsbury 1996, Orloff 1993, O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999).

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[15] Some authors also emphasize the implicit effects of other policies on the well-being of families, for example health care policy and education policy (Kaufmann o.J., Dienel 2002, Bahle 1995). For an analysis of the impact of tax policy, see particularly (Mückenberger, Spangenberg, and Warncke 2007). Kaufman concludes that "economic, tax and education policies have an often greater impact [than specific family policy], although the needs of families do not have a high priority in these policy fields" (Kaufmann o.J.:1).

[16] Non-profit or community-based organizations are sometimes added to the state-market-family triangle.

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In addition to the economic, social, and institutional aspects of family policy, I would like to highlight two other aspects: first, families are targets of state policies as well as agents of social provisioning and welfare development (Haney 2003). The solutions that individual families develop in response to the institutional framework have, at least in the long run, repercussions at the level of social norms and practices as well as for the policy debate. Second, family policy always entails a more or less explicit understanding of the gender order in society, of "proper" gender roles in the family, as well as of gender roles in the (labor) market and society. As a consequence, family policy has the potential to support, or even initiate, developments toward greater equality between women and men; but family policy can be, and often indeed has been, an important factor in the upholding of deeply rooted gender inequalities.

II.2. The Historical Development of Family Policy

Historically, the family became a subject of state intervention in the context of the industrial revolution, when the structural disadvantages of families in the economic sphere, as well as social and political crises demanded state interventions in support of the family (Bahle 1995). However, family policy was always a strongly contested field of state action: many conflicts about policy goals, as well as discourses of key policy actors, in fact show remarkable durability (and were notably reflected in post-1990 Polish and Czech reforms). The Church, for example, regularly questioned the basic legitimation of the state to interfere in family life throughout the history of family policy (van

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Kersbergen 1995, Fix 2001). Employers, as Bahle emphasizes, showed a strong interest in state-sponsored family allowances: they considered targeted, often patronal, support for those considered in greatest need an instrument to calm workers' general demands for higher wages.[17] While compensation for a family's extra costs associated with raising children, state family benefits as income support were also inherently linked to the wage system, often serving to uphold low wages or buffering the family wage system (Paci 2002)based on a single male income earner (Bahle 1995, Pfenning and Bahle 2000).

Family policy has always expressed, and reproduced a specific cultural, political, and institutional arrangement between the state, the market, and the family as providers of well-being for families and individual family members (Gerhard 2003a, Langan and Ostner 1991). Benefits are aimed at altering the income distribution, for example, between households with and without children, as well as among groups of households with children, for example between two-parent and single-headed households. Feminist research has emphasized that family benefits have an impact on the gender division of labor, as well as on the definition of the private and the public by delineating the scope of legitimate state intervention. Family policy therefore has an emancipatory potential – but is not necessarily emancipatory (Gerhard, Knijn, and Weckwert 2003, Lewis 1993).

The first family allowances in Europe were introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, either as state allowances or paid by employers. After the First World War, in

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[17] The first associations of employers in family support funds happened in France 1918 and Belgium 1921 (Bahle 1995: 57).

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most cases the system was only maintained in the civil service. It was revived, however, during the 1930s, for example in Belgium 1930, France 1932, Italy 1936, Spain 1938, Hungary 1938 and the Netherlands 1939 (Bahle 1995: 60-65). Finland introduced communal and income-related family assistance in 1943, Ireland in 1944. After World War II, employment-related family support systems were introduced more broadly throughout Europe, for example in the UK in 1945, in Norway 1946, in Sweden 1947, in Denmark and Austria in 1950, and in Germany in 1954.[18] A general trend, like in other welfare state schemes, was that systems in continental Europe were employment-centered, whereas in the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom they had a universal character.

From their inception, family policy measures already included a national-specific combination of some of the following measures: cash allowances as well as tax measures addressed at families, incentives to promote marriages and childbearing, and services to support families, which included counseling as well as early childhood education and care services. In comparison with other welfare state benefits (in particular with pensions and health benefits), spending for family benefits remained relatively stagnant in most countries, and "more than other welfare state benefits, it depended on changing political agendas" (Bahle 1995: 134, my translation).

The links that existed between family policy, women's employment, and childcare services started to receive increased political attention from the 1970s onwards

[18] Other family benefits, such as maternity allowances, had been introduced earlier.

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(mainly in the West, but also to some extent in state socialist countries, as will be elaborated below). It is in this context that a focus on individual family members (e.g. working mothers or children directly) as the recipients of family benefits and services supplemented, to a certain degree, prior family policy measures which were directed more broadly at the family as a social institution (Jenson and Saint-Martin, Deacon 2002). While family policy was never explicitly recognized as a social policy field covered by the European Union's legal and policy coordination mandate, it started to receive EU attention in the context of employment and poverty reduction/social inclusion policy coordination.

II.3. Family Policy Goals and Motivations

Family policy lacks a unitary goal and focus. Instead, its goals depend on a combination of various goals and other social policy fields' agendas that are put forth in nationally specific ways. To varying degrees, the main goals that decision-makers claim to pursue through family policy are: income redistribution, labor market participation, and demographic stability. In the following section, I will look at each of the three dimensions while keeping in mind that family policy regimes are always combinations of various goals (and potentially other goals, in addition to the ones addressed here).

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II.3.1. Income Redistribution as a Family Policy Goal

It is a well-documented empirical fact that families face greater poverty risks than households without children. Therefore, income redistribution and poverty reduction are two central goals of family benefits (Leibfried and Voges 1992, European Commission 2005, European Commission 2007). Historically, the first family policy measures were focused on poverty reduction, particularly poverty relief for (working) mothers (Gauthier 1996; Bahle 1995; Pfenning and Bahle 2000). Cash benefits in the form of state-sponsored income transfers to families were developed in the context of the industrial revolution, as a compromise between the state, employers, and workers: industrial wages either needed to be brought up to the level of a family wage, as was the demand of workers' organizations, or needed to be topped up through state income support, as desired by the employers (Ferrarini 2006: 16).

Income-redistribution through family benefits does not occur without conflict, however: arguments often center on the question of whether family allowances should be universal (to support the income of all families), or if allowances should be income-tested (i.e. available only to those families in greatest need in order to achieve the greatest anti-poverty effects). Similarly, another line of debate juxtaposes income-support with measures to increase the labor force participation of all family members, with the latter being seen as the appropriate policy measures to support a family's own income generation. The income status of single-parent families after social transfers may serve as an indicator for the effectiveness of family policy to reduce poverty and redistribute

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income: studies illustrate the significantly higher risk of poverty of single-parent families because of their relatively higher costs and much more restricted possibilities for labor force participation (Rüling and Krassner 2007).[19] Higher benefits for larger families are common in many countries to address the extra costs incurred by an increasing number of children. However, in addition to serving redistributive goals, benefits that are linked to the number of children also serve the goal of pronatalism.

II.3.2 Links between Labor Market and Family Policy

Family benefits and economic and labor market policies are linked in multiple ways: benefits may or may not provide parents with incentives to participate in the labor market (Ferrarini 2006, Rürup and Gruescu 2003). Conversely, family benefits may be a disincentive or even barrier to parents' labor force participation. Feminists have paid particular attention to the fact that some benefits particularly facilitate women's economic independence through labor market income, while others contribute to women's marginalization in the labor market, or even keep them from entering the labor market altogether.[20] Relating to these debates, Fagnani, for example, argues that reforms of the

[19] Some authors look particularly at the situation of households headed by single mothers as an indicator for the redistributive and the gender content of family benefits, by focusing on the level of employment participation of single mothers, as well as the level of income poverty of single-headed family households (Gordon 1993, Lewis 1999). Both indicators are analyzed in order to assess the potential of family benefits to support women's autonomy or, conversely, the degree of dependence on a (male) partner, illustrated by income poverty where there is no partner on whom to rely on (see, for example, (Saxonberg 2007).

[20] Highlighting the multiple barriers to women's labor force participation, feminist welfare state researchers have reacted to the mainstream notion of "decommodification" through welfare state

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French family allowance system over time were driven, on the one hand, by the growing demand for childcare services, but at the same time by the government's desire to support women's employment, and explicitly to decrease women's unemployment through their (self-) employment as childminders {Fagnani 1.02.2007 #811, see also (Morgan 2003)}[21]

As Western countries have experienced a massive increase in the employment participation of women since more or less the 1970s, debates about the links between family benefits and labor market policy have experienced a slight shift of attention: in recent years, the focus of attention has shifted to contributions of family benefits to work-family reconciliation (Bertram, Roesler, and Ehlert, Villagomez Morales et al. 2004, Rürup and Gruescu 2003, OECD 2001, Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997, Migdal 1997, Plantenga and Remery 2005).

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provisions by referring to women's struggle for a "right to be commodified" as a necessary component of a gender-sensitive welfare state edifice (Knijn and Ostner). While the notion of "decommodification" as introduced by Esping-Andersen emphasizes the potential of welfare state benefits to offer social citizenship rights independently from market-based entitlements, feminists have emphasized that this may be of limited use for women who long to participate in the labor market (Esping-Andersen 1990, Esping-Andersen 1999). The "analysis of de-commodification must be accompanied by analysis of services that facilitate labor market participation, such as child care and parental leave" (Ginn 2004:191).

[21] Between 1991 and 2003, the number of registered child-minders (almost 100 % women) increased from 130.000 to 384.000, and the number of families receiving the benefit that supports a family in employing a the services of a registered child-minder increased from 100.000 to 612.000 (Ross 1997)

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II.3.3. Links between Demographics and Family Policy

Attempts to influence the population development through state intervention have a long tradition, for example, in the form of incentives toward childbirth, or restrictions to abortions. Facing birth rates below the replacement level in many Western societies for the past few decades, and facing a very rapid decline in birthrates in postsocialist European countries during the 1990s, family policy became increasingly regarded as an instrument to increase birth rates. Studies that investigate the effects of family policy on fertility in Western Europe have produced ambiguous results: studies focusing on the West increasingly recognize the positive correlation between women's labor force participation and fertility (Wennemo 1994, Hantrais 1999; Gauthier 2002, Neyer 2006). Conversely, there is also some evidence that familialist policies in Eastern European countries increased fertility, at least temporarily (Kantorová 2004). Neyer therefore concludes that "we still lack a clear understanding of how and to what extent family policies affect reproduction and employment" (Neyer 2006: 5).[22]

Neyer emphasizes the symbolic dimension of policies: the lack of childcare services, low benefit levels, long parental or care leaves, and gender-segregating policies signal to women that it might be difficult, if not impossible, to combine employment and motherhood, re-enter the labor market after parental or care leave, and maintain their

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[22] Neyer further argues that even if family policies have an impact on childbearing behavior, they need not lead to an increase in the total fertility rate nor have a long-term effect on the level of fertility. She sees evidence that "policies that support a woman's access to work, secure her employment retention, and ensure her sufficient income seem to be a pre-requisite for her to consider having a(nother) child." (16)

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standard of living in the short and the long run. This may lead to lower fertility. Conversely, "more adequate provision of childcare services, high levels of benefits, flexible parental leaves, and gender-equality oriented policies may reduce the concerns about the compatibility of employment and care, re-entry into employment, and income maintenance," and may thus lead to more babies (Neyer 2006: 16).

III. Gender Equality and Family Policy

The multiplicity of family policy goals, stemming from the fields of income, labor market, and population policy all point to the relationship between family policy and gender policy. Policy debates are embedded in a gendered cultural background, so that gender culture is present at the level of individual action and perception like a "master narrative", while also permeating the structural and institutional frameworks of states and societies (Migdal 1997, Pfau-Effinger 1998, Pfau-Effinger 2004, van Oorschot 2005).

While gender is embedded in family policy, family policy and the promotion of gender equality and women's emancipation are two different policy dimensions. Family policy can contribute to promoting gender equality, as it can also uphold or even strengthen traditional gender role divisions and women's subordination in a patriarchal family setting. One could imagine the dimensions of family policy and gender equality

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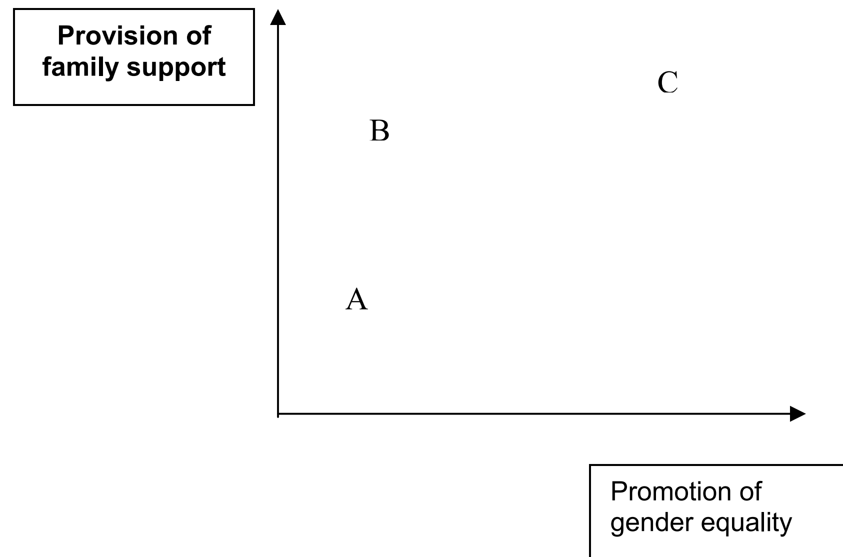
policy as crossing policy axes (see Figure 3).[23] This allows to illustrate differences in the character of family/gender policy configurations by their place on the axes.

Figure 3 Relationship between Family Policy and Gender Equality Policy



With respect to the dimension of family support, the state essentially makes two decisions: which families to support, and how to support them. In fixing benefit entitlements and designing specific benefits, as well as in distributing institutional commitments and responsibilities, the state makes a normative statement about "proper," i.e. state-recognized and supported families, as well as about a "proper" gendered division of labor within the family. Conversely, family forms that do not comply with the

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[23] I take this approach to understanding different dimensions of priorities and interests in one policy field from (Zolberg 2006).

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norm are often not, or not to the same extent, entitled to state support. Policy discourses highlight the "value" of the family as a social institution and refer to "proper" as opposed to "incomplete" or "broken" families (Kamerman and Kahn 1978, Kaufmann o.J., Gerlach 2004).[24]

The level of family support, and entitlement criteria are the other important points of contestation in family policy debates: how generously should families be supported to bear the cost of raising children? Should family benefits be universally available, or should they be targeted to those families in greatest economic need? In Figure 3, policy configurations would move up on the axis of family support, depending on the extent of state support for families.

With respect to the gender dimension, state policy embodies an understanding about the gender role division in the family, and about the state's commitment to promote gender equality. Historically, maternalism (i.e. family policies that were specifically targeted at helping women better fulfill their "natural" role as mothers and caretakers), and corresponding policies influencing the appropriate male social and domestic roles, have underpinned the development of family policy and modern welfare states, and have stabilized traditional relations of gender inequality (Haney and Pollard 2003, Bock and Thane 1994, Gerhard 2003b, Koven and Michael 1990, Leira 1992, Sainsbury 1994).[25] A

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[24] Some family forms may not even be recognized as families at all, as is the case with homosexual couples with children in many countries.

[25] Scott shows that the political attention for women workers in the 19th century was not only due to the historical process of a separation of household and production site. The woman worker in

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typical debate in family policy is about the role of mothers, and "good motherly behavior" to be strengthened through family benefits.[26] Maternalist family policies would be depicted by policy configuration "B" in Figure 3.

Numerous examples illustrate how certain family benefits contribute to maintaining, or even strengthening, relations of gender inequality (Bruning and Plantenga 1999, Jenson 1997, Moors and Palomba 1995, Pfau-Effinger, Rüling and Krassner 2007, Sjöberg 2004). Recent discussions within the European Union, for example, have circled around the consequences of extended child care leaves that are accompanied by flat-rate (and typically quite low) cash benefits, using them as examples for a family benefit that is likely to maintain existing structures of gender inequality (Villagomez Morales et al. 2004). In general, the level and design of cash benefits for caring has come under scrutiny in recent debates: if the cash benefit is small, or childcare leave is unpaid, it is likely that the parent with the lower income will withdraw from the labor market, because the overall loss of income for the household will be lower (Fagnani 2007, Htun 2000). Given the prevalent gender gap in wages, it will more commonly be the mother rather than the father who leaves her workplace in order to raise a child.

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need of state protection was a product of political, economic, medical and social reform discourses at the time, not for her own sake and health, but so that she would be able to bear healthy children (Benhabib 1994).

[26] Such strongly normative topoi are indeed characteristic for family policy – no similarly strong debate about "good" workers or employers, or "good" doctors takes place in employment policy or other social policy fields.

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Conversely, family policy has the potential to "redress gender-based inequities" (Mazur 2002: 31). Examples for such benefits intended to promote gender equality are those that specifically address fathers, with the explicit goal of shifting the unequal gender division of child care responsibilities by involving fathers to a greater extent in the unpaid care work. Several EU member states, for example Sweden, Germany, Slovenia, and Iceland, have introduced "daddy months" of child care leave in recent years (i.e. leave periods that can only be taken by the fathers or otherwise will be lost to the family), thereby intending to increase the take-up of leave by fathers (Fagnani 2007). Other countries have made family leave financially more attractive in order to increase the number of fathers who withdraw temporarily from the labor market in order to care for a child. Income-related cash benefits during child care leave exist in some countries (e.g. Germany, Sweden) and effectively reduce the opportunity costs of leave, i.e. the loss of income for a family, in cases when the higher income-earner takes leave (Rürup and Gruescu 2003). Depending on the overall extent of state support for families, policy configurations that promote gender equality would be found toward the right side of Figure 3, as depicted for example though "C".

Observers have argued that family policy discourses are "often merely a convenient vehicle for other agendas (Haney and Pollard 2003:4, Strach 2007).[27] For

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[27] Haney argues that familialism in Eastern Europe, i.e. the political and ideological promotion of the family as an institution, has proven to be a "malleable and flexible" political discourse that can be appropriated by various political actors in competing and conflicting ways (Haney 2003): 177).

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example, Gerhard shows that a normative discourse on the "crisis of the family" and "family dissolution" has characterized Western family policy making for the last 200 years (Gerhard 2007[28], Hagemann, Jarausch, and Allemann-Ghionda forthcoming). Opponents of women's emancipation have used arguments about the crisis of the family, as she argues, to uphold a conservative family ideal with a traditional gender role division: a family is therefore based on marriage, a founding unit of the state, and women are naturally subordinated to men and limited in their political and economic participation because of their caring responsibilities.

While Gerhard highlights the historical continuity of conservative family values, others have questioned the durability of such norms. For example, in her study of the development of family policy in Germany, Gerlach claims that the progressive de-institutionalization of the family (expressed, for example, in the increase in births to non-married mothers) has contributed to a growing "normative neutrality" in the relationship between family, state and society (Gerlach 2004: 46).

IV. The Role of National Actors in Family Policy

The national family policy context is made up of a web of relations of various collective actors, including the state, political parties, profit- and non-profit groups (e.g. employers, trade unions), as well as churches and women's organizations. The roles of

[28] Gerhard focuses in particular on family law as a foundation of welfare state regimes. She highlights differences in family law traditions and traces their continuity in national family policy regimes, even over extended time periods (Gerhard 2003b).

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various actors are the result of a political process, and also limited by social and cultural norms. The following section turns to each group of actors individually, discussing its position and preferences, as well as opportunities and limitations to their influence on policy making. An introductory overview is given in Table 2

Table 2 Family Policy Preferences of National Actors

	Catholic Church	**Christian Democracy**	**Economic Liberalism (liberal parties, enterprises)**	**Social Democracy (parties, trade unions)**	**Women's movement (maternalism/ gender equality activism)**
Basic tenet	State should not intervene in family; if it does, it should support traditional families and gender role divisions	State should support traditional families and gender role divisions	State should not intervene in family life, or only minimally – poverty reduction; Contradictory: state should ensure human capital reproduction	State intervention / family support is justified	State can actively promote gender equality
Preferred family policy model	Familialism (Conservative-statist or Liberal-individualist)	Familialism	Minimal family assistance, part of state assistance as a measure of last resort More recently: state should facilitate work-family reconciliation Market for family services needed	Traditionally: state support for traditional families and role divisions; More recently: gender equality promoting f.p. or choice-oriented	Divided: familialism (conservative-statist, choice-oriented); Or: equality-promoting family policy

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The position of the state vis-à-vis the family has been most convincingly interpreted in the context of normative assumptions on the one hand, and priorities emerging from the economic system on the other. This line of thinking is helpful both for state socialist and Western capitalist family policy contexts. Bahle shows how the context of the industrial revolution prompted the state to take a growing interest in families, as well as a growing concern of the state for the family's well-being: "The family was not a natural private unit of life; it was part of the institutional foundations of European societies. It is for this reason that the family became the object of social control that shaped its specific forms. This is one of the essential reasons for the variation in the relationship between state and family" (Bahle 1995: 14, my translation).[29]

In market economies, enterprises tend to become interested in family policy particularly regarding those aspects that promise to increase productivity; enterprises have also assumed implementing roles in family policy where they recognized a specific benefit to doing so, or when required to do so by the state. While the role of enterprises as family service providers has massively decreased with the transition from state socialism in Eastern Europe, the interest of employers in family policy has recently been growing in many Western European countries, primarily in the context of demographic changes

[29] The ambiguity of the state's role throughout the decades vis-à-vis women and the family, between protection and control, is reflected in feminist debates on the welfare state: while some analysts, especially in earlier debates, have stressed the oppressive and controlling side of the welfare state, others have emphasized the possibility of women's empowerment through the state, and the potential of the state to be "woman-friendly."

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and the looming threat of a lack of qualified workers (Hummel 2000, Federal Institute for Population Research and Robert Bosch Stiftung 2005, Kaufmann 2005, Berger and Kahlert 2006).

Churches, on the basis of their moral foundations, typically show a strong interest in the normative content of family policy. Usually, churches and Christian Democratic Parties lobby in favor of support to the family as a social institution, in particular, in support of traditional families and stay-home mothers (Fix 2001, Hornsby-Smith 1999, Huber, Ragin, and Stephens 1993, van Kersbergen 1995). Churches and faith-based organizations often also act, alongside welfare organizations and other private actors, in the implementation of family policy. They may, for example, run child care institutions or offer other family-related services. In matters of family policy, church and state have struggled over the limits of the private sphere (with the church demanding limits to state interventions, but not necessarily refraining from exerting its own influence), as well as over normative questions regarding the definition of the family and benefit entitlement criteria, and proper gender roles in the family that are supported through state intervention (Pfenning and Bahle 2000, Fix 2001).

At different historical moments and in different places, family organizations and women's organizations have played important roles in the development of family policy. The construction of women's collective identity, the power resources of women's organizations to act (either through political parties or independently), and the political opportunity structures that allow for women's political participation are the determining

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factors for the degree of influence of women's organized participation in the policymaking process (Hobson and Lindholm 1997).

In the early phases of welfare state development, women's organizations strongly supported provisions for the protection of mothers in the workplace and benefits directed specifically at mothers, such as leave schemes and provisions for occupational safety and health of mothers (for a European perspective: Bock and Thane 1994, for a US perspective: Skocpol 1992, Leitner 1999).[30]

A tension between equality- and diversity- based demands has characterized the involvement of women's organization in family policy debates over the years.[31] Most early demands for family allowances by women's organizations had maternalist roots and were often explicitly diversity-based: women emphasized the particular needs of women as mothers, in particular of working mothers rather than advocating for gender equality and gender role changes as family policy goals (Koven and Michel 1993, Haney and

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[30] The maternalist tradition in early family policy is also reflected in the development of international labor standards. The first Maternity Protection Convention (ILO Convention 3 from 1919), as well as some of the other early conventions regarding women workers, for example the Night Work (Women) Convention, ILO Convention 4, embody a strongly protective understanding of women workers. Over the years, this has been transformed into an equality-based approach, emphasizing the equal treatment of women and men and the principle of non-discrimination, as reflected most clearly in the Convention on Equal Remuneration (C 100, 1951), on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (C 111, 1958) and the Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities (ILO Convention 156 from 1981), see: http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp1.htm.

[31] Lewis, referring to Rathbone, highlights the difference between pre- and post-World War I women's movements, the earlier being a the strictly equality-based voice demanding women's right to vote, the later focusing on difference-based social rights and protection of women as mothers, or potential mothers (Lewis 1994).

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Pollard 2003, Lewis 1993, Bock and Thane 1994).[32] Feminist and equality-oriented organizations in turn have in most countries been much less involved in family policy debates, focusing instead, for example, on women's political participation. However, Siim shows that in Denmark and Sweden women's equality-based demands for social rights to child care and equality in labor force participation preceded action for equal political integration of women (Szalai 1991). Hobson and Lindholm also analyze the trajectory of women's social citizenship rights in the Swedish welfare state, which encompasses: maternity leaves and job security; protection of married women's right to work; income maintenance policy for solo mothers; universal maternal health-care; and a mother's benefit based on needs (Hobson and Lindholm 1997).

Elsewhere, as in Germany and Italy, a tradition of maternalist and diversity-based claims characterizes family policy. It is visible, for example, in the emphasis placed on women's traditional roles as caretakers and has slowed down the integration of family policy in gender equality policy frames. In some contexts, maternalism and diversity-feminism have been direct obstacles to alliances of equality feminism with the concerns of gender equality in family policy. The historical tradition of special "privileges" for (working) women that were justified by women's reproductive role and packaged in a

[32] For a comparative analysis of maternalism in France and Britain, see (Pedersen 1993); for a specific focus on Britain, where feminists demanded wages for mothers so that women's economic dependence on men would not leave them vulnerable to a husband's abuse of power, see Lewis op.cit..

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discourse of abundant of gender stereotypes has also shaped the development of state socialist family policy after 1945.

V. The State, Gender and Family Policy in East and West

Previous parts of this chapter have spelled out a working definition of family policy and highlighted the logic and dynamic of family policy as a social policy field: the combination of regulatory and normative aspects makes family policy an especially interesting social policy field. In addition, preferences of national actors with respect to family policy regimes were discussed. The following part highlights main aspects of different family policy regimes, and spells out policy legacies and the impulses for family policy reforms in postsocialist Europe after 1990.

V.1. Gendered Legacies of the "State Socialist Welfare State"

The social policy model of Central and Eastern European socialist states has been called "state-collectivist" or "bureaucratic-collectivist," emphasizing in particular the central provisioning role of the state and the overall emphasis on collective consumption as opposed to individual welfare (Deacon 1992). While recognizing the relatively equal income distribution and the low levels of income poverty guaranteed by the state, critics have highlighted the repressive character of the socialist welfare state: the authoritarian and controlling character of the state and its representatives, including social policy institutions and bureaucrats, the low level of individual responsibility, and the overall

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relatively low standard of living, as compared to Western Europe (e.g. Ferge 2001). Kornai has coined the term "premature welfare states," thus highlighting the high, in his view excessive, level of social spending (Kornai 1992).

The family as a social metaphor gained a specific meaning for both the communist regime and its people. Family privacy and sexuality often remained the last vestige and safe harbor of protection from an otherwise controlling state. Yet at the same time, as some have argued, protecting the privacy of family life, especially the early formation of families, ensured a level of conformity with the state: "Nothing is better for a totalitarian regime than to prevent spontaneous and revolting political activity which is natural for young people by having them be responsible for a partner and children" (Rabušic quoted Sirovátka 2003: 3).

Official Communist party discourse and the social policy discourse in Central and Eastern Europe prior to 1989 emphasized the ideological commitment to the equality of women and men. One of its most visible expressions was the (intended) disruption of gendered employment patterns. It became apparent, for example, in the quickly growing employment participation of women and the opening of formerly typically "male" professions for women. Pictures of a "woman tractor driver," used on a Polish billboard, for example, are among the most renowned examples of the push against "old," i.e. "pre-Communist" gender stereotypes.[33]

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[33] Seibert, however, reports that "Despite the familiar imagery of post–Second World War posters encouraging women to drive tractors, in Poland driving tractors or even buses was illegal for women throughout most of the communist period as it was seen as dangerous to their

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Women's employment participation was a key concern of socialist governments, in order for all available human resources to contribute to post-war reconstruction efforts and the stabilization of the socialist economies. Socialist family policy was thus explicitly subordinated under economic priorities, and the employment participation of women - rather than high quality care and education of women- were central concerns of family policy. The establishment of a dual-earner family became part of the state socialist norm. Demographic concerns, however, were not left out of sight: high marriage rates, as well as high fertility rates were considered successes.[34] Average ages at first marriage and childbirth were low in comparison with the West. The family image that was propagated resembled a traditional, pre-WW II, East European family.

However, despite a proclaimed commitment to equality, socialist family policy was not gender-neutral, nor was it explicitly and consistently conceived as gender-equality policy. Instead, in practice, state socialist family policy reinforced traditional gender role models and cultural stereotypes (Schmidt 2002, Gal and Kligman 2000b, Pascall and Kwak 2005). State socialist policies never explicitly fostered a change in

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reproductive organs. In 1956 new laws prohibited women from working in numerous types of jobs (Schmidt 2001:156). Throughout the communist period this list grew longer, until ninety types of jobs in eighteen branches of industry were banned for women. This included driving tractors, underground work and work demanding great physical effort (Kitschelt 1995a:235), see (Degener and Rosenzweig 2006).

[34] Different state socialist countries' family policies were quite similar with respect to many family benefits. However, the importance of population policy, i.e. the degree to which socialist family policy attempted to influence birthrates, and the state control over women's bodies namely through the legislation of abortion was strikingly different between different socialist countries. (Gal and Kligman 2000a)

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traditionally assigned family responsibilities. Men were never explicitly addressed as fathers in official social policy discourses and family legislation. They were even legally excluded from a number of family benefits such as childcare leave schemes. Only under exceptional circumstances, such as the death of the mother, could men claim most of the family-related benefits. State socialist family policy thus reinforced a "gendered division of labor within the family as well as a simple pattern of child rearing practices which both enabled women's participation in paid work, but simultaneously also limited the quality of their participation" (Fodor et al. 2002).

In addition to supporting women in their dual roles as workers and mothers, a central goal of social policy under real socialism was income redistribution between households. Income and wage policy, as well as social policy, were designed to avoid undesired income inequality and poverty.[35] Alongside wage controls, direct support for families and state subsidies for relevant products were core means of equalizing per capita income. For example, through Czechoslovakia's policy of deliberate equalization of income, wages, and old-age pensions, income differences among the population were kept very small by international standards. Consequently, the CSSR was the country with the most equal income distribution in the entire state socialist camp. In 1988, only 6 per cent of the population lived below the social minimum level, though living standards stagnated in the 1980s (Nesporova 1999).

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[35] In contrast, some forms of income inequality were politically desired and justified, e.g. higher incomes for high-level party functionaries.

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Considering the overall economic situation of socialist economies, government spending on family benefits was relatively high. For example, at the end of the 1980s, public expenditure on family benefits amounted to 4.4 per cent of GDP in Czechoslovakia, and 3.0 per cent in Poland. Thus, spending for families in Czechoslovakia was higher than in most Western European countries, and comparable only to Sweden. Public expenditure on family programs in Poland, while not as high as in Czechoslovakia, was also higher than in many highly developed Western European welfare states (see Table 3).[36] Relatively, both Poland and the Czech Republic spent a greater share of family benefit expenditure on cash benefits than on in-kind benefits (mainly childcare). Family allowances were the most important public expenditure component after pensions and disability benefits (Kamerman 2003: 12).

Table 3 Public Expenditure on Family Programs, 1989 (Percentage of GDP)

	CSSR	**Poland**	**Sweden**	**Germany**
Total	4.4	3.0	4.4	1.9
Cash benefits	3.1	2.3	2.1	1.3
Family/ child allowance	2.2	2.0	0.9	0.9
Maternity and parental leave	0.5	0.2	1.0	n/a
Other family support	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
In-kind benefits (mostly childcare)	1.1	0.7	2.3	0.6

Source: (UNICEF/ MONEE 1999)

[36] Even the economic crisis in Poland during the 1980s with massive shortages of goods did not result in cuts in the social security provisions.

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Most social security benefits were linked to the employment status of a beneficiary.[37] Typically, contributions to the social security budget were deducted directly from the payroll of enterprises. A range of services was provided through the state or through specialized state-owned companies. Other benefits or services, like crèches and kindergarten, or company-owned holiday residences were provided through the enterprise, sometimes on-site. The level of cash family benefits was typically linked to the worker's remuneration prior to claiming the benefit (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003, Wóycicka 2003): on this basis, for example, Czechoslovakia offered maternity leave and cash benefits, extended maternity leave,[38] and a special leave entitlement and benefit for a parent to care for a sick child. Similarly, through the workplace, the Polish welfare state offered maternity leave and benefits, childcare benefit (i.e. a benefit and leave to care for a sick child), and child-raising leave for employed mothers.

Next to employment-based benefits, some additional family benefits were universally available and paid directly from the state budget. For example,

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[37] While in fact the most important family benefits in socialist countries were provided through the workplace, from the perspective of an individual user the employment-link was in most cases not relevant. Social security entitlements in the planned economy appeared to be granted as a matter of universal non-contributory personal rights.

[38] Before 1989, maternity leave, strictly speaking, and childcare leave together were regularly termed "maternity leave" or "extended maternity leave". They are mentioned here separately to emphasize their conceptual differences. Maternity leave in the sense of ILO Convention 183 is related to the protection of mother and child in relation to the child's birth, while "extended maternity leave", today typically termed childcare leave/ parental leave is provided to a parent to raise a child. With respect to the latter, there is no biological reason to restrict it to the mother.

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Czechoslovakia offered a one-time birth grant and a maternity allowance for all mothers. Poland had a child-raising allowance for mothers, as well as a family allowance, which depended on the family income, but not on a previously existing employment relationship. In 1974, Poland also introduced benefits from an alimony fund to support single parents (almost exclusively mothers) who were determined by court order to be eligible for alimony. With the introduction of this new benefit, the Polish state de-facto assumed the role of fathers who did not pay alimony for their children.[39]

Maternity leave and benefits were the benefits with the longest traditions in state socialist family policy: in the Czech Lands, maternity leave was introduced in 1948,[40] as was the child allowance to help families cover the costs related to raising children. In Poland, maternity leave and benefits had been introduced as early as 1924 and the related provisions were not changed once the Communist party took over. The benefit for caring for a sick child was introduced in 1954. Maternity leaves in general were quite generous and virtually all women entitled to the leave and benefit took it (Kamerman and Kahn 1978).

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[39]According to the law, the state was supposed to claim the money back from the fathers. No exact data are available on the results of the state's collection activities. However, it is common knowledge that the enforcement of the state's claim against non-paying fathers was weak then, and continues to be lax at present.

[40] The Worker's Health Insurance Act from 1928 had already granted maternity benefits to insured women, yet it was not consistently implemented until after WW II (Pavlik 1985).

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V.1.1. Reforms of State Socialist Family Policy

Over time, state socialist family policy responded to pressures coming from the demographic and economic development (declining birth rates, labor surplus), as well as to popular demands for change. Extended maternity/parental leave schemes, for example, were not part of state socialist family policy from the beginning. The same is true for cash benefits attached to parental leave in order to replace lost income. Instead, parental leave schemes were relatively "new" measures in many socialist countries, often only introduced during the 1970s as results of political debates and complaints of working mothers. Parental leave (at the time, typically conceived of as "extended maternity leave") was introduced as a pronatalist measure, therefore responding to a widespread concern about a drop in births rates that demographers brought to the public's attention. In Czechoslovakia, family benefits became an important political issue during the second half of the 1950s, especially after demographic data indicated a decline in fertility.[41] Documents of the 11th, 12th, and 13th Congresses of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, in 1958, 1962 and 1966, respectively, illustrate the growing concern about the income situation of families and the need for support infrastructure for working women (Pavlik 1985). In response to such concerns, a flat-rate birth grant was introduced relatively early on in 1956; however, an extended two-year maternity leave was not introduced until 1970, and it was unpaid. At the same time, a maternity allowance was

[41] As in other countries, birth rates increased immediately after the Second World War, attributed primarily to a greater number of marriages in post-war years (Pavlik 1985). In the 1950s, however, birth rates were on the decline.

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introduced for mothers of two or more children who stayed at home after their maternity leave expired.

In Poland, child-raising leave was first introduced in 1968, consisting of a one-year leave entitlement without pay. In the 1970s, when demand for labor decreased because of growing economic difficulties, and when demographers reported declining birthrates, women started to be encouraged to stay home for longer periods of time(Lohmann and Seibert 2003: 78).[42] Unpaid leave was extended to three years in 1972 (Wóycicka 2003: 194). Paid leave for two years was introduced only in 1980 in response to popular demand, and as a concession on the part of the Communist Party government to the opposition Solidarity trade union which had initiated a campaign on the issue. A great number of Polish women took advantage of the paid childcare leave because the benefits in fact secured a decent standard of living for the mother, and the provision of institutional childcare did not satisfy the demand in the country (Cichocińska 1993).

V.1.2. Institutional Childcare to Support Mothers' Work-Family Reconciliation

Childcare facilities, operated by the state or state-owned enterprises, were another pillar of real-socialist family policy. Since childcare was typically considered a mother's responsibility, childcare facilities were crucial to mothers' ability to combine employment and family responsibilities. In comparison to most Western European

[42] From today's viewpoint, the decline in birth rates during that period appears only minor: While 2.52 in 1965, it declined to 2.2 in 1970 and was 2.27 in 1975 (Lohmann and Seibert 2003: 82).

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countries, childcare was relatively widely accessible, generous, and comprehensive within real socialism on the whole. However, there were significant differences in the availability of childcare between Poland and Czechoslovakia: demand was consistently much higher than the supply of childcare places in Poland, as indicated by waiting lists and overcrowding of the facilities. Here, throughout the entire post-war period, the network of social services, among them childcare services, was less well furnished than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, including in Czechoslovakia (Lohmann and Seibert 2003: 70). Also, there were considerable differences in the availability of childcare services between different regions of the countries, with great disparities sometimes existing between urban and rural settings. Moreover, criticism about the quality of the services provided was widespread: they were often overcrowded, and the ratio between children and employees did not allow for quality care (Kocourková 2002).

In all socialist countries, nursery care enrollment, i.e. care for children below age 3, was always lower than childcare enrollment of children of kindergarten age or older. This may be explained by a number of factors, chief among them the fact that extended maternity leave and benefits allowed mothers to stay home, often for up to three years, with a return guarantee. There is some indication that this happened in Poland with respect to the introduction of the child-raising allowance in 1981. The widespread criticism about the quality of services was certainly another element. This was supported by child psychological research emphasizing the negative consequences of early institutional care. However, there is no data to assess the actual demand for nursery

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facilities, particularly since the well-known lack of facilities and their poor quality may have depressed demand. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether demand or supply factors were the driving forces behind inadequate nursery care provision. In fact, women's low retirement age also supports the very common system of childcare residing within the family.[43]

In Poland, the supply of nursery services declined further during the 1980s, beginning from an already relatively low starting point. Over the entire decade, the number of factory-run nurseries decreased by a quarter, the number of places by a third, and the number of children in nurseries by almost half. However, the diminishment was not uniform. The number of children in nurseries increased during the first half of the decade, and then decreased noticeably during the second half of the decade: the number of total users of nurseries was 194,186 in 1980. It reached its peak in 1986 with 201,510 children, and then declined to 150,631 in 1989 (Cichocińska 1993). The decline in factory nurseries during this period was even greater than the decline in municipal nursery places. Cichocińska emphasizes that the economic situation, in particular tight family budgets, were the main reason for this decline, not demographics: the decline in nursery care enrollment coincided with a withdrawal of subsidies, and a shift toward the calculation of charges on the basis of actual costs.

[43] Women could legally retire at age 55, or could even choose early retirement under particular circumstances (Ratajczak-Tucholka 2009).

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The numbers of Polish children in kindergarten (i.e. between 3 years and primary school) also declined noticeably over the 1980s (Cichocińska 1993). This was particularly felt in previously overcrowded kindergartens in urban areas: in 1980, there were over 130 children for 100 available places attending kindergarten, declining to slightly over 120 in 1985 and slightly over 100 in 1989.[44]

V.2. Male Breadwinner, Dual Earner, Universal Carer – Family Policy Models in the Postindustrial "West"

This section discusses key features of family policy as gender policy in post-WWII Western welfare states. By comparing key features of Western family policy regimes with the state socialist policy model elaborated above, the ground will be prepared for analyzing post-1990 reforms in the later chapters. The comparative overview and the discussion of reform pressures and trends in the concluding section of the chapter will facilitate the elaboration of factors that explain divergence between family policy reforms in the subsequent chapters.

While some social policy measures and particularly poverty assistance policy go back a long time, the Western welfare state as conceptualized by mainstream research

[44] Cichocińska points out that the high share of children in kindergarten is partly a result of the mandatory attendance of children during the year before going to school (Cichocińska 1993: 317).

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developed primarily in the post-World War II period (Deacon 2002).[45] The same is true for family benefits: early family benefits responded to needs that emerged with the industrialization process – but in its most recognizable form -as more or less comprehensive family policy and a component of Western welfare states- family policy also developed mainly after WW II in Western Europe and the Western industrialized world.

Building upon feminist and mainstream welfare state research, I propose to distinguish four ideal-type (in the Weberian sense) of Western family policy regimes:[46]

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[45] Strong roots of many of today's welfare state features originate between the 1880s and 1920s in various European countries, however (Bock and Thane 1994).

[46] My typology is most like Gauthier's, who distinguishes a pronatalist model, a pro-traditional model, a pro-egalitarian model and a non-interventionist model (Gauthier 1996). Other sources that I draw from are (Lewis 1992, Sainsbury 1994, and Lewis 2001). Mainstream comparative family policy research does not share my focus on the gender content of family policy (for example Bahle 1995, Castles 1993, Gauthier 2002, Hantrais 2004, O'Hara Kathy 1998).

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Table 4 Key Characteristics of Family Policy Regimes

	State socialist family policy	**Conservative-statist family policy**	**Liberal-individual f.p.**	**Choice-oriented f.p.**	**Gender-equality promoting f.p.**
Extent of state intervention	Strong	Moderate - Strong	Minimal	Moderate	Strong
Services vs. cash benefits	Cash > services	Cash > services	Cash, vouchers	Cash = services	Services > cash
Importance of income redistribution	High	High	Low	Moderate	Low (moderate with respect to income distrib. betw. men and women
Availability of childcare services	Moderate – high	low	Market-regulated, so access is the main issue	Moderate - high	high
Position re: gender equality	Verbal commitment to equality, practical support for traditional gender relations in family	Maternalist: state support for traditional gender relations	No strong position; could be commitment to equality, could be traditional gender relations	Commitment to *choice*; support to enable families to chose	Commitment to equality; promoting gender role change
Position re: women's employment	Strongly in favor	Minimal to moderate	Moderate	Moderate, if women chose	Strongly in favor
Position re: men's care work	Indifferent	Indifferent	No clear position	Moderate	Active support

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Conservative-statist family policy (similar to Gauthier's *pro-traditional model* and very much like Leitner's *explicit maternalism*) is mainly based on state support for a male-breadwinner/female caretaker family. State intervention in family matters is recognized, but in principle, the state's role is subsidiary to the family, and possibly also to religious institutions. Consequently, in this model the state offers support to families, but does not explicitly support women's labor force participation, or the reconciliation of employment and family life. The state typically guarantees extended childcare leaves, normally with employment protection, but provides only limited support for childcare institutions (it is particularly reluctant to support institutions for the smallest children). For Gauthier, West Germany is a classic example of a pro-traditional family policy model (Gauthier 1996: 203-204).

Liberal-individualist family policy (similar to Gauthier's *non-interventionist model* and to Leitner's *implicit familialism*) is based on a limited role of the state and strong roles for families and markets, respectively. The state is not interested in actively promoting gender equality, although it is not necessarily opposed to gender equality as a principle. While women's employment participation is considered beneficial at the household and macroeconomic level, the state does not actively support the reconciliation of employment and family life through labor market policy or family policy. Benefits around motherhood and child-raising are very limited, if provided at all, as is state support for institutional childcare. If provided, family benefits and services are a result of individual or collective negotiations between employers and employees, or services are

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offered through the market. Anglo-Saxon countries could be described as examples of the liberal-individualist model (Gauthier 1996: 204).

Choice-oriented family policy is similar to both Gauthier's *pronatalist model* and Leitner's *optional familialism*, but does not prioritize pronatalist policy goals to the same degree. It justifies state policy toward the family with the main goal being the creation of conditions in which families have real choices regarding how to decide about their caring/employment/family life arrangements and gender role divisions. In a choice-oriented model, childcare institutions are necessary to facilitate the reconciliation of employment and family life; this model therefore indicates that a high level of women's employment participation is deemed beneficial for the economy and the state is interested to reap the benefits of women's productivity.

In a **gender-equality promoting family policy model** the state explicitly aims at promoting gender equality through family policy. One would find these policies in the upper right corner of Figure 3. The state supports mothers in their employment participation and encourages fathers to assume more caring responsibilities, thus aiming to shift the traditionally unequal division of labor between women and men and actively promoting gender role change. Among other benefits, state investment in childcare services is thus a core element of family policy in this model. Gauthier sees the Nordic countries as representatives of the pro-egalitarian model (Gauthier 1996: 204).

The variety of family policy models in Western industrialized countries serves to well illustrate the influence of other factors and actors that influence family policy,

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alongside the economy and the central state. Among these other influential factors, the influence and prevalence of demographics, cultural traditions, the strength of Christianity as it is embodied in a Christian democratic political orientation and/or an influential position of Christian churches, and in particular, gender culture are most extensively documented. This is in contrast to state socialist family policy, where family policy was more explicitly subordinated under economic and employment policy priorities, resulting in the relative similarity of socialist family policy in different countries.

For Gauthier, for example, the main driving force of family policy is demography (Gauthier 2000a). She argues that state policy vis-à-vis the family is necessarily guided by the state's interest to ensure the reproduction of the population, and all family policy is thus a more or less pronatalist policy. Pfau-Effinger, in turn, holds that cultural factors explain variation between policy models (Pfau-Effinger).

The influence of religion, and specifically Catholicism, on welfare states has been emphasized by others (van Kersbergen 1995, Huber, Ragin, and Stephens 1993, Huber and Stephens 2001, Hornsby-Smith 1999, Castles 1994, Fix 2001, on France: Morgan 2003). They all support the same basic argument, namely that the institutionalization of the principle of subsidiarity in a welfare state is a result of the influence of Catholicism. Consequently, where Catholicism has a strong influence on social policy, the family is affirmed as the smallest "natural" social unit and provider of human welfare, while at the same time the family is regarded as a value as such. On that basis, one could argue that where religion is strong, the state follows either a conservative-statist or a choice-oriented

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policy path – but exactly why one or the other model is followed depends on case-specific factors (and in fact, as the discussion of the Polish case will show, a liberal-individualist model may prevail even though the Catholic Church is strong in the country). Bahle highlights that predominantly Catholic countries share two key trends in family policy: the control of abortion and relatively generous support for families, either directly or through state subsidies to other institutions, for example the health insurance system (Bahle 1995, 101). In contrast to this family-focused tradition in predominantly Catholic countries, Bahle argues, state social action in predominantly Protestant countries has been directed at the individual (Bahle 1995).

VI. Conclusion: Family Policy in Europe – Reform Pressures and Dynamics

VI.1. Family Policy Reforms in Western Europe

Substantive changes have affected family policy frameworks in Western European countries since the 1970s. The changes were consequences of economic transformations, recent trends in welfare state reforms, as well as reactions to European Union social policy legislation.[47] During the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, expenditure for family benefits increased in the EU, on average, despite a decline in population (Petrasova 2008, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)). When compared with expenditure increases in other areas of social spending,

[47] This analysis here reflects changes that have taken place in "old" EU member states. For a discussion of the consequences of EU membership, see the Chapters on Poland and the Czech Republic, respectively.

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particularly for old age and health, however, the family spending increases are small. This might be seen as an indicator of the greater political vulnerability of family benefits and the lack of political clout of those advocating for family policy (Bahle 1995: 134).

A shift in goals has characterized family policy since 1980, particularly within the "old" EU countries: first, policy has increasingly focused on women's labor force integration and employability as a measure against poverty. Second, and similarly, the focus of policy has shifted toward children's future employability and labor market success as conditioned by early childhood development and childcare services. Thus, albeit to different degrees, policies that facilitate the reconciliation of employment and family life have moved to the fore of political attention in EU countries representing all the different family policy models. In addition, Gauthier argues, there has also been a trend toward means-tested rather than universal family benefits in the "old" EU member states (Gauthier 2000b).

At the EU level, countries have increased policy dialogue and exchange of experiences in all aspects of family policy that are relevant in the context of the European Employment Strategy, i.e. work-family reconciliation, women's employability, and care services. During the Lisbon and Barcelona European Summits, in the years 2000 and 2002 respectively, all EU member states agreed on a number of benchmarks to be achieved by 2010; among them was the commitment to increase women's labor force participation to 60 per cent, to ensure the provision of childcare facilities to at least 33% of children under the age of three, and to at least 90 per cent of children between age

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three and the mandatory school age. While the agreed goals are not legally binding, all member states participate in the Open Method of Coordination, the agreed upon process to ensure that progress is indeed achieved at the national level. This methodology foresees the drafting of national action plans, as well as ensures a peer review process based on regular reports about progress towards achieving these EU-wide goals.

Family policy models, institutional set-ups, spending priorities, and family policy discourses continue to diverge between the EU member states (as do the countries' gender policies, for example). However, there is a selective process of convergence in family policy in the prioritization of labor market goals and a focus on family poverty: by virtue of membership, new members automatically accept the targets agreed upon by all previous members, as well as the commitments formulated in the past, and immediately participate in the joint monitoring process. The process of convergence is selective in that it entails only some aspects of family policy (e.g. childcare services), and only extends to the family policy aspects that are closely related to the labor market. As a reflection, family policy at the EU level is not treated as an explicit policy. Instead, the measures in question are directly subsumed under employment policy. In some other aspects that belong to the broad field of gender and family policy, goals are formulated (e.g. increasing women's employment participation) without prescribing policy measures to achieve these goals, so that convergence of policies may, or may not, happen. In yet other areas, such as maternity protection and parental leave/ benefits, for example, binding EU

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legislation exists through EU directives.[48] The EU approach, however, is to formulate the minimum principles for benefits to be guaranteed by the state, while in fact, many member states have a broad variety of benefits that go much beyond the mandated minimum. Importantly, the ongoing assimilation process agreed to by all member states is designed to achieve convergence toward common goals on the basis of exchanging good practices and "blaming and shaming" of those member states that are laggards or do not achieve progress at all – but whenever there are no binding laws, no punishment is foreseen or institutionally possible if the goals are not achieved.

Is the outcome of the partial European convergence process a 'new' family policy in the sense of Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen 2002)? He argues that today, "effective family policy must be child-centered, women-friendly, and must be regarded as a social investment." He further claims that family policy has to respond in particular to new family forms such as single parent families, the rising employment rates of women bringing about growing numbers of two-earner families, and the centrality of maternal employment for the economic well-being of families and children, the significance of the quality of childhood for child development and later development, the

[48] See Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 concerning the implementation of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth and women who are breastfeeding (http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10914.htm); as well as Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by the European social partners (http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10911.htm).

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need for policies that minimize child poverty, social exclusion, and help reconciling employment and family life, and the centrality of gender equality in family policy.

It remains to be seen to what extent the convergence in discourse and harmonization of selected policy measures results in an effective policy convergence, and is in fact implemented in practice. In particular, the integration of gender equality into family policy on the one hand, and labor market policy on the other, remains under debate in many member states. What is striking, however, is the absence of normative statements, and even a normative undertone, in Esping-Andersen's and current EU policy statements about the family.

VI.2. Postsocialist Reform Trends

With the beginning of economic and political reforms in the former state socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/1990 and the EU-approximation process during the 1990s, CEE countries had to reform policies on the basis of their own history as well as the "Western models," while being confronted with new needs emerging from the economic, political, and social reforms. Before entering into a more detailed analysis of the two cases under study here, Poland and the Czech Republic, in the following chapters, this concluding section highlights some aspects of the general conditions for reforms, as well as addresses key influential factors and pressures on postsocialist family policy development.

With the end of state socialism, four factors were most influential on family policy development, often in diverging or even contradictory ways: first, the idea of the

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"family" as an autonomous "private" space that should be kept outside state control was revitalized. This powerful ideological tenet of liberal democracy (despite the fact, as the historical examples presented above have shown, that the state has an unbroken history of exerting its influence over the family and the family's economic role) was matched by an overall discourse, in particular during the early years of the transition process, that the state's "excessive" involvement in the economy and society should be reduced.

A second variable to influence the gender politics of postsocialist family policy was the generalized popular experience and shared postsocialist narrative of the family as a space of resistance against state socialism, or at least a space of solidarity for the oppressed. The family was therefore depicted as a space that the repressive socialist state had never been able to control fully, regardless of its many attempts to do so. This popular notion combined, thirdly, with a widespread anti-feminism that characterized postsocialist societies and gender policy debates: feminism, in particular during the first years of the transition process, was depicted as a "Western" influence or import, alien to the political and social conditions and debates in Central and Eastern European countries.[49] One of the side effects of the negative public response to feminism was a particularly slow development of feminism in academia, in particular in the fields of economics and comparative (social) policy, which otherwise could have produced expert knowledge on the effects of policy reforms. Moreover, the skepticism towards feminism was partly responsible for the often-debated slow development of an independent

[49] See the debate reflected in (Funk and Mueller 1993), and (Šiklová 1998).

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women's movement in most Central and Eastern European countries. Because of the particularities in the development of women's organizations as part of a postsocialist civil society, there was only a small and relatively weak activists' base to debate and respond to family policy reforms (Einhorn 1991, Flam and Fuchs 2003, Fuszara 1997, Lemke, Penrose, and Ruppert 1996, Matynia 1996, Renne 1997, Sloat 2005).

A fourth influential factor was the growing awareness of the massive demographic change that over time came to influence social policy debates in all postsocialist countries: birth rates declined quickly and steeply throughout the region during the 1990s.[50] In conjunction with the surge of nationalist conservative discourses in a great number of countries, demographic arguments have been used to justify demands for anti-abortion as well as purportedly "pro-family" policy demands, such as birth grants. These arguments have matched well with anti-feminist sentiments of the vocal majority of policymakers and the general public.

There is a noticeable tension, however, in the policy impact of the various factors: political demands and interventions that are based on demographic as well as nationalist concerns, and follow a conservative gender-agenda, on the one hand, assign an important active role to the state in influencing family behavior. On the other hand, the liberal

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[50] In most countries, birth rates decreased massively during the 1990s, most notably at the beginning of the decade. By the end of the 1990s, transition countries had the lowest fertility rates in Europe (1.35 as compared to 1.53 in Western Europe), with the Czech Republic (1.13) having the lowest fertility among all EU member states and accession countries, and Armenia, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Latvia close to the Czech rate. Projections for the year 2015 show a continuation of these trends, with further significant decreases in population for

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tradition and the notion of the family as a site of opposition are wary of state interventions into family life. In particular, both would oppose state interventions with the specific goal of changing gender role divisions and dynamics in the family, and would thus be supported by anti-feminists.

The four factors were present, to different degrees, throughout the entire CEE region. Their effect on family policy reforms, however, was mediated by political and institutional conditions, such as the pressures exerted by economic reforms and fiscal austerity, as well as the manifest liberal, i.e. anti-state, discourse that characterized much of the postsocialist reforms. While Bahle argues that the design of cash family benefits and family income redistribution systems is determined by the relationship between the state and the economy, as well as the role and importance assigned to subsidiary structures (Bahle 1995: 114), family policy reform processes in postsocialist CEE show the relevance of a broader range of institutional as well as political-cultural factors.

The studies of Poland and the Czech Republic presented in the following chapters illustrate that the difficulties of measuring family policy impacts, the multiplicity of actors interested and involved in family policy making, and the highly normative content of family policy are key reasons why family policy tends to be a space for populist claims and proposals, and why reforms trajectories are at times unpredictable and highly conjunctural.

Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Hungary, Armenia, and Belarus (Leitner 2006).

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Chapter 3

The Development of a Liberal-Individualist Family Policy in Poland

I. Introduction

Polish family policy underwent numerous reforms during the first decade and a half of postsocialism. As a result, at the time Poland joined the EU, its family policy differed considerably from what it had looked like under state-socialism. While the country's postsocialist family policy did not present a unified picture, it presented key features of a liberal-individualist family policy model most directly.

Two chapters of this dissertation deal with the trajectory of Polish family policy between 1990 and 2004. The present chapter (Chapter 3) covers the descriptive side by presenting the necessary factual information. It offers an overview of the changes in the social policy framework and their impacts on family benefit reforms. In separate sub-parts, developments in maternity leave and benefits, parental leave and cash family benefits, as well as the status of institutional childcare provision, are surveyed and interpreted. The following chapter (Chapter 4) offers an analytical discussion of the reasons for the Polish reform trajectory by discussing the political, institutional, and historical explanations for the country's policy choices.

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Today, state spending for family support in Poland is very low by European standards. Family support benefits are scarce and are available only to families in greatest economic need. But even for those families who receive state support, the benefits are so low that they are not of much help. Family-related services, particularly childcare services, are not widely available and affordable. Gendered role assignments are thus perpetuated: where services are unavailable or unaffordable at market prices, women continue to be the main providers of unpaid care and family work, and they face severe challenges combining employment and family obligations.

The progressive withdrawal of state support did not happen because state help was no longer needed as the country recovered economically during the 1990s. The situation of Polish families illustrates the need for policy interventions: the economic conditions of families have remained precarious throughout the last decade and a half, and family poverty rates, as well as children's poverty rates are high in comparison with other EU countries.[51] Birthrates in Poland today are low, and reports confirm that women face major difficulties to combine their economic role with their family responsibilities. The prevalent gender division of unpaid and caring work within families is highly unequal, to the disadvantage of women (Bystydzienski 2005, Glass and Fodor 2007, Graniewska 2004).

[51] For all years with available data during the 1990s, Poland ranked among the group of countries with the highest poverty rate of children after social transfers. With a risk of poverty rate of 24 %, it had the highest rate of all EU countries in 2007. Poverty rates for households with children, in particular for single parent households in Poland are also consistently among the highest by EU standards. See Eurostat data on living conditions and welfare. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu .

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In contrast to the limited state support available in Poland today, the political and public discourse is filled with positive references to the family. Politicians across the party landscape, alongside representatives of the Catholic Church and often the mainstream media, insist on the importance of the family, its positive role in Polish society, and the need to protect and support the traditional family.

II. Polish Political Reforms since 1990 – the Social Policy Framework

II.1. Initial Economic and Political Reforms

Postsocialist economic and political reforms in the country began with the negotiated elections in 1989 (Bystydzienski 2005). The first post-Communist government initiated radical economic reforms, under the main responsibility of Finance Minister Balcerowicz (a reform commonly referred to as Polish "shock therapy") (Kornai, Haggard, and Kaufman 2001, Pysz 2003, Kolodko [Zycie Gospodarcze No. 47, 1993] 1993). In a period of severe economic crisis and high external debt during the early 1990s, reform measures were meant to lead the country toward a market economy while at the same time establishing a democratic political system (Lavigne 1995, Orenstein 2001). Observers have pointed out that the Solidarity government did not have a direct popular mandate for its market-liberal reform program, but that the "unconditional commitment to the free market" (Lavigne 1995: 101) and strong general support for the Solidarity led government allowed the reformers to follow through with reforms (Orenstein 2001: 35).

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Like all other transition economies, Poland suffered an economic recession at the beginning of the 1990s, reflected in an 18 per cent loss of value of the Gross Domestic Product between 1989 and 1991 (Chłoń-Domińczak 2002: 100f). Employment and real wages also declined significantly, though the former was initially less severe than the latter (see Figure 4 below). While the GDP started to increase again in 1992, employment continued to fall until 1993, thus creating unprecedented demands for state assistance to the unemployed and their dependent families. When employment increased in later years, it did not hold pace with GDP increases. The unemployment rate had its first peak in 1994, declined until the end of 1998, and then grew quickly to above 19 per cent in the years before the country joined the EU (see Figure 5 below).

Even for those who kept their jobs, work did not necessarily ensure a family's well-being during the early 1990s, as real wages had fallen significantly (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2004, Księżopolski 1993). The fall in wages was steepest in 1990, then the level stabilised in 1994. After 1995, the value of real wages started to increase, following the increase of the GDP. It is noteworthy that in the period from 1998-2000, wages and unemployment grew simultaneously. This phenomenon was due to two factors: firstly, the rigorous Labour Code and the relatively strong position of the trade unions made lowering wage levels difficult, and secondly, the labor market was fragmented, with unemployment in some sectors (i.e. heavy industry) and a labor shortage in others (i.e. services).

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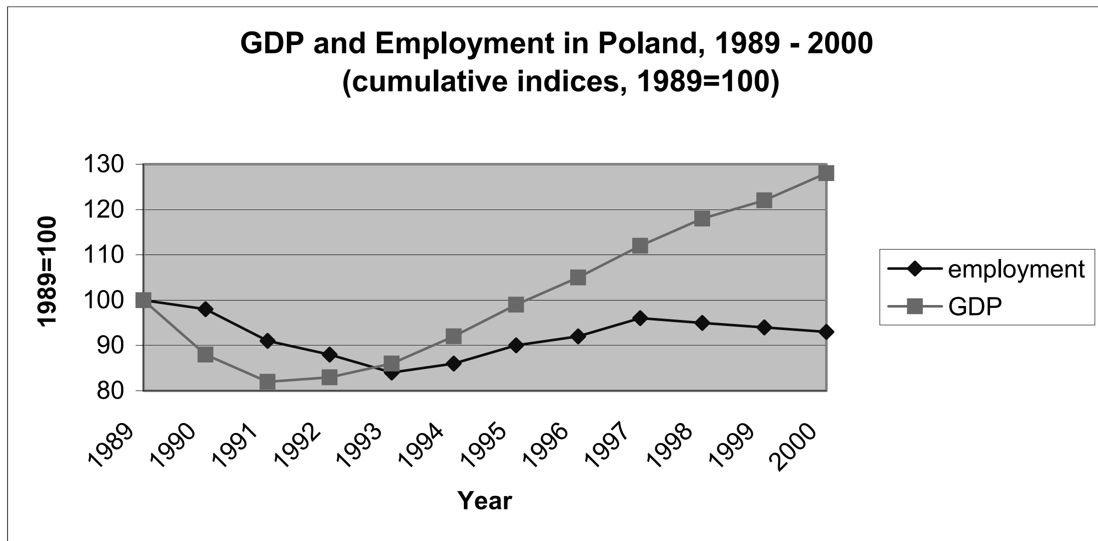
Figure 4 GDP and Employment in Poland, 1989-2000



Source: (Chłoń-Domińczak 2002: 101), based on data from the Central Statistical Office

Gender was, and continues to be, an important structuring feature of the Polish labor market (Bystydzienski 2005, Gontarczyk-Wesola 1997, Simienska 1997b, Kotowska 1995, Rawls 1995). Gender differences in employment opportunities and levels of unemployment thus facilitated the strengthening of a traditional division of labor between women and men in unpaid and care work. During the 1990s, economic activity rates of both women and men declined considerably: by 2000, men's activity rate had dropped from 74 to 64 per cent, while the rate for women had dropped from 57 to 49 per cent (Wóycicka 2003: 267). Not only was women's economic activity was very low by European standards, women's unemployment was also higher than men's. Women started

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to be heavily affected earlier in the decade, and their unemployment grew more steeply and faster then men's: in 1992, women's unemployment rate was 15.2 per cent, compared to 12.4 per cent for men. In 2000, the male unemployment rate had risen to 14.2 per cent, the female unemployment rate to 18.1 per cent (Wóycicka 2003: 270). Since then, the differences in unemployment rates for women and men have been decreasing, though they overall remain on a high level: in mid 2003, the unemployment rate for men was 18.9 per cent, and for women it was 19.9 per cent (Chłoń-Domińczak 2004).

Figure 5 Unemployment Rate in Poland, 1990-2005

Source: ILO Key Indicators of the Labor market (KILM)

II.2. Addressing the Social Consequences of Economic Reforms

To address some of the immediate social consequences of the economic transition process, in 1990, the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs Jacek Kuroń developed a

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new social welfare system. It was primarily addressed at alleviating the consequences of unemployment.[52] Newly introduced social welfare benefits addressed problems such as homelessness, unemployment, orphan-hood, disability, and income poverty.

By expanding state support mechanisms to assist citizens in coping with the consequences of the economic reforms, social policy practice in this period partially contradicted the economic reform discourse which promoted the withdrawal of the state from social welfare. The contradicting logic and discourses also reflected a power struggle between Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz and Labour Minister Kuroń. Their divergent opinions shaped the course of many reform debates in the early 1990s.

In line with not only the prevailing neoliberal discourse of better targeting assistance, but also past traditions of state assistance, most of the benefits introduced after 1990 were means-tested. From a family policy perspective one benefit was of particular importance: the guaranteed periodic benefit, which was paid to single parents (in practice mostly women) who exhausted their right to unemployment benefits, as long as the child was less than seven years of age or in primary school. The benefit was paid for three years, at a level of 88 per cent of the net minimum wage during the first year, and 70 per cent during the latter two years.

[52] A central component of the welfare system developed under Kuroń was the unemployment benefit, which Poles colloquially referred to as "Kuroniówka."

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II.3. Political Instability Affected Social Policy

Numerous governmental changes and an overall climate of political instability characterized Poland between 1990 and 1993.[53] On overview of the consecutive governments of the period is provided in Table 5. The economic situation started to turn in 1992, with rising GDP and declining inflation, resulting in massive popular discontent with the market-liberal government and leading to a political swing to the left in 1993. A new government was formed by a coalition of the post-communist Alliance of the Democratic Left (SLD) with the Polish People's Party (PSL). It promised to continue the general reform path designed by Solidarity economists, but placed more emphasis on social policy under its "Strategy for Poland" program (Orenstein 2001). However, wages and employment levels only began to rise in 1994 (Wóycicka 2003: 188). During the same year, more than 25 per cent of all Polish families could not afford to purchase the basic necessities of food and clothing (Seibert 2001: 42). While Poland became one of the fastest growing CEE countries during the middle of the decade, the share of the population below the poverty line circled around 12 to 17 per cent between 1995 and the turn of the century (Lohmann and Seibert 2003: 16). Unemployment during these years peaked at 15 per cent in 1995 (Chłoń-Domińczak 2002: 101).

In the 1997 elections, the political pendulum swung back to the right: the right-wing Election Action Solidarity (AWS), the electoral coalition linked to the Solidarity movement, became the largest party in parliament, entering a coalition with the Freedom

53 For more detail on the political shifts during these years, see, for example (Orenstein 2001).

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Union. The change in government took place just as the economic situation began to change for the worse again. Beginning in 1998, economic growth slowed down considerably, while unemployment continued to grow: from 6.8 per cent in 1997, GDP growth declined to 4.4 per cent in 1998, and to only 1 per cent in 2001 (Wóycicka 2003: 188). Unemployment at the end of the 1990s was over 14 per cent for men and over 18 per cent for women. After extended political debates, major social policy reforms were enacted in 1998/1999. These included a radical reform of the education system, the national health insurance system, and the national pension scheme, which was partially privatized (Chłoń-Domińczak 2002).

A further radical political shift took place in the 2001 elections, when AWS lost its representation in parliament. Political power returned to the post-communist SLD (in a joint list with the small Labour Union, UP), in coalition with the Peasants' Party (PSL). However, this left-wing government under Prime Minister Miller also prioritized fiscal austerity over social policy. This was reflected, for example, in the lowering of income limits for means-tested benefits and in changes of benefit indexation rules. After the coalition broke in 2003, SLD/UP formed a minority government, which weakened its decision-making powers considerably.

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Table 5 Polish Governments (1989-2005)

	Prime minister	**Party**	**Governing coalition**	**President**
1989 - 1991	Tadeusz Mazowiecki	None (Solidarity) (R)	OKP, ZSL, SD	Wojciech Jaruzelski 1989-1990
1991	Jan Krzysztof Bielecki	Liberal Democratic Congress (R)	KLD, ZChN, PC, UD, SD	Lech Wałęsa 1990-1995
1991-1992	Jan Olszewski	Centre Agreement (R)	PC, ZChN, PSL,PL, PSL „S“	
1992	Waldemar Pawlak	Polish People's Party		
1992-1993	Hanna Suchocka	Democratic Union (R)	UD, ZChN, KLD, PL, PChD, SChL, PPG, PChD	
1993-1995	Waldemar Pawlak	Polish People's Party (L)	SLD, PSL	
1995-1996	Józef Oleksy	Democratic Left Alliance (L)	SLD, PSL	Aleksander Kwaśniewski 1995-2005
1996-1997	Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz	Democratic Left Alliance (L)	SLD, PSL	
1997-2000	Jerzy Buzek	Solidarity Electoral Action (R)	AWS, UW (left coalition June 2001)	
2001-2004	Leszek Miller	Democratic Left Alliance (L)	SLD, UP, PSL (left coalition 2004)	
2004-2005	Marek Belka	Democratic Left Alliance (L)	SLD, UP	

Source: (Bednarz 2006)

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III. Post-1990: Pro-Family Discourse, Diminishing Practical Support

III.1. Declining State Spending on Families

The overall trend in Polish family policy reforms was a progressive withdrawal of state support and a strengthening of the family's responsibilities. It is thus justified to call the Polish family policy liberal-individualist familialism.[54] However, family policy reforms have not followed a straightforward pattern. Instead, reforms consisted in multiple small reform steps. Individual steps sometimes reversed previous ones, reflecting shifting political priorities. Throughout the 1990s, family support measures were not conceived as part of a larger family policy framework with specified goals and institutional responsibilities for family policy.

It is possible, however, to describe the general lines of reforms: increasing emphasis was placed on maternity and birth-giving. These priorities echoed the state socialist protective policies, but responded to an even greater extent to the post-1990 conservative interpretation of the concept of a family and gender roles. In turn, the emphasis on the state's role in supporting the upbringing of children, particularly the need to support reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities – a cornerstone of state socialist family policy discourses – has decreased. This is reflected in the entitlement structures that govern access to family benefits, in spending trends for cash

[54] Saxonberg and Szelewa call it "implicit familialism," see Chapter 1 (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007).

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benefits, and in the availability and cost of institutional childcare provision (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007, Fodor et al. 2002).

The decade of the 1990s did not bring about a change in the basic entitlement criteria for family benefits. Almost all of them continue to be either employment-linked (maternity leave, child care leave, child raising leave), or income-tested (family allowance), or both (child raising benefits) (Fultz, Ruck, and Steinhilber 2003). The only benefit that was not income-tested during most of the 1990s was the alimony benefit. However, it was tied to a court ruling establishing the entitlement to alimony in the first place. For an interim period of three years, between 1989 and 1993, income-testing of the family allowance was also abolished; however, it was reintroduced as part of Prime Minister Suchocka's reform program.

A noticeable general trend in cash support for families over the course of the 1990s is the overall decline in spending for family benefits and in the real value of the benefits provided (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)), (see Figure 6).[55] Family benefits were more affected by cuts than other social security benefits, for example pensions (Fultz and Steinhilber 2003: 24; Wóycicka 2003: 200). Note that during the same time, total social expenditure was increasing: for example, between 2001 and 2002, the total share of social expenditures of the GDP rose from 18.4

[55] The decline in the real value of benefits has been partly the result of changing indexation rules for the benefits (e.g. 2002 for family allowance).

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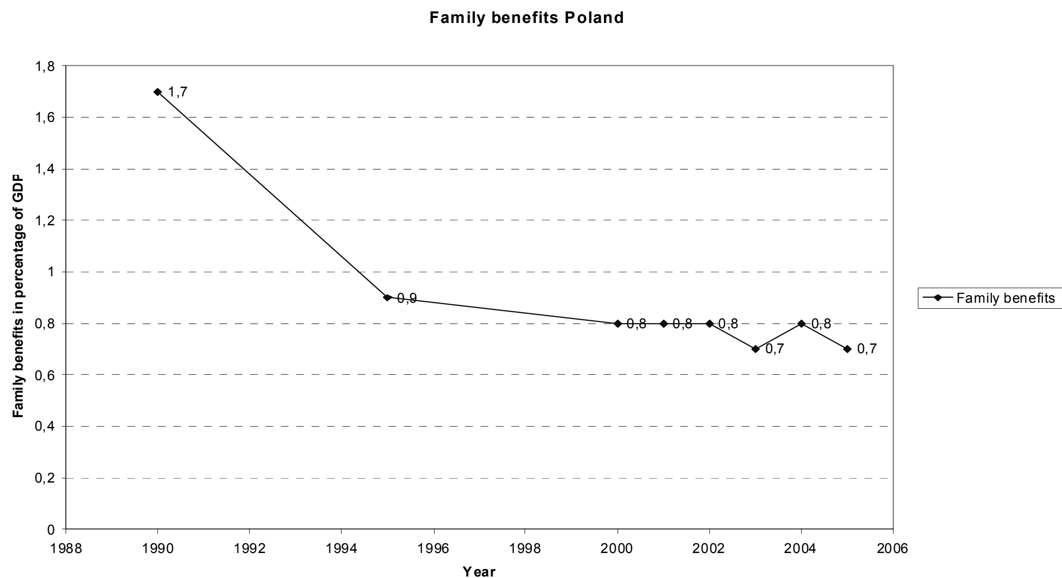
per cent to 18.9 per cent. During the same period, however, the share of expenditures for sickness, family, and nursing benefits dropped by 12.5 per cent.

Figure 6 Family Benefits as Percentage of GDP. Poland 1990-2005



Source: OECD StatExtracts

The overall number of beneficiaries for cash family benefits has also declined noticeably. Depending on the benefit scheme, the numbers declined between 30-60 per cent, despite the fact that increasing poverty boosted demand for state support. The total number of beneficiaries for the family allowance, for example, declined from 10.8 million in 1990 to 7.3 million in 2000 (Wóycicka 2003: 202). Between 1998 and 2002, the number of persons collecting child care benefits declined from 173,000 to 151,000

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(Ministry of Economy 2003: 44). With respect to child care leave and allowance, a similar trend is visible: in the late 1990s, women with low-paid but permanent jobs tended to take parental leaves and claim parental allowance over four times less frequently than before the 1996 reform (Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V. (GVG) 2003: 26).[56]

A decline is also very much visible in the share of family benefits in household income. This is particularly visible in the case of the largest benefit, the family and nursing allowance, which underwent the greatest decline. Its share of net household income dropped from more than four per cent at the end of the 1980s to 1.24 per cent by the end of the 1990s (Wóycicka 2003).

At the beginning of 2004, a new encompassing reform of family benefits was agreed upon. It was intended to simplify the system and improve benefit allocation and affected all family benefits that were not employment-related (Chłoń-Domińczak 2004). Henceforth, a single income criterion determined eligibility and a better monitoring of beneficiaries and administration of benefits through a special institution was introduced. From May 2004 onwards, a single means-tested family benefit was introduced, supplemented by additional benefits for specific circumstances, such as child birth or single parenthood (Chłoń-Domińczak 2004).

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[56] Observers claim that the decline in the use of child care leave (i.e. leave to care for a sick child) and benefits is a result of the fear of women that they will face negative consequences from their employers (Heinen and Wator 2006, Steinhilber 2003).

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III.2. Maternity Leave and Benefits

The development of maternity leave and benefits since 1990 illustrates particularly well the different approaches of the Polish Right and Left in family policy. The Right focused on expanding maternity leave and spending on childbearing – while criminalizing abortion. Conversely, the Left emphasized the need for fiscal restraint of the welfare state and cutting maternity leave in the interest of women's employment. In this context, the length of maternity leave and the payment of birth grants have been among the most contested pieces of postsocialist family policy throughout the decade.

Maternity leave and benefits, introduced in 1924, and reformed in 1974 and 1977, are among the oldest social security benefits provided in Poland. Offering protection for women during pregnancy and after childbirth, they have traditionally constituted a central feature of state support for social reproduction and protective policies for women. At the beginning of the 1990s, there were no big debates centered on maternity benefits. The length of maternity leave was 16 weeks for the birth of the first child, 18 weeks for the birth of the second child, and 26 weeks in case of a multiple birth. Since 1974, the level of the benefit was 100 per cent of the woman's remuneration for the last three month prior to the leave. None of Poland's governments altered the maternity leave and benefits until 1999.[57] Yet as a reflection of its 1999 "Pro Family Policy Program," the conservative AWS/ Freedom Union government decided to extend the leave to 20 weeks

[57] Only the maternity leave for individual farmers was changed in 1991. Previously, they were entitled to 14 and 16 weeks of leave at 1/30 of the state minimum pension for each day. This was cut to 8 weeks for any birth at same level of benefit.

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for the first and successive children, and to 30 weeks in the case of a multiple birth (valid from 2000), and beginning in 2001 to increase it to 26 weeks and 36 weeks, respectively.

The extension of maternity leave was heavily criticized by the left SLD opposition as well as by employer's organizations and women's NGOs at the time, who claimed that a longer maternity leave would make the employment of women more costly and unattractive to the employer. Therefore, the argument ran that the reform would be detrimental for women's employment opportunities, in addition to being costly for the social insurance budget. Consequently, after the change in government in 2001, the length of maternity leave was cut back to 16 and 18 weeks, respectively, by the new SLD-led government. Yet, at that time, the justification for the cut-backs focused on the higher expenditures connected to a longer leave rather than on women's employment perspectives.

Alongside the extension of maternity leave to 20 weeks in 2001, a right for fathers to utilize two weeks out of the whole leave period was introduced. Yet as there was no information campaign or public showcases related to this expansion of paternal rights, its Polish fathers have been extremely laggard in taking advantage of it. Even more troubling, some observers claim that most fathers do not even know about their legal entitlement to a share of the maternity leave.[58] The special right for two weeks leave for fathers has survived the subsequent cutbacks of the overall maternity leave under the left-wing government.

[58] Interview with Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak, Warsaw, 9 February 2006.

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State support in the form of cash for women during pregnancy and immediately after the birth of a child was the second heavily contested family policy topic during the 1990s. During the very controversial abortion debates in the early 1990s, and again later during their second turn in government, conservatives and the Catholic Right effectively softened the criticism against the anti-abortion law by channeling funds to supporting pregnant women.[59] During the lively parliamentary debates about the introduction of the very rigid anti-abortion legislation in 1991/1992, the concept of a new cash benefit for pregnant women and women with a small child arose as a centerpiece of conservative family policy.[60] The benefit was income-tested (according to the criteria established in the Social Welfare Act), foreseeing a maximum payment for 12 months at a level of 28 per cent of the average monthly earnings (Wóycicka 2003). In addition, a one-time cash grant was given for every newborn child in a low-income household. In 1999, under the AWS government, the amount of the one-time grant was raised to 20 per cent of the average wage.

While conservative parliamentarians lauded the link between anti-abortion and mother/child benefits, soon after its introduction reports pointed out that some local

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[59] Interview with Ewa Tomaszewska, Warsaw, February 6, 2006. Interview with Kinga Lohmann, Warsaw, 13 November 2001.

[60] After several years of fierce parliamentary and social debates about abortion, on January 7, 1993, the Law on Family Planning, Legal Protection of the Fetus and the Conditions of Permissibility of Abortion, effective from 16 March, 1993 was passed. The law prohibits legal abortions for social reasons and abortions performed by doctors in private clinics. An abortion may be granted for medical reasons (the pregnancy endangers the life or severely threatens the health of the pregnant woman), for fetal malformations, or for legal reasons if the pregnancy has resulted from a criminal act (Zielińska 2000).

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communities charged with paying out the benefits refused to do so on budgetary grounds (Zielińska 2000). In this context, some lawyers argued that this refusal was a violation of the constitutional principle of social justice (Zielińska 2000: 48).

During the course of the 1990s, consecutive left-wing governments saw themselves forced to deal with the fact that program expenditures dramatically exceeded estimates conducted under their predecessor conservative governments. Consequently, in 1994, the left-wing SLD government in power cut the benefit duration for the benefits for pregnant women from twelve to four months and reduced its amount, although only moderately. At the time, women parliamentarians from the SLD were also successful in proposing the reintroduction of abortion on social grounds – a logical move, since the benefit had been introduced together with the very strict anti-abortion law. Yet the pro-choice success was only short-lived: the law on more liberal access to abortion passed parliament again after fierce public debates in 1996, but was quickly halted by a ruling of the Constitutional Court in 1997 (Zielińska 2000).

A similar cut to a family benefit under a left-wing government occurred in 2002, when the one-time maternal benefit was abolished. Contrary to its pre-election promise, however, the government did not liberalize the anti-abortion law. Observers have ascribed this to an agreement between the left-wing government and the Catholic Church: the anti-abortion law would remain unchanged in exchange for the Church' support in the run-up for the EU accession referendum.[61]

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[61] Interview with Kinga Lohmann, Warsaw, 5 February 2006.

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The consequence of this reform trajectory was in fact the delinking of the prohibition against abortion from the financial support of women during pregnancy. While the Right had linked both, the reforms under Left governments contributed to leaving pregnant women without financial support from the state while being denied a free choice in the field of sexual and reproductive rights.[62]

III.3. Parental Leave and Cash Family Benefits

Like maternity benefits, cash support to families, as well as provisions for leave, and benefits to care for a small or sick child played an important role in state socialist Polish family policy. Consequently, they were a main target of reforms after 1990 and an important area in which the postsocialist state demonstrated its preference for a traditional caring role of women.

The history of cash support to families in Poland has a long history: a basic income-tested family allowance for low-income families was first introduced in 1947. An income-tested alimony benefit to support single parents, typically women who were unable to collect alimony from the absent parent was introduced in 1974. Short-term leave and cash benefits to care for a sick child ("Child Care Leave") were first introduced

[62] After the right-wing election victory in 2005, the Sejm, dominated by a minority government of the Party Law and Justice (PiS), was supported by the right-wing nationalist League of Polish Families and Self-Defense and once again re-introduced a universal birth grant, the *becikowe*, in early 2006. Simultaneously, the pro-life lobby gained again even more public attention, putting forward the demand for abolishing abortion entirely, which was combined with the proposal for a constitutional change that introduced the requirement that the Polish state provide protection to life "from its conception."

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in 1954.[63] Basic parental leave ("Child Raising Leave") was introduced in 1968, and was initially granted for one year without pay. In the 1970s, when demand for labor decreased because of growing economic difficulties, and when demographers reported declining birthrates, women started to be encouraged to stay home for longer time periods (Lohmann and Seibert 2003: 78).[64] Unpaid leave was extended from one to three years in 1972 (Wóycicka 2003: 194). An income-tested two-year allowance during child raising leave was introduced in 1981, in response to demands from the Solidarity trade union in the negotiations with the government.[65]

The struggle for the introduction of a cash allowance during child raising leave is an interesting precedent of "early" family policy positions of the Solidarity trade union: confronted with severe labor market problems in the early 1980s, Solidarity was able to convince the Communist government to introduce a child raising allowance, showing that it was "cheaper to pay women to stay home with small children rather than building and maintaining childcare institutions"[66]. Indeed, in the twenty-one points of the Gdansk agreements between the Communist government and Solidarity in 1980, only one

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[63] Leave could also be taken to take care of a healthy child during an unforeseen closure of a childcare institution or school, or if the spouse caring for the child was temporarily unable to do so because of illness, childbirth, or hospitalization.

[64] From today's viewpoint, the decline in birth rates during that period appears only minor: while 2.52 in 1965, it declined to 2.2 in 1970 and was 2.27 in 1975 (Lohmann and Seibert 2003: 82).

[65] Note the difference: child raising leave with employment protection is granted for three years, the allowance is paid for two years.

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demand addressed the situation of women workers: the demand to introduce paid child care leave (Heinen 2002). Nearly 90 per cent of the Polish women who were eligible took advantage of the leave as soon as it carried an allowance (Heinen and Wator 2006: 196).[67] Thus, between 1980 and the late 1990s, Solidarity's position was able to bridge all economic and social change and show continuity on the financial and moral benefits of home care for small children and on women's temporary detachment from the labor market for caring purposes.

After more than a decade of reforms, cash support for families was very low in absolute numbers: from May 2004, the family allowance was 43 złotys a month for each of the first two children, 53 for the third, and 66 for the fourth and subsequent children. Supplements were, for example, 500 złotys at childbirth, 400 złotys per month during child raising leave, or between 170 and 750 złotys per month for single parents, depending on the number of children in the household (in May 2004, 1 US$ = 3.7 PLN) (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2004). In 2004, the Council of Europe's European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) review of the implementation of the European Social Charter in Poland considered the family allowance "to be manifestly inadequate, especially once it is taken into consideration that

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[66] Interview with Ewa Tomaszewska, Warsaw, 6 February 2006. As an elected Solidarnosc representative, Ms. Tomaszewska had been a close observer of the negotiations leading to the Gdansk agreement in 1980.

[67] Heinen also refers to calculations by Polish authorities in the 1970s and 1980s, showing that child care leave, even accompanied by benefits, "turned out to be a third as expensive as child care centers, provided that the benefits given did not exceed a quarter of the average salary" (Heinen 2002: 88).

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the other existing family benefits are provided to a limited number of beneficiaries and that the Polish tax system does not take into account children, to the exception of single parents" (European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) 2004: 22).

III.4. Who Cares? The Status of Institutional Childcare Provision

During state-socialism, child care institutions were under the mandate of the state administration, or were organized at the premises of state-owned enterprises. During the early years of state socialism, the number of childcare places grew massively: from almost none in 1939 to 50,000 places in crèches in 1954, and from 80,000 places in kindergartens to nearly 400,000 during the same time period (Heinen 2002: 74). However, in the later decades of state socialism, there was much less emphasis on institutional childcare provision. In comparison with other state socialist countries, institutional childcare in Poland was insufficient, both in terms of the number of institutions, as well as in terms of the quality of care provided (measured for example in staff qualification and the ratio of children to staff member) (Heinen 2002, Heinen and Wator 2006). Attendance rates were relatively low, in particular for children below three years of age: crèches never accommodated more than 5 per cent of children up to age two, for example, and only somewhere between 40-50 per cent of three to six-year olds attended kindergarten in the years when attendance was greatest. The fact that kindergarten attendance became mandatory for six-years old children in 1970 served to increase overall attendance rates (Wóycicka 2003, Heinen and Wator 2006). In 1989, 34

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per cent of three to six year old children attended kindergarten. Because demand was greater than the supply of institutional childcare, the existing institutions were overcrowded: in 1980, for example, 124 children attended kindergarten per 100 places (Wóycicka 2003: 203).

As a consequence of the poor institutional framework for childcare, most young children (i.e. below three years of age) in state socialist Poland were cared for by their mothers on child raising leave, or by other family members, in particular grandmothers. The tradition of home care for children was supported by the state as well: child care leave was extended from one to three years in 1972, and an income-tested parental benefit was introduced in 1982, which was the main women-focused demand of Solidarity in the Gdansk agreements in 1980. To facilitate the caring role of elderly women (and to take off pressure from the labor market), a 1990 law encouraged early retirement for women at 55 years of age. A large group of retired women support younger family members, for example in childcare (Heinen 2002).

With the reform of public administration after 1989, local governments (*gminas*) were made responsible for the operation of crèches and kindergartens. As a consequence of declining revenues and simultaneously increasing responsibilities of local governments, the childcare infrastructure suffered considerably: state spending (state and local government) for child care declined from 0.46 to 0.39 per cent of GDP, a decline of 17 per cent (Wóycicka 2003: 204). Many company-based childcare institutions were closed as privatization occurred.

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Over the course of the 1990s, the overall number of kindergartens dropped by nearly a third, and the number of crèches by about two-thirds, plummeting to a meager 469 institutions for the whole country by 1996 (Instytut Pracy Spraw Socjanych (Institut for Labor and Social Studies) 1997: 60). The decline was steeper in the countryside as compared to within larger cities. However, at the same time enrollment rates of 3-6 year old children increased from 32.8 to 39.1 per cent. The increasing enrollment rates illustrate that the closing of facilities was not only the result of the decline in birth rates, but also a political decision that was often justified with financial arguments. Moreover, the fewer facilities that remained tended to accept more children, often at the expense of quality (Heinen and Wator 2006).

During the same time period, operating costs of childcare institutions increased because state subsidies on basic goods and services were eliminated. The local governments (*gminas*) passed on the higher operating costs for childcare services to parents in the form of higher fees, so that care costs have risen noticeably.[68] Studies show that parents pay between 20 to 40 per cent of the operating cost of a childcare institution, which amounts to about 19 per cent of an average wage (Heinen and Wator 2006: 204; Balcerzak-Paradowska 1994). It has been estimated that the ratio of the average child care fee to the average wage between 1992 and 1996 increased by zero to two per cent, followed by a further increase between 1996 and 2001 of three to five per cent. On the

[68] The cost for crèches is lower than for kindergartens.

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whole, however, the proportion of the operating costs of child care institutions that comes from parents' fees has not increased dramatically.[69].

Enrollment rates in Polish childcare institutions at the beginning of the twenty-first century were low: Only about 2 per cent for children below three years attended care institutions, and below 40 per cent for 3 and 4 years old children went to a kindergarten, rising to barely 46 per cent for 5 years olds (OECD 2008). In addition, the regional distribution of care facilities is remarkably uneven: in rural areas only 13.5 per cent of 3 to 5 year old children attend a kindergarten (Comenius Foundation for Child Development 2007). Clearly, this is far from the EU targets for childcare attendance of 90 per cent of children between three years of age and the mandatory school age, and for at least 33 per cent of children under three years of age. Despite the fact that achieving the EU target is virtually impossible, none of the Polish governments since 1990 has included investment in the network of childcare institutions among its key family policy priorities. Instead, the question of the low level of institutional childcare and its direct impact on

[69] Calculations from 2000 show that the cost of a place in a kindergarten for an average income earner is relatively high when there is more than one child in the family: for two children it is about 37 per cent of the net average wage for women, and increases to about 76 per cent of the wage of a minimum wage earner. The share of incomes of child care institutions paid by parents has been estimated to have grown by one to two per cent between 1992 and 1996, and two to three per cent between 1996 and 2001 (estimate by Olejniczuk-Merta, 2002, quoted in Wóycicka 2003: 216). About half of the kindergartens reduce or annul payments for children from low-income families or for families with many children, however (Wóycicka 2003).

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parents' possibilities to combine employment with family responsibilities, was absent from family policy documents, as well as gender equality discourses.[70]

Finding affordable, quality childcare is a concrete problem for many Polish families today, particularly in rural areas. However, the connection between institutional childcare and women's economic participation plays only a marginal role in public debates, apart from the contributions of a relatively small group of academics and a few women's NGOs. Some reports mention a low demand for institutional childcare, in particular for children below three years of age, but other experts in the field claim that low attendance is not a matter of demand but of inadequate supply (Heinen and Wator 2006, Comenius Foundation for Child Development 2007). Even for families interested in using care facilities, the quality of the institutions may not be up to the standards set by parents, and bureaucratic procedures stand in the way of accessibility and user-friendliness.[71]

However, representative data on demand for childcare services are hard to come by, as are data about alternative or informal childcare practices. It is well-known that there is a market for home-based childcare in households of middle-class urban families,

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[70] Heinen and Wator report that the secretary of the Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status for Women and Men "dodged the question [about the inadequate investment of the government in child care centers] ... by declaring that it was outside her portfolio" (Heinen and Wator 2006: 208).

[71] For example, many childcare centers accept only children with two employed parents, regardless of the availability of places. Subsidies for the childcare fees are available but the application procedure is discouraging (Heinen and Wator 2006).

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often provided by immigrants from Ukraine or Russia, yet the size of this market has not been documented.[72]

Data on the overall availability or trends in availability and cost of childcare institutions are not mentioned in the key governmental documents dealing with family policy between 1990 and 2004, nor are any goals formulated as to the state's role in supporting the provision of institutional childcare, be it on the central or local level. In 2005, the coalition government of the Conservative Right and Justice (PiS) party and the League of Polish Families even considered the introduction of a maternal wage, combined with the closure of childcare facilities (Zycie Warszawy 2005).[73]

IV. Conclusions

In their overall impact, the numerous reform steps in Polish family policy since 1989 have moved the country from a state socialist family policy regime with important familialist traits to a liberal-individualist familialist policy regime. The access to and effectiveness of state support to families was severely limited and the burden on the family significantly increased. A decade and a half after the end of state socialism, family

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[72] Data on private/ informal childcare is hard to come by, however. The Council of Europe Family Policy Database, for example, provides no information on Poland (www.coe.int/familypolicy/database).

73 After the country became an EU member, the focus of family policy continued. Just alike the declarations – and omissions - of previous governments, the governmental strategy for social policy 2007-2013 did not include child care centers as areas of intervention for the central state (Department of Public Benefits 2007).

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benefits were reduced to a social safety net for those in greatest need. Moreover, family benefits became an instrument used in the promotion of a conservative family model and increasing birth rates, as well as an implement to help gloss over the hardship created by a restrictive anti-abortion legislation. The limited role of the state in the support of families is reflected particularly in the low investment in childcare infrastructure. Alongside ideological considerations, fiscal constraints have driven social policy. Nevertheless, family policy has a marginal position in social policy debates in postsocialist Poland.

The reform steps that were implemented often contradicted the pro-family rhetoric present in the political and public discourse. Strong pro-family statements and value-based arguments, it appears, serve to counterbalance what amounts to limited support in practice. Family policy was closely intertwined with the debates over access to abortion in Poland during the 1990s: gender conservatives, in joint action with the Catholic Church, have controlled the scope of family policy and its reforms. The state has been weak against the strength of religious and cultural norms.

The Polish family support system and its reforms show a clearly path dependent pattern, in which gendered norms and institutional legacies have reinforced each other. This is true, for example, with respect to the tradition of income-testing of benefits – the notion of the "deserving" and the "undeserving" has been inherent in cash family benefits, even under state socialism. It is also the case with respect to the record of state-

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sponsored child care, where Poland has always placed the burden of greater responsibility on mothers and families rather than the state.

Polish family policy reforms happened in relative isolation from European family policy trends and debates. Since 1989, family policy and gender equality policy were not conceived of as interrelated or mutually supportive policy fields. Instead, gender equality and family policy are rather understood as mutually excluding or even opposed policy fields. Concerns that have come to predominate family policy debates in many Western European states over the course of the 1990s, such as women's economic rights, gender equality in the family, and the reconciliation of employment and family life, have played a very marginal role (if they have played a role at all)in Polish public debates. At the moment when Poland joined the EU, its family policy was more liberal than that of many other member states, while at the same time its family rhetoric was more conservative.

Why has Polish family policy followed this particular road in family policy reforms? The following chapter develops an explanation for Poland's unique course of reforms, highlighting political and institutional dynamics and the very specific actor constellations in Poland during the first decade and a half of policy reforms since 1990.

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Chapter 4

Explaining Family Policy Reforms in Poland

I. Introduction

To explain the Polish family policy reform trajectory, this chapter analyzes the political dynamics and reform debates between 1990 and 2004 in light of the institutional traditions and the legacy of the state socialist family policy tradition. My analysis highlights four particular characteristics of the Polish case. *First*, family policy after 1990 was strongly influenced by the institutional structures set up during state socialism, as well as cultural legacies, norms, and day-to-day practices stemming from state socialist or even earlier periods in Polish history.

Second, family policy reforms had a marginal position on the Polish reform agenda during the 1990s. The absence of established procedures and designated spaces for family policy debates to take place within, and the weakness and instability of administrative institutions responsible for family policy during the entire period encompassed by this study further exacerbated the marginalization of family policy as a social policy concern.

Third, family values and (mostly conservative) social norms came to bear strongly in the Polish family policy reforms. Family policy discourses of the main political actors

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reflected deeply rooted underlying normative differences. On the one hand, a preference for traditional family values was widespread and crossed party lines. Catholicism was a shared foundation of reform actors, with the Catholic Church driving a strongly moralistic pro-family discourse. One the other hand, at the level of concrete family policy, clear differences between proposals were visible: while the post-Solidarity center-Right garnered support through populist calls for welfare state generosity, the reformed Socialists called for welfare state austerity and increased individual responsibility. Despite the strength and shared value of Catholic family values in postsocialist Poland, general state family support was not expanded.

Instead, the main attention was focused on restricting access to abortion and birth-related benefit schemes. The primary line of conflict lay between maternalists/familialists and gender equality advocates. Throughout the period encompassed in this study, family policy became even more maternalist than it had been before. Gender equality advocates were clearly in a marginal political position. This constellation can be partly explained by the fourth characteristic of family policy reforms.

Fourth, debates about reproductive rights and abortion virtually crowded out family policy debates for much of the 1990s. Where family policy was treated at all, the policy agenda was narrowly focused on pregnancy and childbirth, and family benefits were conceptualized as secondary to the politics of reproduction. In other words, family policy became the measure by which women would be compensated for their lack of choice in family planning.

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The chapter proceeds by addressing these four characteristics of Polish family policy reforms individually, followed by concluding remarks.

II. The Background: Institutional and Cultural Continuities

II.1. Institutional Legacies

Family policy after 1990 was strongly influenced by the institutional structures set up during state socialism, as well as by cultural legacies, norms, and day-to-day practices that predated and/or emerged under state socialism (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007, Yuval-Davis 1997). Under these conditions gender equality activists and family policy "Europeanists" struggled unsuccessfully to transform established policy patterns and practices at the family-level, and to challenge the reflection of unequal gender relations in state action and political debates.

Historical legacies in social policy impacted the design of benefits after 1990. Continuities are visible, for example, in the rules that regulate benefit entitlement, such as the tradition of means-testing to determine the eligibility for benefits. Thus, the targeting of benefits according to income is not an entirely postsocialist invention in Poland. Instead, family benefits have long been directed primarily at families with low incomes. State socialist legacies also influenced supply-side decisions about childcare services: the state was generally reluctant to dedicate attention and funding to institutional childcare services, with the clearest exception being a short period during the early years of state

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socialism. Thus, a weak family support infrastructure was inherited from state socialism and declined further after 1989.

An excellent example that can be used to illustrate the continuity of limited state support and strong familialism in Poland are childcare services, where "the responsibility of family-oriented tasks [is placed] squarely on the shoulders of women" (Heinen 2002: 77). From the perspective of the state budget, maternalist policies (in either the form of incentives for women to stay at home or else the bare absence of alternatives) had the additional advantage of costing less than investment in services, an argument that reappeared at several instances during socialist and postsocialist reform debates.

Notably, the first Communist governments tried to break with pre-war traditions by emphasizing women's labor force integration and the development of childcare institutions.[74] Political and economic priorities, as well as demographic concerns drove these efforts. However, criticizing the broken promise of gender equality in state socialism, Siemieńska (1997) describes women's involvement in the labor market under state socialism as 'externally directed,' or rather, as an outcome of a state decision and political pressure and not as an outcome of women's emancipation (Simienska 1997a).

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74 In 1960, already 59 per cent of all Polish women worked outside the home; in 1970 the proportion reached 65 per cent and declined slightly to 58.7 per cent in 1978, and 57 per cent in 1988 (Wóycicka 2003). While this was a high percentage when compared to most Western European countries, it was lower than in most other state socialist Central and Eastern European states, indicating the prevalence of a traditional family model, as well as the continued importance of the agricultural sector in Poland.

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In its 1950 Childcare Program, the Polish government defined childcare as a public responsibility, and investment in childcare was significant for the time (Bodrova V. and Anker 1985). Yet economic priorities and a discourse of gender equality had to be balanced with the prevailing cultural conservatism of the population at large (and of individual Communist party officers); one must also not forget the continued strength and influence of Catholicism which emphasized women's role in the family.

Moreover, investment in childcare facilities was a function of economic development, with propaganda oriented to encourage women to return to the home or to the workplace, depending on the needs of the economy (Heinen and Wator 2006). For example, during the years of modernization and increasing living standards, while Gierek was the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, major investments in childcare took place; nonetheless, attendance rates remained relatively low because of the baby boom during those years (Heinen 2002: 75, Heinen and Wator 2006).

The actual supply and quality of state-provided childcare never matched the Communist government's promises. During the 1970s, childcare facilities were often overcrowded.[75] Crèches never accommodated more than 5 per cent of children up to age two, while 40-50 per cent of three to six-year olds attended kindergarten during the

[75] Overcrowding was most acute in crèches for the youngest children, which accepted almost twice the number of children they had planned to (Heinen 2002 75). But overcrowding was also a serious problem in kindergarten and after-school care.

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1980s, a low figure in comparison with the neighboring German Democratic Republic, or with Czechoslovakia (Wóycicka 2003).[76]

With partial support by the state, Polish parents responded to the lack of childcare institutions by either developing solutions within the family or the Church.[77] For example, in addition to the already existing one-year child-raising leave for mothers, a 1975 law allowed grandmothers, often the primary child minders next to the mother, to retire earlier than men (Heinen and Wator 2006). In 1972, leave to care for a sick child was introduced, and child-raising leave for mothers was extended from one to three years. From 1981, an income-tested parental benefit was paid, thus fulfilling a demand that was brokered in the Gdansk Accords between the Communist government and the oppositional Solidarity party.[78] Solidarity's demand for a paid parental leave reflected the frustration among working families with the existing child care infrastructure – but it was

[76] In 1990, the proportion of three- to six-year old children accommodated in kindergarten was 95 per cent in East Germany, 87 per cent in Czechoslovakia and 76 per cent in Bulgaria, compared with 33 per cent in Poland (Balcerzak-Paradowska 1999: 249).

[77] In a 1998 survey, 71 per cent of the population believed that women should suspend paid work at least until a child is three years old; 7 per cent of them thought the mother should stay with the child until the end of primary school, and 22 per cent of them thought that she should stay with the child until it attends primary school (Heinen and Wator 2006).

[78] The parental benefit was one of only three demands put forward by Solidarity that explicitly addressed the situation of women (Heinen 2002, Penn). The other two were an increase in the number of placements in day-care centers and preschools for the children of working mothers, and a reduction of the retirement age for women from age fifty-five to fifty, and for men from age sixty to fifty-five.

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also an expression of the prevailing conservatism in family and gender matters that had also shaped Solidarity's positions (Penn 2005).[79]

Out of necessity, the state also had to tolerate, or even support, the strengthening of anti-state discourses and practices under the roof of the Catholic Church. For example, quite paradoxically, the afternoon children's education programs organized by local parishes were a very practical help to families needing to reconcile employment with care responsibilities (Stegmann 2003). Yet after the improvement of Church-state relations in the 1970s, "priests systematically stressed the Church's opposition not only to abortion but also to mother's employment" (Heinen and Wator 2006).

Childcare policy stayed on the familialist track after 1990: economic restructuring and privatization after 1989 had deep repercussions on the labor market, as well as on social infrastructure, particularly in sectors such as childcare services (see Chapter 3 above). While pressure on the state for economic support of families increased, demand for institutional care weakened with unemployment and plummeting birth rates. Therefore, the resulting cuts in subsidies did not immediately cause public protest. Moreover, child care centers, especially those for children younger than 3 years of age, continued to have a bad reputation among mothers, even among "those who declare they have never visited one" (Staab and Gerhard 2010).

Families expected little from the state or lacked imagination of positive state intervention.[80] They developed their own solutions rather than raising their voice as a

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[79] Interview with Ewa Tomaszewska, Warsaw, 6 February 2006

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political constituency: in polls, Poles expressed a preference for cash benefits over the development of care infrastructure, which can be seen as a reflection of the low expectations people have of the state and its role as an institution capable of providing care (Steinhilber 2003).

II.2. The Legacy of Gendered Cultural Norms

Strongly gendered social and cultural norms were always in the background of Polish family policy reforms between 1989 and 2004 and influenced family practices – at times coming to the fore even against opposing political incentives. Numerous observers document the durability of stereotypical gender role assignments in Polish families during the Communist as well as the post-communist periods (see, for example, Chołuj 2004, Firlit-Fesnak 2002, Gontarczyk-Wesola 1997, Seibert 2001, Simienska 1997b). While political and economic systems have in large part changed, the primary responsibility for care work and social reproduction has remained with women in a model which Kotowksa described as the "dual earner – female double-burden model" (Kotowska and Matysiak 2008: 828). Despite state socialism's at least rhetorical commitment to gender equality, and despite the relatively high employment participation of women, gender role stereotypes continued to shape social practices and economic life.

[80] Interview with Marek Rymsza, Warsaw, 6 February 2006.

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Unequal practices at the level of individual households are embedded in a larger gendered cultural and historical framework, as historians have emphasized. In particular, historians on Poland have pointed at the link between a construction of femininity and the nation (Ekiert and Hanson 2003). Pickhan describes the "long living myth of a symbiotic link between motherhood and the Polish nation, which has seen its impact during the 19th and 20th century significantly increase through the experience of foreign domination, repression and the struggle for national self-determination (…)" (Ekiert and Hanson 2003: 8, my translation).

For decades, the topos of the Polish mother has played a prominent role – and has therefore been a discursive reservoir in contemporary family policy debates.[81] Key to understanding this gendered cultural tradition is the history of a political instrumentalization of motherhood: mothers were assigned the main role in preserving Polish culture and transmitting it to subsequent generations through their place in the family.

The topos of the mother has also been taken up in the opposition against state-socialism, as Stegmann shows. The family became a core component of the concept of "anti-policy," developed by the underground Solidarity movement during the 1980s, and intended to kindle "social and cultural life outside the regime's official phrases and

[81] The poem "To the Polish Mother" by the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz in 1842 is often considered a representative expression of national sentiments, and founding element of national identity. The Polish mother, "*Matka Polka*," as he describes her, is a strong and devoted mother who renounces her own needs for the greater good of the nation, a mother who educates her children in the spirit of Polish-ness, even though her sons may be forced to die for the nation.

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values" (Stegmann 2003: 180, Penn 2005). The defense of the family against unwanted state intrusions has been a key reason why Poles have put up with, or even preferred, minimal state interventions in the realm of family care.

Catholic teachings on the roles of women and the family were always inseparably connected to this national-cultural interpretation of motherhood. Under Communism, the Church took on the role of a "counter-organization to the state … [and] true incarnation of the Polish nation," promoting an understanding of the family as intimately connected to both Catholicism and the Polish nation (Stegmann 2003). In its 1978 "Letter about the duties of Catholics in Poland concerning national and religious culture," the Episcopate highlighted the important role of families for the transmission of religious and national values. It addressed "Catholic parents" (in fact addressing particularly mothers) as defenders of the "national culture" through the education of children at home: "The first word of the mother evokes the baby's smile and creates the foundation of the fatherland's culture." (all quotes in Stegmann 2003: 188ff).[82]

Linking the family and the nation, and assigning an instrumental role to women, has maintained its political appeal among right-wing populists today and has shaped family policy discourses since 1990. On 6 June 2006, the organizers of the "First National March for Life and Family," for example, claimed that a family could only be

[82] The strong importance that the Church gave to religious education and the profound skepticism of the Church about the education in state schools explains why the demand for introducing religious education in schools acquired such prominence, both during state socialism as well as after 1989 (e.g. Nowakowska 1997).

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"naturally Polish" if constituted by father, mother, and child/children. In turn, gays and lesbians, and their organizations and "sympathizers," such as feminists and liberal (pro-choice) organizations and media, were termed "anti-family" (and by extension, anti-Polish).[83]

III. Weak Policy Debate, Shifting Institutional Responsibilities

Family policy reforms had a marginal position on the Polish welfare state reform agenda during the 1990s, in comparison with the larger reform debates focusing on pensions, health care, and education. This was exacerbated by an absence of spaces for informed family policy debates (Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004, Pascall and Kwak 2005). As a consequence, family policy debates were saturated with normative and moralistic arguments, but exposed little factual information about the impact of family benefits, international policy trends, or clear prioritization of policy objectives.[84] Poland occupied a marginal, at times rather extremist, position in international debates and policymaking on the family during the 1990s, in particular in comparison with the majority of EU member states.

An important institutional factor explaining the weakness of family policy debates and decisions lies in the role and position of responsible state institutions. The

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[83] The organizers accused the liberal Polish daily paper Gazeta Wyborcza of misinforming the public and being "notoriously anti-family"
(see: http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2007/may/07052203.html).

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administrative institutions that were responsible for family policy during the entire period encompassed by this study were weak and instable. For much of the time between 1990 and 2004, there was either no institutional responsibility assigned at all, existing posts were not filled, or other priorities took over the agenda of the responsible state body (Lohmann and Seibert 2003, Brunnbauer 2000).

The history of the state bodies dealing with family body and/ or gender policy – the Plenipotentiary of Family Affairs and the Parliamentary Commission on Family Affairs) – since 1989 is exemplary to show the shifting political priorities as well as the instrumentalization of the state institutions in the interest of anti-abortion politics. Table 6 illustrates the multiple changes at the top of the Plenipotentiary. Whenever they could - for example, after the political takeover of AWS in 1997 and again after the right-wing election victory in 2005 - conservative Catholics and staunch anti-abortionists laid claim on the key political posts in the field of family policy. These conservative pro-family advocates, when in power, effectively closed out more progressive positions on family policy from the public debates and managed to delay the national reception of international debates in the field of family policy, women's rights, and demographic development. As a consequence, for much of the 1990s, public debate on family policy was very narrow, leaving aside important questions about the link between gender equality and family policy, for example.

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[84] Interview with Danuta Wojdat, Gdansk, 14 November 2001; Interview with Anita Seibert, Warsaw, 9 February 2006; Interview with Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak, 9 February 2006.

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Table 6 Overview of Changes in the Key Family/ Gender Policy Institution[85]

Time period	Head of the Plenipotentiary	Political priorities and character of the institution
1991 (April) – 1992 (January)	Plenipotentiary for Family and Women Anna Popowicz	Popowicz was vigorously pro-women's rights, protested against introduction of legal restrictions of abortion, therefore dismissed
1992- 1994 (December)	No Plenipotentiary nominated	Office operated on low level focus on youth
1994 (December) – 1995 (May)	Barbara Blida	Blida, at the same time Minister for Construction, admitted publicly that she had no interest in gender or family policy and in the post
1995 (May)- 1997 (November)	Plenipotentiary for Women and Family Affairs Jolanta Banach	National Action Plan for Women developed More inclusive character of institution: preparation for UN Beijing conference, collaboration with NGOs. But: split of NGOs, withdrawal and protest of Catholic NGOs (prepared own shadow report) Other NGOs continued collaboration, Standing Forum of Collaboration established (some Catholic orgs. participated)
1997 (November) - 2002	Government Plenipotentiary for Family Kazimierz Kapera (until 1999); Maria Smereczyńska (1999-2001)	Kapera was a conservative Catholic gynecologist, anti-abortion activist Institution's mandate excluded advancement of women, conservative statements about marriage, role of the family Dismissal of all office staff, rehire on ideological basis NGO collaboration terminated, active obstruction of NGO work in preparation of Beijing +5 UN conference

[85] Other governmental institutions and expert groups that have contributed to debates about family policy have included the Center for the Development of Welfare Services at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Governmental Demographic Council, an advisory forum of demographers and statisticians offering expertise on demographic developments, which received increasing governmental attention over the years.

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		Poland outside EU consensus in UN Conferences
2002 - 2005	Plenipotentiary for Equal Status Between Women and Men Izabela Jaruga Nowacka Magdalena Šroda	'feminist' Plenipotentiary, reforms in context of EU accession, e.g. reform of Labour Code to reflect non-discrimination; focus on women's economic rights, labor market active collaboration with NGOs
2005	Plenipotentiary office dissolved Department for Women, Family and Anti-discrimination in the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs established Joanna Kluzik Rostkowska, Head of Department	Reluctance to include non-discrimination in the portfolio[86] Mandate restricted with the reform; sporadic collaboration with NGOs Pro Family Policy: birth-grant, extension of maternity leave, discussion about wages for housewives

Source: own research

During the first years of the AWS-government (in power 1997-2000), an informal network of conservative family policy lobbyists, many of its members from the Christian National Union (ZChN, one of the AWS member groups), as well as activists from the Polish Federation of Catholic Families (Polska Federacja Stowarzyszen Rodzin Katolickich, a principal organization in the Anti-Abortion movement), came to occupy all key governmental posts in family policy, locally as well as nationally. The main "face of family policy" was Kazimierz Kapera, Plenipotentiary of Family Affairs, a Catholic gynecologist and a very outspoken defender of the ban of abortion under all

[86] There was strong political reluctance to include non-discrimination in the portfolio of the Department (the EU directives require that an institution to deal with discrimination is put in place). The department's head herself, however, defended equal rights for gays at a public rally in 2006.

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circumstances.[87] Kapera provoked a public outcry over his critique of a campaign against domestic violence, when he argued that the problem was exaggerated and the campaign could dissuade young women from marrying (Brunnbauer 2000). He was then replaced by Maria Smereczyńska, like her predecessor an active member of the Polish Federation of Catholic Families and the Catholic Polish Medical Association (Katolickiego Stowarzyszenia Lekarzy Polskich), as well as the leader of the Parliamentary Commission on Family Affairs. During her tenure, Poland worked in coalition with a few other countries and the Vatican, but against a wide consensus of EU member states, to hamper the formulation of a strong outcome document during the five-year review of the UN Beijing Platform for Action on women's rights.[88]

Only the change in government to the left-wing SLD-led coalition in 2001 led to an increase in women's political representation and changes in gender discourses, as well as a change in the institutional set-up for family and gender policy. Family policy was reintegrated into the Ministry of Economy, Labour, and Social Policy through the Department of Family Benefits, and the Plenipotentiary of Family Affairs was disbanded. However, after a strong lobbying initiative of women's NGOs, a new Plenipotentiary for

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[87] For example, he defended the ban on abortion even in the case of a twelve-year old rape victim.

[88] At the General Assembly, in New York, 2000, Poland opposed specifically the reaffirmation of the terminology used around women's reproductive health and rights in the Beijing Platform for Action. Accordingly, the Polish delegate, in his speech emphasized the Polish conviction that "the law must protect human life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death" (Republic of Poland 2000). While all other countries (except Malta) that were at the time negotiating their membership in the European Union supported the joint EU delegation, Poland explicitly opposed the EU's position in favor of a specific mentioning of sexual rights.

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Equal Status Between Women and Men was created under the Prime Minister's Chancellery. Initially, the government had planned to call it Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status for Women and the Family and place it in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Thus, the institutional shape that was finally agreed upon reflects the renewed possibilities for successful NGO lobbying under the left-wing government, as well as the priorities of women's organizations that are pushing for gender equality as opposed to the continuation of rather weak governmental interests in family policy. The parliamentarian and Chairwoman of the Labour Union (Unia Pracy), Izabela Jaruga Nowacka, was appointed to the new post. Thus, "for the first time, in Poland a women who calls herself feminist" occupied such a key governmental position (Fuszara 2004).

IV. Polish Isolation from International Family Policy Trends

The Polish move toward familializing policies is explained by experts as being the result of a lack of information and public debate on international experiences within family policy, as well as being a response to social and demographic developments (Muszynka 2004). In addition, the lack of information on international trends in family policy has facilitated the ideological instrumentalization of family policy, in particular by the center-Right AWS: "Examples from other countries would help counter their conservative proposals," as one NGO activist pointed out.[89]

[89] Interview Anita Seibert, Warsaw, 9 February 2006.

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In fact, Polish family policy debates were isolated from international and European trends during the 1990s. Experiences with different family policy measures and institutional organizations in other European countries received only very limited public recognition, and academics who published on the topic did not see their arguments embraced on the national level.[90] Some Polish women's NGOs, and a few representatives of the left-wing SLD raised their voice to demand more and better childcare facilities – but did not receive any governmental recognition. In effect, Poles "do not know the details about what is done in other countries, we receive no information on this through the media or governmental statements, all we know is through our contacts with other NGOs", as an activist pointed out.[91]

The isolation is striking, as it happened at a time when the country was approaching EU membership, and participated in the EU coordination processes on social policy. Yet the Polish family policy agenda, and public debates on family policy in Poland, remained nationally focused. Throughout the accession process Poland lagged behind in the transposal of EU gender equality legislation, a fact that was repeatedly pointed out in EU reports on progress toward EU accession (Kamerman and Moss 2009, Allroggen, Berger, and Erbe 2002, Aslanbeigui, Pressman, and Summerfield 1994). In 2000, during the post-Solidarity AWS government, Poland even made a point of not

[90] Interview Irena Kotowska, Warsaw 14 November 2006.

[91] Interview with Anna Nowak, Warsaw, 11 November 2001.

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joining the EU consensus at the five-year follow-up Conference to the UN World Conference on Women.

V. The Role of Domestic Political Conflict in Family Policy Reforms

While acknowledging the role of institutional and policy legacies, the analysis of Polish family policy reforms shows that in large part they were a result of domestic political struggles. The main line of conflict in family policy debates was between (neo-)liberalism and Catholicism/welfare state populism (as represented either through the Church or through the post-Solidarity Right). The second main domestic conflict was between maternalists / familialists and gender equality advocates.

At the heart of these conflicts was a fundamental disagreement about the preferred family policy model. This was reflected in debates about the extent of state intervention and the generosity of family benefits, as well as in those concerning the scope of family policy. The conflict between welfare state populists and (neo-)liberals not only concerned the field of family policy. Instead, opponents had very different views about the welfare state model in general and about ways to consolidate the Polish state budget and reduce the rampant external debt with which the country entered the post-1989 reform era. These debates shaped pension and health care reforms, as well as family policy (Müller 2003, Kochanowicz 1997).

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V.1. Neoliberal versus Catholic and Populist Welfare State Reform Proposals

Contrary to examples from elsewhere in Europe, the political Left in Poland proposed a leaner, more strongly market-oriented social policy since 1990. In the field of family policies this has taken the form of, for example, advocating for cuts and the further targeting of family benefits to those households in greatest economic need. In the eyes of parts of the public and the opposition, the emphasis on fiscal restraint has made the post-Communist SLD look like they converted to neoliberalism themselves (Dobrowski 2004). In its 1993, 1996/7, and 2001 campaigns, the reformed socialist successor party Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) emphasized general social justice arguments, yet proposed spending cuts and the targeting of social benefits (SLD 2005). In the field of family benefits, under the SLD government the benefits for pregnant women were cut and the family allowance was reduced (see Chapter 3). The SLD emphasized fiscal and institutional concerns, for example, citing inefficiencies caused by multiple institutional responsibilities for different benefits (Chłoń-Domińczak 2004).

In turn, the post-Solidarity (center-Right) parties that are close to the Catholic Church, celebrated the family rhetorically and opposed benefit cuts. They repeatedly promised an expansion of family benefits, in particular when calls for family support fit the context of their restrictive anti-abortion politics. When in power, however, the generous promises were generally not implemented, mostly due to budgetary

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implications.[92] Even observers who are generally sympathetic to the Church have pointed to the lack of social policy expertise and the relative absence of a critical debate over the liberal economic reform program. Instead of developing social policy initiatives based on Catholic social ethics, the Church broadly supported the radical economic reform program (Pamula 1995). Thus, by the first years of the 1990s, the programmatic impact of Catholic social thinking on the political parties was marginalized by liberal economic commitments (Dacewicz 1995).

It should be noted, however, that the impact of partisan politics was greater at the level of family policy discourse that at the level of the actual policies that were implemented. The responsibility for the massive decline in family support spending during the first half of the 1990s, for example, was shared by the first post-Solidarity and the first SLD-led government. Parties defended notably different positions in social policy, and family policy, discourses, and used family policy strategically in order to demonstrate their moral attitudes. As a consequence, a growing gap developed between a widespread family-support discourse and the de-facto economic reality that large numbers of Polish families were struggling to make ends meet.

Particularly at the beginning of the transformation process, leeway for expanding social policy was indeed limited. In the latter portion of the 1990s, other social policy fields were prioritized over family policy, among them, pensions. These limitations

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[92] An exception was the universal birth grant (*becikowe*) of 1000 PLN introduced under the PiS government in 2005.

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contributed to the increasingly ideological nature of family policy, and allowed political parties from all sides to hide their programmatic weakness. No explicit governmental family policy statement existed during most of the legislature of the SLD-PSL coalition (1993-1997). But in April 1997, the government presented its "Family Policy Outlines," drafted by the Plenipotentiary for Women and Family. For the first time in Poland after 1990, a policy document explicitly linked family policy and women's policy (Bretherton 2001). It highlights in particular the importance of support for families/women in the reconciliation of employment and family life, yet simultaneously lacks concrete policy proposals beyond a general commitment to offer childcare services.

The change in government to the electoral coalition post-Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) in November 1997 produced a return to a more moralistic family discourse (Brunnbauer 2000). Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek announced that his government would place a higher emphasis on family issues than its predecessor, but never clearly outlined intended political measures. Soon it became clear that moralistic statements about families and the need for family support were an integral part of the general discourse that the AWS employed as a strategy to discredit the ex-communist Democratic Left Alliance. Chiefly, the AWS discourse was based on naturalizing notions of gender roles in the family, as well as on constant references to the cultural topos of "Mother Poland" (*matka polka*), assigning a heroic role to the mother in the struggle for Polish nationhood through the upbringing of the future generation (Seibert 2001, Ost 2005).

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AWS' "Pro-Family Policy Program" was presented to the public in 1999 (The Government of Poland 1999). In an explicit reference to the Vatican Family Rights Charter, it defined the family as a "natural relationship more fundamental than the state" and proclaimed that "no law may infringe the inalienable rights of the family" (Dominiczak 2002, Dacewicz 1995). Among the goals of the program were family benefits and tax deductions for families with children, described in another governmental document as "the creation of solutions strengthening the material foundation of family functioning" (Republic of Poland 1999). These measures were intended to support the overall goal of increasing birth rates, a key concern for the AWS government (Heinen 2002, Płatek). Other goals of the pro-family program included the introduction of separation (as a substitute to divorce), Canon Law marriage, a complete ban of abortion, and the withdrawal of sex education from schools (Dominiczak 2002).

As a supplement to the "Program of Pro-Family Policy," the government also presented a "Report on the Situation of Polish Families" in 1999 (Kapera 1999). The growing numbers of divorces and statistics about criminal offenders from single-parent families were among the important concerns highlighted. Women's organizations criticized the report as a highly ideological document "meant to promote the traditional model of family as a reproductive unit to be maintained against all odds" (Brunnbauer 2000: 141). In contrast, "Women who raise three or more children should be greeted with

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respect and not be treated as humiliatingly as is currently the case," as AWS parliamentarian Ewa Tomaszewska explained.[93]

The immediate consequences of the electoral success of AWS were the suspension of an UN-funded program on domestic violence and the suspension of governmental subsidies for contraceptives, as well as the dissolution of the Plenipotentiary for Women and Family, followed by the establishment of the new Plenipotentiary for Family Affairs. The same changes in name and mandate for this governmental institution happened at the voivodship local level (Brunnbauer 2000, Dominiczak 2002).

The joint focus on family policy and gender equality policy – a trend in Western Europe – was resisted by the Catholic Right in Poland, since "gender equality as a notion promotes divisions, while we attempt to treat the family as a unit."[94] Consequently, the Pro-Family Policy Program adopted by the Council of Ministers on 3 November 1999 clearly prioritized women's role in the family: "Women and mothers have a special role in the family. Women devoted to motherhood and family life should have the opportunity to materialize their own social aspirations and those choosing professional career the possibility of squaring it with family life and motherhood" (Auer and Cazes 2003). Maria Smereczyńska, the governmental family policy representative outlined that "the state must create conditions that allow families to function independently in deciding how to

[93] Interview with Ewa Tomaszewska, Warsaw, 15 November 2001.

[94] Interview with Ewa Tomaszewska, Warsaw, 15 November 2001.

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raise their children" (Brown 1988), implying that the state should create conditions for women to withdraw from the labor market.

Only the take-over by the left in 2002 created conditions for a move toward European trends in gender and family policy. Ideology was de-emphasized as family policy was broadly subsumed under employment policy or social policy, or linked with gender equality policy.[95] A new National Action Plan for Women was developed, which closely reflected the EU directives on gender equality, as well as the priorities of the European Employment Strategy and the Beijing Platform for Action (Bodrova and Anker 1985). The plan focuses strongly on women in the labor market, and highlights the need to develop care facilities as a precondition for women's economic activity (Lohmann and Seibert 2003).

The take-over of the left-wing government also brought a return to a more technical and efficiency-oriented language in social policy and a return of more liberal reform projects. Discourses around social and family policy lost their strong moral and religious connotations. The "Social Policy Strategy 2000-2005," for example, which the government presented to the public soon after the election, utilized less moralistic and more technical language when compared to social policy statements of the predecessor government. It paid particular emphasis to the need to counteract institutional shortcomings of the system of welfare state benefits and to the need to economize limited funds for family support (Chłoń-Domińczak 2004). The introduction of stricter means-

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[95] Interview with Kinga Lohmann, Warsaw, 5 February 2006.

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testing and the later unification of all family benefits under one benefit with supplements was a reflection of this strategy, as was the conversion of state alimony support into a subsidy to the family allowance.

Excursus: Family Policy in Poland after EU Membership

Increased media and public attention to the failures of the existing family support system in the summer of 2004, and women's discontent about their lack of influence on the family allowance reform, turned family policy into an important topic during the electoral campaign of 2005. Promises to increase family support were made across the party spectrum. As in the years before, the parties differed in their degrees of populism and traditionalism, this time also introducing a more nationalistic note than ever before. In particular, the party Law and Justice (PiS), and even more so the League of Polish Families and Self-Defense parties (the three parties that later formed a governing coalition) highlighted the importance of the family as the "foundation of social life" and Polish cultural identity, as well as stressed the need for the government to encourage people to have more children. The concrete promises of the different parties in the area of family support remained very vague, ranging from higher birth grants to income tax deductions, and increased family allowances for needy families. Notably, while housing construction was integrated as one element of the pro-family proposals of Law and Justice, none of the parties promised a better childcare system.

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In keeping with the pattern of the 1990s, the electoral victory of the conservative nationalists brought the immediate dissolution of the Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of Women and Men. Instead, a Department for Women, Family, and Anti-discrimination in the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs was established, headed by Joanna Kluzik Rostkowska, a former journalist and former Plenipotentiary for Women and Family Affairs in the Bureau of the Mayor of Warsaw.[96] The newly constituted Parliamentary Commission on the Family and Women's Rights was headed by LPR member Anna Sobecka, a former director and close supporter of the ultra-conservative Radio Maryja. As a reflection of the discursive turn under the new government, the Commission, in its first documents, replaced the word "women" with "mother" or "family."[97]

Once in power, the minority government headed by PiS outlined its proposed family policy reforms, which in fact were essentially a revival of AWS initiatives of the 1990s. Again, high priority was given to one-off support for families with a newborn. A universal birth grant of 1000 złoty (around 315 US$ in January 2006) was introduced in early 2006. A second proposal placed high on the agenda was, once again, the extension

[96] Initially the government had planned to call the Department only "for Women and Family." The name was changed once the government realized that all EU member states are required to assign institutional responsibilities for dealing with non-discrimination (Interview with Katarzyna Kądziela, Warsaw, 8 February 2006).

[97] Interview with Izabela Jaruga Nowacka, Warsaw, 13 October 2005. Graff reports a similar struggle over terms in the abortion debates, where "pregnant woman" became replaced by "mother," "fetus" became "unborn child" etc. (Kitschelt 2003: 41).

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of the legal maternity leave to 26 weeks, which the government was planning to achieve in several steps.[98]

The agreement to introduce a universal birth grant was accompanied by highly populist pro-family statements, in particular by representatives of the League of Polish Families and some PiS parliamentarians interested in raising their own profile in the public debates.[99] While negotiating support for the minority PiS during the confidence vote in parliament, the League of Polish Families put PiS under pressure to introduce the birth grant, despite tight budget constraints. While supporters of the universal birth grant, among them Kluzik Rostkowska, considered the "baby bonus the first step to encourage people to have more children,"[100] the Federation for Women and Family Planning argued that "the new payment will not lead to the increase of births in the country where continuous economic discrimination of women … as well as lack of access to affordable child care is one of the reasons couples decide against having children" (Astra Network 2006). Demographic research supported the latter argument: "The first thing is to help parents combine work and family duties, which means improving state-run child care centers. The birth grant is no serious support for families".[101] Yet these broader analyses of the development and situation of Polish families were not taken up in political

[98] Interview with Ewa Tomaszewska, Warsaw, 6 February 2006.

[99] Interview with Kinga Lohmann, Warsaw, 5 February 2006.

[100] Interview with Joanna Kluzik Rostkowska, Warsaw, 9 February 2006.

[101] Interview with Irena Kotowska, Warsaw, 14 November 2006.

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initiatives. Similarly, the link between family support and gender equality in employment, which the previous SLD-led government had come to recognize, was virtually deleted from official discourses under the PiS-led conservative nationalist government.

V.2. Maternalism / Familialism versus Gender Equality Promotion

An ongoing conflict between advocates of a strongly familialist (or, in fact, maternalist) family policy and advocates of gender-equality and women's rights on the other was the second line of domestic conflict that shaped Polish family policy debates. While the first groups were close to, or directly dependent on, the Catholic Church, the second groups came mainly from the movement of women's organizations that developed during the1990s in the country.

The central argument on both sides concerned the responsibility of the state: should it protect the traditional family, and in particular, should it support women so that they could fulfill their "natural" role as mothers and caretakers, by liberating them from economic pressures to contribute to their family income? Or, as gender equality advocates argued, should the state develop the potential family policy to influence gender relations within the family and to promote gender equality? In answering these questions, gender equality advocates referred to international treaties and EU legislation, as well as the commitment to gender equality contained in the Polish constitution.[102]

[102] Interview Anita Seibert, Warsaw, 9 February 2006.

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The relative power that Catholic-inspired or Church-dependent political actors held over family policy discourse implied that they exerted greater control over the family policy agenda. Maternalist ideas dominated public debates, with Catholic groups influencing policy planning and decision-making processes in general. They successfully exerted influence over specific individual actors, in particular within the post-Solidarity (center-right) political parties, as the parliamentary debates reflect.

Conversely, those who argued in favor of a gender equality-promoting family policy, in particular women's rights activists, struggled to place other proposals on the political agenda. They were particularly interested in broadening the definition and scope of family policy. Against the dominance of the others, however, their efforts were of very limited success: "Our arguments do not ever make it to the top. In particular the media reproduces a very mother-focused image of women. And this is what the Catholic clergy keeps telling people every day. Our concerns about women's economic rights and the need for greater equality in the area of unpaid work are not heard by the general population."[103]

VI. About Family Policy and Reproductive Policy

A special facet of Polish policy debates was the crowding out of a broader vision of family policy by the debate over abortion for much of the 1990s. The family policy agenda became narrowly focused on pregnancy and childbirth, and family benefits were

[103] Interview Kinga Lohmann, Warsaw, 5 February 2006.

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conceptualized as being secondary to an anti-abortion agenda; that is, they came to be seen as measures to compensate women for their lack of choice in family planning. Policy concerns such as parental benefits, care services, or work-family reconciliation did not make it to the agenda. Thereby, the maternalist bias in Polish family policy rhetoric was upheld and strengthened, yet de-facto family support continued to be limited.

Family policy debates during the 1990s were therefore another example of the "The Politics of Gender after Socialism" as described by Gal and Kligman (Gal and Kligman 2000b). Both have argued that the "debate about reproduction serves as a substitute issue where wider concerns and anxieties around the proper ordering of the postcommunist polity, (gendered) citizens, and nation/state are played out, and where the legitimacy of political authority is articulated and contested" (ibid. 30). The debates about restricting access to abortion proved to be very divisive for Polish society at large, provoking heated public debates and protests over the course of several years (Nowicka 1997, Daly 2000). Indeed, the struggle over abortion has been characterized as a "struggle for real democracy" (Nowicka 1997). Zielińska argues that the "abortion battle" has been the most divisive of all important post-1989 parliamentary struggles. She interprets the course of legal changes, as well as public debates on abortion as a "coded discourse that reflects fundamental concerns, including the shape of the state itself, the state's obligations to society (and vice versa), the rule of law, and, last but certainly not least, the scope of the protection of civil rights and fundamental freedoms (Zielińska 2000: 24).

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Politicians have instrumentalized abortion for self-interested reasons and to gain the support of the Catholic Church, but also to defer attention from the enduring socioeconomic problems that families and women face when trying to reconcile their economic engagement and family responsibilities. The pro-life maternalists were particularly successful in packaging family policy concerns within the framework of anti-abortion measures.[104] An exemplary moment was the process leading to the Law on Family Planning, Legal Protection of the Fetus, and the Conditions of Permissibility of Abortion, which became effective in March 1993.[105] It severely limited the availability of abortion, prohibited abortion for social reasons, as well as abortions performed by doctors in private practice (thus alowing only public hospitals to perform legal abortions, which were legal only in a very limited number of cases). Reversing the 1956 legislation through which the state socialist regime had granted relatively liberal access to abortion before, the 1993 law established one of the most restrictive anti-abortion regimes in Europe. An integral component of restricting abortion was the debate about the need for state support for pregnant women and for families. Indeed, the 1993 law required state and local government agencies to provide assistance for "pregnant women, the conceived child and its mother," and as a consequence the income-tested Benefit for Pregnant Women and Women With a Small Child was introduced. From its beginning, the new cash benefit was not primarily identified as a measure of family support by those who

[104] Regarding the importance of "packaging" of policies, see (Weir 1992: 194).

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fought for legal access to abortion and women's right to chose. Instead, it was seen as a form of financial compensation paid by the government to women who were deprived of self-determining their reproductive lives.

The Polish right-wing parties and the Catholic Church used the abortion conflict for identity-building purposes. They strove to boost their image as protectors and supporters of the Polish family, and, by extension, the Polish nation. The fact that the 1993 benefit later on was cut under a left-wing SLD-led government because of the high spending associated with it helped to further sustain this image. These images and identities were also constantly reiterated through pro-family statements in the right-wing political discourse of the 1990s.

Via its political interventions, the Catholic Church managed to shape what would become the accepted idea of state measures in support of families. Politically, the Church had two key priorities at the beginning of the 1990s: influencing the elaboration of a new constitution, in particular with respect to the redefinition of the place of the Church in a democratic state, and shaping and pushing the legislative process toward new abortion legislation.[106] The Church and a multiplicity of Catholic organizations were the strongest supporters of a strict pro-life position outside the parliament (Brocas, Cailloux, and Oget 1990). The strong support for pro-life positions has remained the clearest social policy

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[105] For an overview over abortion debates and legal proposals regulating the access to abortion, see (Zielińska 2000).

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preference of the Church throughout the years. At no other point did the Church as an institution intervene so directly in social policy or debates about family support, as it did on the questions of the constitution, abortion, and the impact of EU accession on women's situation and place in Polish society.

On the other side, the conflict over abortion was an important mobilizing factor for the independent women's movement in Poland. After the reform of the abortion legislation, access to abortion and reproductive rights and sex education have continued to be one of the central concerns of the Polish women's movement[107] As one observer pointed out, "If one topic mobilized [Polish women], it was not the 56 per cent women among the long-term unemployed, or the discrimination in pay, it was the conflict around abortion" (Gnauck 2004). Many women's organizations had either formed in defense of access to abortion, or had grown considerably while participating in pro-choice activities, such as the campaign for a referendum in 1992. They opposed the new law and provisions of 1993, taking issue with its specific restrictions regarding access to legal abortion as well as the new cash family benefit that it introduced. Women's individual right to decide and the protection of individual reproductive rights and health were the very basis of pro-choice arguments and activities; theirs is a principled stance that was

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[106] In the debates about the new constitution, the Polish Episcopate presented a position paper to the constitutional commission in 1990, in which it referred to a 1947 communication postulating the constitutional recognition of Poland as a confessional state (Stawrowski 1995).

[107] Not only liberal women's organizations became stronger during the conflict about access to abortions, however. Catholic women's organizations also gained a much stronger public voice in support of pro-life positions (Interview with Małgorzata Fuszara, Warsaw, 12 November 2001).

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clearly opposed to the right-wing discourse of emphasizing the family as a unit, and of highlighting women's social role as mothers rather than as individual rights-holders.

The association of anti-abortion politics with family support measures in the public debates served to stifle independent activism that was not maternalist. The notion of the "family" and the new forms of cash support for families were so closely identified with pro-life, conservative, Catholic political actors that it was virtually impossible for Polish women's organizations to develop another family-discourse and a progressive concept of family support that would at the same time promote women's individual rights and gender equality.

As a consequence, income redistribution and cash support for families did not become a main concern for Polish feminists during the 1990s.[108] Instead, next to the discussion about reproductive rights, women's political and economic participation were the central topics of women's activism in Poland during the 1990s (Fuchs 2003). Whenever women's organizations addressed women's economic rights and gender discrimination in the world of work in the context of EU integration, family policies were mentioned. The absence of affordable childcare facilities and the obstacles for women in reconciling employment and family life were regarded as one of the key obstacles to women's citizenship (Lohmann and Seibert 2003). In 2004, protests of single mothers

[108]Women's voices were also weak or even absent from the several-year long debate on pension reforms during the second half of the 1990s (Fultz, Ruck, and Steinhilber 2003). Only later, when the reform was legislated, concerns were raised about the negative impact of the differential retirement age of women and men (Ratajczak-Tucholka 2008).

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against the abolishment of the alimony fund brought renewed public attention and media coverage to family policy debates (Hryciuk 2004). The protest was supported by grassroots women's organizations and established women's NGOs, as well as by trade unions (but also by Catholic women's organizations); thus, it became one of the few examples of a major public debate on family benefits, resulting in the SLD government having to explain and defend the fundamental reform in the family allowance system that had just been legislated.

VII. Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 3 described how the access to state support became more restricted, and progressively fell in line with a liberal individualist family policy model. The present explanatory chapter has highlighted the path dependent character of family policy reforms, as well as the decisive role of national political struggles for reform outcomes. On the one hand, previously established family policy institutions and policy logics shaped the course of reforms between 1990 and 2004. The traditionally weak support offered to families through the state needs to be mentioned in this context, as well as, more specifically, the long history of insufficient provision of childcare services. Jointly, these traditions created an environment of low expectations for state support on the side of families, and of limited political pressure for change in this respect.

On the other hand, gendered cultural traditions, namely a persistent traditional role division of labor between women and men, have also impacted family policy

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reforms. Gender role stereotypes have shaped social practices and economic life throughout, and after, state socialism. Given these strongly gendered traditions, it is understandable why family policy after 1990 has accommodated women's caring role rather than developed initiatives for transformation, for example, through benefits directed specifically at men.

These institutional and cultural traditions have played out in an environment which was not conducive to informed family policy debates. Spaces and procedures for family policy debates were unclear or did not, at least during most of the 1990s. The administrative institutions, which should have been responsible for family policy, were politically weak, troubled by frequent staff changes, and constant reformulations of their mandates. Moreover, and maybe most importantly, the institutions in charge of family policy, and women's rights or gender equality, became instrumentalized in deep ideological and moral struggles over family support. In the end, for most of the time under study, very little positive change was achieved to offer greater support and better services to Polish families.

Particularly when looking at the role of domestic political conflict throughout the course of Polish family policy reforms, a wide gap between a pro-family discourse but very little practical family support becomes obvious. The gap between discourse and practice has been more important than partisan conflict for the course of benefit reforms. In the end, however, partisan positions, and in particular the closeness of various groups of actors to the Catholic Church, did shape family policy *discourses*, including the

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definition of family policy and the justifications given for state interventions in the family.

The role of partisan conflict in Poland has been somewhat surprising: contrary to examples from elsewhere, the political left in Poland was responsible for the more market-oriented social policy proposals since 1990. In the field of family policies, this implied, for example, advocating in some cases for cuts and a further targeting of family benefits. The post-Solidarity (center-right) parties, in turn, celebrated the family rhetorically and opposed cuts, all while repeatedly promising an expansion of family benefits, in particular when calls for family support served their anti-abortion politics. When in power, however, the generous promises were often not implemented, mostly because of their budgetary implications.

This chapter shows that in addition to the domestic conflict over the depth of neoliberal social policy reforms, another line of domestic conflict has shaped Polish family reforms. It was a conflict between representatives of Church-aligned conservative political interests and organized women's groups/ defenders of women's rights, which essentially was a conflict between maternalists and equality-advocates in family policy.

The scope of family policy, and the very definition of family policy has been very narrow since 1990. The conflict over abortion has overshadowed all debates in the field of family support. State support for the family was utilized as a compensation for the prohibition of abortion. Because of this peculiar constellation, it was very difficult for gender equality and women's rights advocates to critically engage with family policy.

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While among the greatest supporters Poland's accession to the EU, these advocates were not able to effectively counter national resistance against the Europeanization of Polish family policies before the country became a formal EU member.

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Chapter 5

Toward a Conservative-Statist Model in the Czech Republic

I. Introduction

Out of all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic is counted among the most successful at enacting reforms. Despite the economic downturn that came with the transition, and despite the challenges of consolidation after the split-up with the Slovak Republic, the country succeeded in establishing a stable market economy under a democratic political system. Unemployment was kept below EU averages, and per-capita income remained high in comparison with other transition countries. Despite repeated changes in government and growing tension between Eurosceptics and advocates of the European Union, the country was able to implement the necessary reforms in a relatively swift manner, as was required in order for it to join the EU during the 1990s.

Since 1990, Czech social policy has been characterized by sharp debates but also by a strong political dynamic of compromise (Orenstein 2001). As a consequence, despite the liberal ideology and rhetoric that was particularly evident in the first years of transformation, reforms were more oriented towards a post-communist social democratic regime than a liberal one (Večerník 2001a, (Večerník 2001c). Observing these apparent

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contradictions, Orenstein has termed the Czech reform way a "hybrid 'social liberal' strategy for transformation" (Orenstein 2001: 61).

In the area of family policy, reforms have led to a conservative-statist family policy regime that provides important state support to families, and sustains a largely traditional division of roles in relation to care responsibilities (Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009a, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006, Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003, Castle-Kanerova 1992). At the same time, family policy has been a marginal topic in social policy debates since 1990, and family benefits have been instrumentalized in the interest of goals such as poverty reduction and the stabilization of the labor market via the imposition of limitations on women's labor force participation (Saxonberg 2003: 137). There continues to be a broad conservative consensus regarding family matters, and a widespread reluctance to join the European mainstream in family policy debates (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007, Szelewa and Polakowski 2008).

As in the case of case of Poland, two chapters of this study deal with the trajectory of Czech family policy between 1990 and 2004.[109] The present exploration (Chapter 5) focuses on political developments since 1990 and social policy reforms. Three subsections deal with key family benefits: maternity leave and benefits, parental leave and cash family benefits, and institutional childcare provisions. The following explanatory chapter (6) then addresses the political, institutional and historical conditions

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[109] Where not explicitly mentioned otherwise, references prior to 1993 refer to Czechoslovakia as a whole.

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and the national political dynamics necessary to explain the specific reform trajectory of the country.

II. Czech Political Reforms since 1990 – the Social Policy Framework

II.1. Initial Reform Steps

During the 1990s, the Czech Republic experienced regular power swings, moving from left-wing to right-wing dominance after elections. However, since the election results were ambiguous, there was a need for political compromises between often quite divergent parties attempting to form a national government (Orenstein 2001). An overview of the consecutive governments between 1990 and 2005 is presented in Table 7.

The transition to a market economy brought about new social needs that often resulted in policy reform pressures; for example, the demand for a response to growing unemployment and new forms of poverty were part of this process (see Figure 7). The unemployment rate in the country grew quickly in the first year of transition then remained at relatively low levels, remaining around 4 per cent until 1996 when it once again grew rapidly to about 9 per cent in 1999.

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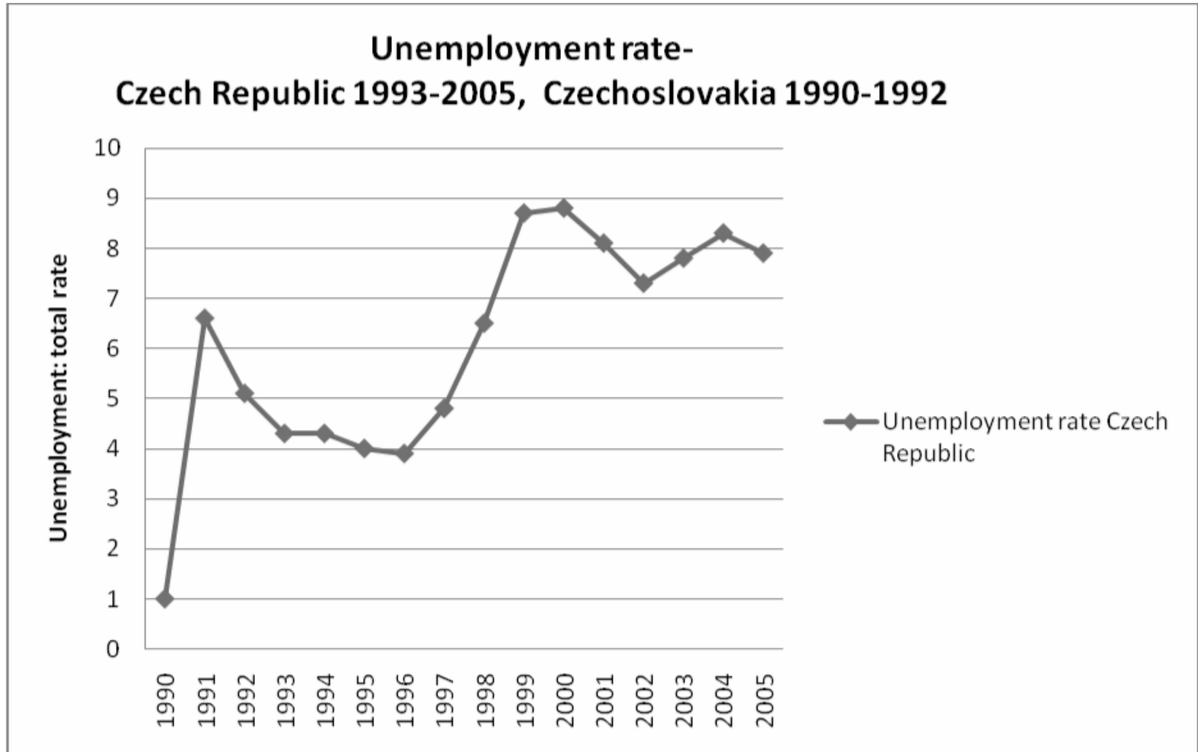
Figure 7 Unemployment Rate, Czech Republic



Source: ILO: Unemployment- total rate Czech Republic, data 1990-1992 for Czechoslovakia

Beyond the goal of poverty reduction, concrete social policy goals remained relatively vague throughout the 1990s despite visible social needs (Večerník 1996). Increasing individual responsibility and reducing social expenditures were recurrent themes in social policy discourse – but Czech social reforms did not strictly serve those goals (Večerník 1996, Potůček 2001, Sirovátka 2000). Instead, as Saxonberg and Sirovátka argue, the Czech Republics reform process was a "decay" into neoliberalism

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rather than a product of conscious neoliberal reform decisions (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2009).

Table 7 Czech Governments (1989-2005)

	Prime minister	Party	Governing coalition	President
1989 - 1992	Márian Čalfa		coalition of national understanding, no Communist majority; since 1990 Civic Forum and Slovak Public Against Violence	Václav Havel (Czechoslovakia)
1993-1997	Václav Klaus	ODS	ODS, KDU-CSL, ODA	Václav Havel (1993-2003)
1997-1998	Josef Tošovský		Government of technical experts	
1998-2002	Miloš Zeman	ČSSD	ČSSD minority government, ODS tolerated	
2002-2004	Vladimír Špidla	ČSSD	ČSSD, KDU-CSL, US- DEU	Václav Klaus (since 2003)
2004-2005	Stanislav Gross	ČSSD	ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, US-DEU	
2005-	Jiří Paroubek	ČSSD	ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, US-DEU	

Source: own research

II.2. Political Changes and Their Social Policy Impact

Between 1990 and 1992, the Civic Forum, the protagonist political force of the 1989 “velvet revolution,” governed Czechoslovakia. The first postsocialist Czechoslovak government initiated a macroeconomic reform process comprised of anti-inflationary and

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financial stabilization measures, price liberalization, and the initial steps towards the privatization of former state-owned enterprises (Klaus 2006).

Many features of the former welfare system, including universal housing subsidies and health and welfare benefits were excluded from early reforms, mainly because state-organized social provisioning and income redistribution was valued highly by the Czech public, as indicated by opinion polls (Večerník 1999, Sirovátka and Valentova 2002: 11).

The establishment of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic in 1990, and the introduction of a household subsistence minimum in 1991, were crucial social policy measures during the years of the Civic Forum government: the subsistence minimum is still the yardstick for all income-tested social security benefits and is the basis for calculating these benefits, as well as the officially recognized poverty line in the country.[110] In response to rising prices, rules for cost-of-living increases for benefits were formulated in the same reform step (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003: 115).

In 1992, the center-Right Civic Democratic Party (ODS) government, led by former finance minister Vaclav Klaus, took office. It advocated for more radical, i.e. neoliberal, market-oriented economic reforms. Political leaders during that period,

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[110] For example, three levels of child allowances are provided, depending on the family income: for families with an income up to 1.1 times the subsistence minimum, for those with between 1.1 and 1.8 times the SM, and for those with an income between 1.8 and 3 times the subsistence minimum. Families with an income greater than 3 times the subsistence minimum are not entitled to the child allowance (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003: 169).

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including Klaus himself, pronounced themselves strongly in favor of a "market without an adjective," that is, to minimize state intervention in market forces Facing a social security system with more than 60 different benefits, reformers called for greater efficiency and transparency, while openly expressing their dislike for the redistributive universal welfare state that still survived. Instead, the ODS government argued in favor of greater individual responsibility, and for a more simple and transparent social security system that would be based on incentives rather than state-sponsored redistribution (Večerník 1995). Consequently, the next reform steps focused on tightening entitlements and introducing means-testing for the allocation of benefits. Flat-rate benefits were preferred to earnings-related ones and individual-rights to collective rights. Večerník thus argues that "this move was proclaimed a shift away from the paternalistic state and general social guarantees toward an efficient and well-targeted welfare policy, strengthening the responsibility of individuals and families, and focusing state care solely on the truly needy" (Večerník 1996: 199).

However, prevailing economic and social insecurity made ODS recognize the role of the welfare state in buffering the negative consequences of the economic transformation. Welfare state benefits were thus granted in exchange for popular support (Orenstein 2001).[111]

[111] Public preferences at the time were complex, however: in a 1991 survey, 65 per cent of the respondents preferred freedom to equality. Yet, only 45 per cent of the respondents thought that the responsibility for an individuals' situation should be entirely transferred from the state to the individual (Rabušic 2001).

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Under ODS, a major reorganization of the social security system was achieved in 1995/96 (Act No. 117/1996, Coll.): social insurance, social assistance, and state social support were regrouped into three social security subsystems, with most family benefits becoming part of the state social support system (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).[112] The state social support system was introduced in two major reform steps, with some benefits that required income-testing and others that did not (see Table 8).

Table 8 State Social Support Benefits in the Czech Republic Since 1995/96

Non-income tested benefits	Income-tested benefits
Parental allowance	Child allowance
Maintenance allowance[113]	Social allowance
Foster care allowance	Housing allowance
Birth grant	Transport allowance
Funeral grant	

Source: (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003): 116

The economic and political situation in the country became problematic around the mid-1990s (True 2003:14). Bank failures and a scandal surrounding ODS party finances and government corruption led to a fiscal and political crisis in 1997. The Czech crown collapsed and unemployment rose to unprecedented highs. The crisis culminated

[112] As an exception, maternity benefits continued to be provided as employment-related social insurance benefits.

[113] This allowance supports the families of soldiers during fulfillment of their basic (substitute) military training, civil service or military training.

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in Klaus's resignation as prime minister (Orenstein 2001). Social policy reforms came to a halt.

After a nine-month interlude under a caretaker government appointed by President Havel, in June 1998 a Social-Democratic-led coalition assumed power. However, as a minority government, the Social Democrats (CSSD) (under Prime Minister Miloš Zeman) entered into an "opposition agreement" with ODS. Contrary to CSSD's electoral program of preserving the welfare state, this political constellation precluded any major reform projects, including those of family benefits (True 2003: 15).

The Social Democratic Party was reelected in 2002 with Vladimir Špidla as Prime Minister. He formed a coalition with the Christian-Democratic Party and the center-Right Freedom Union. Under this government, family policy received more focused attention for the first time since 1990 and started to incorporate European family policy debates. A focused report on the situation of Czech families was drafted in 2004 (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) 2004), followed by an explicit family policy document in 2005 (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) 2005). Family policy was institutionally strengthened within the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs through the creation of a specific department intended to address the issues associated with it. In line with European trends, Czech policy debates started to address family policy as a tool to

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support the reconciliation of the professional and private lives of women. Additionally, increasing attention was paid to the gender equality potential of family policy.[114]

III. Czech Family Policy: Key Reform Trends and Impacts

III.1. Toward Reduced State Spending for Families

The overall trend in family policy reforms in the Czech Republic was towards a reduction of state support and the explicit targeting of remaining benefits, as the government favored a conservative-statist family policy. Familialist elements were strengthened, while on the other hand, women's employment interests were recognized. Four main aspects have characterized Czech family policy reforms between 1990 and 2004, when the country joined the EU:

- First, family benefits were reoriented toward the support of low-income families (Sirovátka 2003:11). Thus, family benefits were integrated into the generalized social safety net. Because of the focus on low-income

[114] During the fist electoral campaign after the country had become member of the European Union, in 2006, family policy received greater attention than ever before, both on the side of the incumbent Social Democrats as well as the opposition ODS. Increased attention to family policy was also reflected in the incumbent Social Democratic government's Family Policy Concept (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) 2005), as well as in the debate about the tax reform in 2005 (joint taxation which privileges one-earner families and a higher tax bonus for children were introduced).

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families, a large part of Czech households, in particular the middle classes, did not benefit from the reforms of family benefits during the 1990s.[115]

- Second, the reorientation of family benefits came with a reduction of overall state spending on the family (see Figure 8) . Overall spending on family allowances decreased from 2.1 per cent of GDP to 1 per cent of GDP between 1990 and 2005 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)). The family allowance was mainly responsible for the decline, as maternity and parental benefits did not undergo mayor changes.
- Third, maternalist traditions in Czech family policy were strengthened: women received state support when they complied with their traditional role as mothers and remained outside the labor market. Czech maternalism and persistent gender conservatism were effective obstacles to the development of more progressive work-family reconciliation policies and the integration of family and gender equality policy.[116]

[115] This situation changed somewhat with the reform to the parental allowance which was introduced in 2007. It allows for greater flexibility in the drawing of the benefit. It has been discussed as beneficial mainly for higher-income women.

[116] It should be noted, however, that formally equal treatment of women and men in the access to family benefits was achieved, but de facto, women continue to be the almost exclusive beneficiaries.

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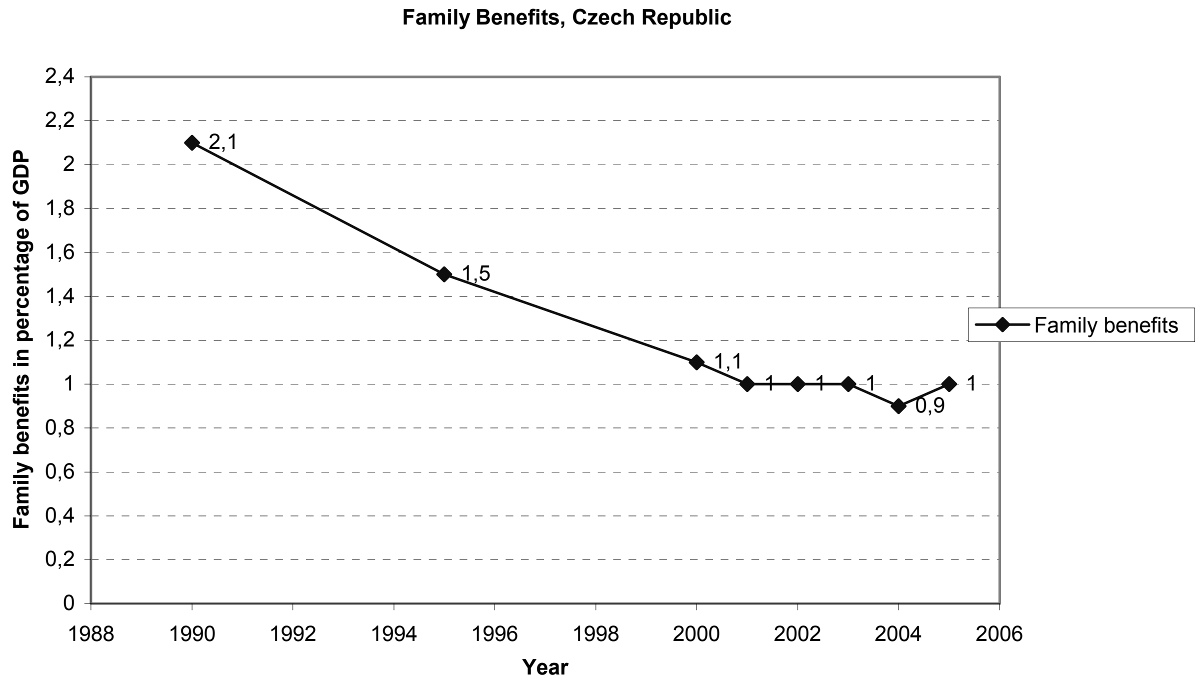
Figure 8 Family Benefits as Percentage of GDP. Czech Republic 1990-2005[117]



Quelle: (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD))

- Fourth, Czech family policy reacted only slowly and reluctantly to European family policy debates. Support for work-family reconciliation, as well as for the promotion of gender equality fundamentally remained marginal in family policy reforms. Only the dramatically low fertility rate of the 1990s (1.13-1.17) prompted a political discussion about the negative impacts of withdrawing family benefits from middle classes. But the

[117] Family benefits here include maternity and parental allowance, as well as general family allowance.

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increases in birth rates since 2002 have once again boosted the voices of those who favored the strict targeting of family benefits.

III.2. Maternity Benefits

As in other Central European countries, maternity benefits were among the earliest social security benefits developed in the Czech Lands. Maternity leave was introduced in 1948[118], as was the child allowance to help families cover the costs related to raising children. The Communist government initially strongly emphasized women's labor force participation (Heitlinger 1979). Yet as a result of women's employment and unchanged gender roles, fertility declined noticeably in the 1950s and 1960s. As a consequence, state socialist family policy incorporated more maternalist elements to enable women to combine work outside the household and maternity, and thereby to increase birth rates. In the second half of the 1960s, a six-month paid maternity leave was introduced. In 1968, paid maternity leave was extended to 26 weeks, and in 1971, its duration was extended to two years. Prolonged maternity leave with a job guarantee was granted until a child reached 2 years of age (in the mid-1970s, it was extended to 3 years). A maternity allowance (at the time representing around 40% of the average female salary) was introduced in 1971 starting with the birth of the second child and paid until the child reached 2 years of age (Kocourková 2002).

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[118] The Worker's Health Insurance Act from 1928 had already granted maternity benefits to insured women, yet it was not consistently implemented until after WW II (Pavlik 1985).

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For many families, the forgone earnings of women on maternity leave were a problem, though. Thus, many women did not exhaust their entitlement to parental leave (Kitschelt 1995b). However, around one-half of the women had their second child within a two-year period after the first, the rationale being that it allowed women to combine two subsequent maternity leaves and to devote a considerable amount of time to childcare while receiving public support. This meant that at the time when women were beginning their professional careers, they had already spent several years devoting themselves to childcare, thus it was unlikely that they would want to go on maternity and childcare leave (Hamplová 2003: 12).

At the beginning of the 1990s, maternity leave, conceived as the period right before and after the birth of a child, was separated from parental leave: since then maternity leave is guaranteed for 28 weeks (36 weeks for single mothers). All employed women due to give birth are entitled to maternity leave whether or not they fulfill the requirements for a cash benefit. The leave period usually begins six weeks before the expected birth of the child. While the law does not oblige a woman to take maternity leave, if she takes time off from work for the birth of a child, the leave has to last at least 14 weeks, six of which must follow the child's birth. The maternity allowance was equal to the amount of the sickness leave allowance (since 1993, it has been set at 69 per cent of the daily basis of income with a ceiling to the maximum amount).

There was far-reaching agreement on state support for mothers in the Czech Republic, as illustrated by the fact that only minor changes have been made in maternity

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benefits during the 1990s: the most significant was a revision in the benefit formula in 1993, from 90 per cent of the net income to 69 per cent of the gross income. This reform was intended to better address the growing number of self-employed individuals covered by sickness insurance and to adjust to changes in the tax system (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003: 116).[119] Until 1999, the benefit level was limited by a relatively low ceiling, thus limiting its wage-replacement function.

A maternity benefit is only provided to the father exceptionally, in cases when he acts as a substitute for the mother during the period in which she is entitled to maternity benefits. Maternity benefits can only be transferred to the father if the mother is unable to take care of a child for some valid reason, such as death or disability due to serious disease. However, since 1990, fathers have been entitled to parental benefit following the birth of a child.

In addition to the insurance-based maternity benefit, mothers receive a birth grant from the state, which is calculated on the basis of the subsistence minimum of a child. It is a one-off benefit for mothers intended as a contribution to the costs related to the birth of a child. If a woman who gives birth to a child dies and the birth grant has not been disbursed to her or any other person, the child's father is entitled to this grant. Persons who are replacing the parental care of a child who is up to one year old, taking him or her

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[119] The basis for calculation continues to be the worker's income of the previous three months. The average portion of income tax is approximately 20 per cent of gross income, and the average proportion of net income equals approximately 80 per cent of gross income. The change in the benefit formula thus caused a modest decline of the replacement rate of the maternity benefit (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003: 116).

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into permanent care, are also entitled to the birth grant. The birth grant has been raised twice since 2000: in 2001, it was raised from 6.400 crowns for one child to 8.000 (followed by a minor adjustment in later years), and in 2006, it was almost doubled, from 8.600 to 17.500 crowns (about 615 Euro/ 730 USD).

III.3. Parental Leave and Cash Benefits for Families

Under state socialism, support for families included not only direct cash transfers such as child allowances, but also subsidies in kind for day-care centers, nursery schools, after-school care, school canteens, transport, summer camp, or indirect subsidies on food and manufactured goods intended primarily for children (Kitschelt 1995b).[120] The benefits were quite important sources of income for families with children. In the 1980s, average transfers (cash benefits, benefits in kind including the provision of day-care centers, nursery schools, after-school care, transport and school canteens and income tax relief or rent subsidies) per child per month equalled approximately 15 per cent of an average monthly salary and in total represented around 10 per cent of total government expenditures (Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009a). Child benefits for 2 children approximated 20 per cent of average wages alone. State housing policy preferred married couples with children over others for all types of newly constructed housing (Kučera 1994). Loans for

120 Child allowances were given to all dependent children, but not in an equal amount per child. It was mostly to the benefit of families with 3 children. In the 1970s and 1980s, child allowances for two children represented 15 to 20 per cent and for three children 35 to 40 per cent of the average monthly wage (Szikra and Tomka 2009).

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young married couples up to age 30 were introduced in 1973 and repayments were partly cancelled at the birth of a child. On the whole, state socialist population policy promoted the early start of family formation, gave great advantages to families with children, and preferred married to cohabiting couples.

The system of state support for parents through leave and benefits was revised profoundly after 1990. Early on, the benefit scheme even expanded, in light of the first consequences of the economic transition process. Two new family benefits were introduced in 1990: first, the state compensatory allowance, which was paid out to all children between 1990 and 1995 to buffer the effect of the liberalization of consumer prices. In prior years, the allowance had been dependent on parents' participation in sickness or pension insurance and its amount depended only on the size of the family. Afterward, the benefit was linked to the number of children and their ages.

Second, responding to the separation of maternity leave/maternity benefits from parental leave/parental benefits, a parental allowance was introduced, which is paid to parents of children up to three years of age who provide full-time care at home.[121] While the maternity allowance was initially provided exclusively to mothers caring for children up to three years of age, since the 1990 revisions, it has been available to either parent.[122] The parental benefit was introduced to foster a traditional division of labor and save

[121] Or up to 7 years if the child is disabled.

[122] Fathers can receive the parental benefit for full-time care directly following the birth of a child (maternity leave is not mandatory for women). However, the amount of the parental benefit is lower than the amount of the maternity benefit.

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money at the same time, as a senior aide to then Finance Minister Klaus explained: "The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is preparing a program for young women so they can afford to stay home with small children, and we will aid them with social support. This policy in the end will save money because when women work they need state-supported care [institutions]" (True 2003:59).

A further indication of the gendered priorities embodied in the parental benefit was that the leave conditions for fathers and mothers was unequalled until 2000: while an employer is obliged to hold a woman's position at work for six months and a job within the company for three years, and is not allowed to dismiss a woman during her pregnancy, a man on parental leave did not have a legally guaranteed right to return to his job. In 1995, the parental allowance was extended from three to four years, a move that, again, was supposed to curb growing unemployment.[123]

Several reform steps during the 1990s directly impacted cash family benefits. In 1993, the previously insurance-based child allowance was decoupled from an employment relationship and instead made dependent on the age(s) and number of children in a family. The 1995/96 social reform then restructured the state assistance for families systematically. Changes sought to concentrate benefits on those most in need and, at the same time, to improve the adequacy of protection for this group. The former was achieved primarily through income testing. The state compensatory allowance was

[123] It should be noted that the employment protection that comes with the leave is only for three years.

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replaced by the income-tested social allowance[124] (see Table 8 above). The child allowance, the basic benefit for families with children to help cover the costs of feeding and raising a child, became income-tested.[125] When the Social Democrats took over in 1998 they proposed switching back to a universal child allowance, but did not keep their promise. Because of fiscal constraints as well as the resistance of both their coalition partners and the opposition, the child allowance remained income-tested.

The parental allowance, however, continued as a universal benefit.[126] In keeping with familialist priorities, it was tied to a number of conditions: restrictions on the caregiver's earnings were imposed. The beneficiary was required to care full-time for a child under the age of four and the child could not attend a childcare institution for more than three (later raised to five) days a month. The restrictions thus solidified the separation of a parent with a small child- de facto almost all women- from the world of

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[124] The subsistence minimum is used as the criterion for awarding the benefit, as well as for calculating its amount.

[125] The size of the benefit continues to depend on a child's age, as before the change. Child allowances are provided at three levels depending on the income of the family in the previous calendar year. A dependent child has the right to a monthly child allowance as follows:
a) in the amount of 0.32 times the subsistence minimum of the child, if the income of the family did not exceed 1.1 times the subsistence minimum for the family;
b) 0.28 times the subsistence minimum of the child, if the income of the family exceeded 1.1 times the family subsistence minimum, but did not exceed 1.8 times the family subsistence minimum; and
c) 0.14 times the subsistence minimum of the child, if the income of the family exceeded 1.8 times the family subsistence minimum, but did not exceed 3.0 times the family subsistence minimum.
Families with an income greater than 3.0 times the subsistence minimum for the family do not have the right to the child allowance.

[126] The base for calculating the size of the benefit was also the subsistence minimum; therefore, the benefit amounted to 1.1 multiple of the parent's subsistence minimum.

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work, rather than facilitated the continued integration of parents on leave into the labor market (Marksová-Tominová 2003, Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).[127]

While the shift toward income-testing reflects a conceptual change in the structure of entitlements, the income limits were not very strict. This was particularly so in the case of the child allowance. As a consequence, a majority of Czech families continued to receive the income-tested child allowance. Increased unemployment during the second half of the 1990s also contributed to an increase in demand for the benefit. Income-testing is stricter in the case of the social allowance, where the family income must be less than 1.6 times the subsistence minimum.[128] After the introduction of income testing as a means of accessing the social allowance, only about a quarter of Czech families were still entitled to the benefit.

III.4. Diminishing State Income Support

On the whole, reduced state support for work-family reconciliation, more stringent entitlement criteria for benefits, and the increased responsibility placed on the family were the main effects of the post-1990 reforms. The proportion of families receiving all three of the most important family benefits (parental allowance, child allowance, social allowance) decreased by half, from 20.1 per cent in 1992 to 9.98 per

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[127] For practical reasons, or to secure family income, a significant group of beneficiaries violated the restrictions in order to stay connected to the labor market (Steinhilber 2003).

[128] Child allowances are included in the calculation of family income.

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cent in 1996. After the reform, 12 per cent of Czech families received no income-tested benefits from the state social support system at all (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003: 125). Those families that remained eligible for all three benefits, however, experienced increases ranging from three to ten percent of their net family income.

Through the reform, family benefits increased slightly as a fraction of family income in households of all sizes, but the increase was somewhat greater for larger families. On the whole, for the families that received state social support benefits, the share of family income constituted by child allowances declined between 1992 and 1999, whereas the share of the social allowance grew. The value of the (non-income-tested) parental allowance remained more or less stable (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).

Table 9 Drop in Support for Families with Children (Child Allowances and Tax Credits), 1989-2002

Type of family	Drop in public support in 2002 (compared to 100% in 1989)
Family with 1 or 2 dependent children	27%
Family with 3 children	35%
Single parent family with 1 child	45%

Source: Inglot 2009

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The nominal value of benefits per beneficiary rose considerably over the decade, mostly as a result of cost-of-living adjustments, as well as of the effort to target the social allowance to those families in greatest need.[129] However, when compared to wages, the nominal value of benefits rose slightly more than the minimum wage, but less than the average wage (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).

The three most relevant family benefits form 85 per cent of total state social support spending. Aggregate expenditures for these benefits have modestly increased in the Czech Republic.[130] In the post-reform period (1996-2000), family benefits as a percentage of GDP grew from 1.78 per cent of GDP to the still low level of 1.85 per cent (see Table 10). This increase in spending for family benefits resulted primarily from higher unemployment beginning in 1997 and the consequent increase in demand for the newly income-tested family benefits.

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[129] From 1991 to 1995, the benefits were indexed in line with price increases. Since 1996, indexation has depended on increases in the subsistence minimum.

[130] Different levels of aggregation of family income data by household size complicate comparisons between both countries.

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Table 10 **Three Family Benefits, Total Spending and Spending as a Percentage of GDP, the Czech Republic, 1996-2000 (CZK, Thousands)**

Benefit	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Child allowance	12,194	12,495	11,493	12,474	12,748
Social allowance	6,244	6,224	6,273	6,251	6,199
Parent allowance	7,357	7,612	7,780	7,718	7,691
Total of three benefits	25,795	26,331	25,546	26,443	26,638
Gross domestic product (GDP)	1,447,700	1,432,800	1,401,300	1,390,600	1,433,800
GDP accounted for by the three benefits	**1.78%**	**1.83%**	**1.82%**	**1.90%**	**1.85%**

Source: (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003):157

In terms of avoiding or reducing family poverty, family benefits have proved successful. The "best" targeted social programs are the social supplement and the parental allowance scheme. The social supplement advances income of the poorest decile by 5 per cent and all but ignores the six richest deciles. Perhaps surprisingly, the parental allowance scheme is targeted very well: it increased the income of the poorest decile by more than 6 per cent and the second decile's income by about 3 per cent, making little impact elsewhere. Children allowances also distribute towards the poorest decile (its income rises by 6 per cent), but they continue to boost the income of all economic brackets, which makes them unnecessarily expensive. (Schneider 2004: 9)

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Although the introduction of the parental allowance in 1990 represented a fundamental change in the legislative conditions for the gender division of roles, few fathers utilize the chance to care full-time for their child. Between 1993 and 1998, the percentage of men caring for a family or household in the group of economically inactive persons (aged 15 years or more) decreased from 0.7 per cent to 0.4 per cent. At the same time, this share decreased among women from 17.5 per cent to 16.1 per cent, largely as a result of the decline in the birth rate.[131] Between 1995 and 1998, parental allowances were provided to almost half a million women but fewer than four thousand men, or less than 1 per cent of the female beneficiary population. The failure on the part of fathers to make use of parental allowance is attributable not only to traditional views of the roles of men and women in Czech society, but also to the gender wage gap. Family income tends to decrease less during the period of care for a small child if it is the woman who stays home.[132] Another disincentive for more equal sharing of childcare was the unequal availability of parental leave. Up until 1 January 2001, men, unlike women, who wished to take child care leave did not have their employment relation protected by law.

Part-time employment during parental leave has only become a reasonable option for parents since the very strict income restrictions for parents on parental leave were lifted in 2001. Some changes did not occur until well after the country had joined the EU:

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[131] Data include men and women regardless of the type of family and form of family cohabitation (i.e. including one-parent families with fathers as the head of the household).

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it has only been since 2005 that the parental allowance is also paid to a parent whose child (older than three years) visits a nursery, kindergarten or other similar pre-school institution for up to 4 hours per day. A child younger than three years can attend a childcare institution for a maximum of 5 calendar days in a calendar month.

Other inconsistencies of the benefit design remained. For example, parental leave and parental benefit were not in line with one another. An employer was obliged to grant parental leave to the mother or father of a child up to the age of three years. In the fourth year, the mother or father still had a right to the parental allowance; however, the employer was no longer obliged to guarantee employment for the parent on leave during the fourth year. Because of the fear of unemployment and the need to increase the family income as soon as possible by the addition of a second income, in the late 1990s about 80% of women return to work before or immediately after the end of parental leave (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).[133]

III.5. Child Care Services

High employment rates of women and high fertility rates were a composite part of the main political objectives of Czech state socialist family policy. The extensive net of

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[132] For example, the value of the parent allowance in 2000 equalled 29 per cent of the average wage of women aged 25-29 years working full-time, but only 20 per cent of the average wage of men under the same circumstances.

[133] At the end of 2005, the parliament approved an increase in the parental allowance (Act No. 112/2006 Coll.). After the change, the benefits will correspond to 40 per cent of the average monthly wage in the non-entrepreneurial sphere. In 2007, the benefit was CZK 7,582 per month.

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facilities for pre-school children was a key instrument toward these ends. Public day care for children over age 3 was easily accessible and not costly, since it was subsidized by municipalities and typically provided by enterprises on-site. Childcare services for children below three years of age were available, although to a lesser degree. By the end of the 1980s, nearly 15 per cent of infants aged 0-2 years old attended nurseries, and nearly 90 per cent of children aged 3- 5 years old attended pre-schools. Despite the high numbers of children at childcare facilities, the capacity of the facilities was insufficient and not all applications for pre-school were accommodated (Hamplová 2000, Sirovátka and Rakoczyova 2009).

In line with its move toward familialism, the state renounced a main part of its previous responsibility for providing childcare. In particular, the availability of childcare services for children below 3 years of age declined, so that in fact childcare for small children was re-familiarized (Hantrais 2004). While in 1989 crèches cared for more than 14 per cent of infants (with about 1,300 crèches with places for 53,000 children), in 2004 this figure had dropped to less than 1 per cent (58 crèches with places for 1,708 children) (Haggard and Kaufman 2009, Offe 2009). Only 18 per cent of the places available in crèches are provided by the state (Staab and Gerhard 2010). Currently, crèches exist only in big cities – and their expenses represent the bulk of an average monthly wage. In 2004, the enrollment rate for children under 3 in institutional childcare was only 0.6 per cent (UNICEF Innocenti Research Center 2007).

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In contrast, childcare institutions for children between 3 and 6 years of age remained relatively widely available and are supported by the public authorities: the costs, including meals, are favorable and represent about 5 per cent of the average wage.[134] Even though the number of children in pre-school has also dropped sharply (by 23 per cent between 1991 and 2001), this reflects the slump in the fertility rate from the 1990s. The enrollment rate of children aged 3-5 in institutional childcare was 87.6 per cent in 2004, and the number of available places actually exceeded the number of children of pre-school age (UNICEF Innocenti Research Center 2007). However, only 44 per cent of 3 to 4 year old children attended kindergartens.

Czech observers widely agree that the main explanation for the different developments of crèches and pre-schools lies in the familialist priorities of state benefits, as well as the low cultural acceptance of nurseries. In 2000, only a minority of women indicated a willingness to work before the (youngest) child reached three years of age (Hamplová 2000). Families were unhappy with the past experience of a combination of enforced employment and childcare; state-provided facilities were considered of poor quality and working time arrangements for mothers inadequate. Surveys from the 1960s

[134] The fee is set by local authorities. Using a typical example from a big city, it is about 10 per cent of women's average wage in the case of low-income families, about 20 per cent in the case of average-income brackets and 40 per cent in the case of high-income families (with income exceeding 3 times the subsistence minimum). A tendency is clear to decrease the numbers even further. Children over 2 years of age are only allowed to enroll in a kindergarten if capacity is available and there is also a requirement of a lower number of children per a member of staff in the case of young children.

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and the 1970s showed that women would have stayed at home if they had had the economic means to do so (Kučera 1994: 64).

As a consequence, nearly all women interrupt their jobs for maternity leave, followed by parental leave. Many combine subsequent maternity/parental leaves (in approximately one-half of cases the second child is born within a three year period following the first). A very high percentage of women attempt to return to full-time employment and make use of public childcare after the period of paid parental leave expires, yet they face serious obstacles when they do so (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).

Despite research pointing at the negative consequences of women's long absences from the labor market, it is striking that none of the post-1990 governments made any deliberate effort to either address the massive decline in early childcare facilities, or to raise the quality of service-provision in the remaining facilities.[135] Instead, childcare policy seems to have contributed to pushing women out of the labor market and into their homes, at least temporarily: between 1988 and 1996, the share of households in prime age (head of household between 25-54 years old) with a single active earner increased from 29.7 to 36.7 per cent, while the average of economically active members in those households decreased from 1.86 to 1.82 (Večerník 2001b:8). In the age bracket 25-49

[135] Part of the problem with respect to the quality of the services provided lies in the administrative division of responsibilities: childcare institutions for children below 3 years of age are under the administration of the Ministry of Health, which regulates the professional requirements of crèche personnel. In turn, kindergarten for 3-6 years old children is under the administration of the Ministry of Education.

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years, women's unemployment rate was much higher than men's in all years (see Table 11).

Table 11. Unemployment Rate of 25-49 Years Old, by Sex, 1990-2004

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Both sexes	..	3.50	8.10	7.40	6.40	6.80	7.20
Female	..	4.40	10.60	9.40	8.40	9.30	9.30
Male	..	2.70	6.00	5.70	4.70	4.80	5.60

Source: UNECE Statistical Division Database, compiled from national official sources

Of all those Czechs who were economically inactive because they were responsible for their home and families between 2000 and 2004, only a minor percentage were men (see Table 12).

Table 12 Homemaking as the Reason for Inactivity of 25-49 Years Old, 1990-2004[136]

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Both sexes	..		252.7	264.0	274.7	282.1	287.5
Female	..		248.8	261.1	272.0	278.1	284.2
Male	..		3.9	2.9	2.7	4.0	3.3

Source: UNECE Statistical Division Database, compiled from national official sources

Certainly, there is a close link between women's absences from the labor market and the lack of childcare services in the country, a fact that remained unrecognized by

[136] The *economically inactive population* includes all the persons who are not part of the labor force, i.e. are neither employed nor unemployed.

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Czech politicians of various political orientations. Like in Poland, the EU commitments regarding childcare services passed virtually unnoticed in the Czech family policy debates until well after the country became an EU member. Several years after its accession, the Czech Republic openly contradicted these benchmarks and refused to make an effort towards achieving these goals.[137]

IV. Summary

In the first fifteen years of post-socialism, family policy reforms led to the establishment of a conservative-statist family policy model in the Czech Republic. State support continues to be important (and regarded as legitimate), particularly when aimed at mothers and families in the greatest economic need. The traditional gender division of labor, particularly in relation to small children, is firmly institutionalised in the country. At the same time, the country has been relatively successful in redistributing income to reduce poverty, an important achievement of the state support given to families.

On the whole, Czech family policy has deepened previously existing maternalist and familialist traditions. However, family policy has only been a marginal topic in social policy debates since 1990, and family benefits have been employed in the interest of poverty reduction and stabilization of the labor market by limiting women's labor force participation rather than gender equality. There was no strategic family policy planning until at least 2000.

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[137] See the following chapter for a more detailed discussion.

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The overall commitment to state-sponsored income redistribution contrasts with the widespread resistance to integrate gender equality concerns into family policy that has characterized the first decade and a half of reforms. Czechs interested in more progressive family policy reforms and the promotion of gender equality through family policy were a weak presence throughout the first decade of reforms: for much of the 1990s, even women's organizations did not assign a high priority to family policy. Similarly, the trade unions -that were so active and vocal during the first pension and benefit reforms- were not particularly present in family policy debates.

While reforms advanced the formal equality of benefit entitlements between women and men, change in real life did not follow. Most notably, men have been entitled to parental leave and allowance since 1990; in the past, provisions for caring for a small child were granted to men only under exceptional circumstances. However, it took almost eleven years to equalize the conditions under which women and men could enjoy parental leave. Only since January 2001 do men enjoy protection of their employment relationship when on parental leave. It is no surprise that few men chose to use their leave entitlement during the 1990s since they would have had no assurance that they would be able to return to their previous job. The financial consequences of parental leave for a family still constitute strong disincentives for fathers to use their leave entitlements: in 2000, the relatively low and flat-rate parental allowance represented 29 per cent of women's average wage (for those between 25 and 29 years of age), and only 20 per cent of men's average wage.

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As in Poland, the progress toward greater formal equality of women and men in family benefits has not had measurable impacts on the gender division of labor so far: a 2001 survey indicated that in 83 per cent of married couples, women always or usually do the everyday housework (Family 2001, quoted in Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003). This remains true regardless of women's engagement in paid employment. Other data show that the main difference between women's and men's time budget lies not in the hours of employment but in the hours spent on housework: women spent twice as much time as men on housework (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).

The Czech Republic has slowly and reluctantly moved toward the European mainstream in family policy debates, but the development of modern reconciliation policies is still in its initial phase. Thus far, family policy has contributed to stabilizing traditional gender roles rather than contributing to the development of gender equality. The family support system facilitates women's exit from the labor market rather than facilitating their economic independence. It may therefore create a trap for women, particularly for those with fewer educational and job qualifications.

Why is it that the Czech Republic has followed this particular reform path, leading to the deepening of conservative-statist traditions that are embedded in a strongly familialist family policy organization? In the following chapter, I will look into the reasons for the particular Czech reform trajectory, focusing on the role and priorities of main actors in the Czech policy landscape and key political conflicts leading to important reform decisions.

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Chapter 6

Explaining Continuity and Reforms in the Czech Republic

I. Introduction

While the preceding chapter provided a description of Czech family policy reforms between 1990 and 2004, this chapter attempts to explain the reasons for the particular reform trajectory that the country chose. Why were the family policy reforms in practice more moderate than the liberal discourse would suggest? How can we explain that family policy took a conservative turn, while other social policies were modernized? What has slowed the Europeanization of family policy, so that in the Czech Republic family policy continues to support mothers staying at home to care for their children, while other European countries focus on work-family reconciliation and a more equal sharing of child-care labor?

Following the previously outlined explanatory model of family policy reforms, this chapter describes how institutional and cultural traditions, as well as external influences, have impacted the behavior and opportunity structures of Czech political actors in the family policy reform process. The analysis focuses on the impact of three variables. Two variables concern the "Past": institutional traditions on the one hand, and cultural traditions in the form of norms, values, and social practices, on the other. Taken

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together, they highlight the path-dependent character of policy reforms. In other words, the "Past" served as a corridor to channel post-1990 reform debates and proposals. Continuity within the institutional setup of benefits and services, for example, affected discussions about the introduction of means-testing in family benefits, as well as the reform of childcare institutions. By and large, the reforms that took place after 1990 did not constitute a fundamental break from previous traditions of family support, even though more strictly liberal demands were certainly raised in the discussions.

There was also considerable continuity with respect to norms and practices within the family and family policy discourses. The impact of family discourses is most clearly visible in the preferences regarding care for small children, as well as gender role assignments in daily life. In both fields, Czech society continues to follow a relatively traditional division of gender roles.

A third variable to explain Czech family policy reforms was, as in the case of Poland, the external context. External influences on family policy reforms were primarily exerted through EU norms and standards; these were the crucial modernizing impulses for Czech family policy debates. Despite the fact that the Czech Republic was slow to implement EU legislation regarding equal opportunities and treatment of women and men, EU concepts and terms were –slowly, selectively, and strategically– incorporated into the Czech family policy discourse. Even when opposing EU trends, Czech governments perceived a need to position their approach against a more progressive

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external family policy environment (for example, in statements about the provision and funding of childcare institutions) (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) 2005).

Czech family policy reforms came about as an outcome of domestic political struggles – these are addressed in Section III of this chapter. National political actors, such as the main political parties, strategically used family policy in the interest of other political goals (e.g. relieving pressure from the labor market and cost-saving through institutional reforms in the field of childcare). Parties and, for example, civil society organizations, also made statements about family policy in order to position themselves ideologically. Analyzing the role and political stance of Czech national actors is complicated because the goals they assigned to family policy varied considerably, depending on the relative weight assigned to the dimensions of income redistribution, gender relations, and demographic sustainability respectively.

II. Institutional and Cultural Continuities in the Czech Course of Reforms

II.1. The "Past" – Institutional Continuities

After 1990, the family policy institutions and traditions inherited from state socialist times, or partly even from before WW II, proved quite resilient to reform attempts (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2009). Alongside norms and behavioral patterns, institutional traditions exerted a strong influence over the development of family policy reforms. Continuity, for example, is visible in the basic entitlement structures for family benefits: despite a lowering of the overall level of

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benefits, all but one family benefit continues to be provided without income restrictions, thereby allowing a relatively wide access for Czech families (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).[138] Calls for a fundamental break with the inherited and generous family policy setup through the introduction of means-tested benefits or strict benefits ceilings have not prevailed, with one exception: entitlement to the child allowance since 1995 has become based on a means-test. However, during the debates, a commitment to state support for families was invoked, and, though the intervention of the Christian Democrats, the initially proposed limits for the means-test were lowered, so that a large number of families were still entitled to the benefit (see Chapter 5).

Reforms in childcare services also showed the strength of institutional continuities. During state socialist rule, public day care for children over age 3 was easily accessible and not costly, while childcare for children below three years of age was more difficult to access. Responsibilities for both types of institutions were split, with the Ministry of Education in charge of kindergarten and the Ministry of Health in charge of crèches for children under 3 years old. At the end of the 1980s, nearly 15 per cent of infants aged 0-2 years attended crèches, and nearly 90 per cent of children aged 3-5 years attended kindergarten. The reputation of both types of institutions among parents was very different: while kindergartens were quite accepted as educational institutions among

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[138] Note that other social assistance benefits are not as widely accessible because they are indeed provided only on the basis of a means-test. Also note that a few years after the Czech Republic became an EU member, i.e. after the end of the time period covered in this study, support for parents on parental leave became more generous: The universal parental allowance was raised and various options for drawing the benefit were introduced.

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Czech families, crèches for small children had quite a bad reputation. Alongside persistent, deeply gendered beliefs about the need of small children for exclusive family-based care through their mother, other factors contributed to the poor image of crèches: nurses rather than pedagogues cared for the smaller children, the institutions were overcrowded, and they did not follow transparent quality standards.

After 1990, the mistrust against crèches inhibited demands for quality improvements, or a shift of institutional responsibilities to the Ministry of Education.[139] The negative reputation of early childcare institutions during state socialism was significantly influenced by Czechoslovak pediatricians who based their opinion on the research of two psychologists, Langmeier and Matějček (first presented in 1961), who fostered the negative impact of early childcare on child development (Kutter and Trappmann 2006: 61). Despite doubts as to the general applicability of Langmeier and Matějček's results, their conclusions live on until today.[140]

As a consequence, the demand for crèche services never surpassed a threshold to create significant political pressure, nor did a strong opposition build up against the closure of crèches. Because most families never developed the hope that crèches could be high-quality caring institutions, as political constituencies they did not raise claims for adequate public investment in childcare services or for qualitative improvements of

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[139] The transfer of responsibility for childcare institutions for children below three years of age from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Education happened in 2008 only.

[140] Interviews with Michaela Marksova-Tominova, Prague, 16 May 2006; Interview with Vera Kucharova, Prague, 17 May 2006.

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existing institutions. The minority of crèche users was relatively small, and the majority of Czech families continued their long-standing practices of utilizing either family-based childcare or finding solutions on the private market. The demand for institutional services was even further depressed through the extension of the period of parental leave in 1990, and during the 1990s, the relatively easy availability of places in kindergarten for two years olds in many areas facilitated the development of informal solutions.[141] This example illustrates how the inherited institutional setup and inculcated practices, which were responsible for the poor reputation and low demand for services for very young children, worked in the service of post-1990s interventions to further scale back childcare services for small children (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2009, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006, Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007).

While a significant degree of continuity in the state support system inherited from state socialism is visible, it should also be noted that the legacy of family policy predates state socialism. Rather than introducing radical breaks with the past, family policies of consecutive regimes were built upon previous ones (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2009, Thelen 2004). Szelewa and Szikra point out that the development of welfare state structures, and differences between countries, have not started with state socialism but much earlier, around the First World War with the formation of independent nation-states

[141] Czech kindergartens are allowed to accept two year old children, as long as there are no applications for older children. The massive decline in birth rates during the 1990s thus facilitated access to childcare services for those families with kids below age three who wanted to use institutional services. When birth rates resumed, access to services for kids below 3 years became very difficult again.

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(Szikra and Szelewa 2009). The first act pertaining to kindergartens dates back to 1869, which institutionally established kindergartens, nurseries, and crèches that depended on the age of the child and the character of the service. The net enrollment rate of children below 6 years of age just before WW II was 20 per cent (Szelewa 2006: 10).

There were a number of partially successful attempts to break with the influence of the past in family policy after 1990. In the early 1990s, prominent postsocialist Czech reformers, like then Finance Minister (and later president) Vaclav Klaus, aimed to fundamentally transform the inherited welfare state schemes by initiating controversial debates about the need for profound reforms and a redesign of social policy. However, Klaus and his fellow reformers did not succeed in their call for a liberal postsocialist welfare state. The resistance against liberal proposals was partly built on an invocation of older welfare state traditions and values of redistribution, as well as state paternalism (Matějů and Vlachova 1997).

Some have argued that institutional continuities reflect a certain historical commitment on the part of Czechs to a continental, central European, Bismarckian, and corporatist welfare state (Večerník 1996, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2009). Večerník, for example, argues that "The social democratic tradition of prewar Czechoslovakia and the proximity of "Social Europe" has prevented unrestrained capitalism from returning" (Večerník 1996: 191).[142] Particularly in the area of family policy, a majority of Czechs

[142] Opinion surveys have noted the relatively high and persistent value of social justice in Czech society, as well as the development of preferences for redistribution on the basis of need, merit, and individual effort over the course of the 1990s.

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resisted a market liberalism that would have profoundly transformed the inherited institutional structure (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006). In the area of family benefits a majority of Czechs preferred universal to means-tested benefits, with an overwhelming majority demanding state support for families in principle (Večerník 2004: 10).

In a number of additional aspects we can observe the impact of institutional legacies and the path-dependent character of Czech family policy reforms. First, family policy continued to play a marginal role in social policy after 1990. At the level of policy discourses, there was a shift in emphasis during the 1990s, but this was not reflected in the generosity of benefits or in government levels of spending. Rhetorically, the family became an addressee of social policy, as "the most natural social group which should (…) ensure the care for its members and form their material and intellectual needs from childhood until old age" (Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009a). However, the approach to the family was largely instrumental. The central goal of reforms formulated by the various governments at the time – regardless of their overall political position – was the fight against emergent and increasing poverty, and the support for families in coping with economic hardship that came about as a result of the transition to a market economy.

Second, within the parameters of social policy broadly and family policy narrowly, gender equality had an even more marginal place. Concerns for gender equality or women's rights have not received much interest from the various governments, nor has the gender impact of the various social reforms received much attention in the public deliberations about reform impacts. In this respect, family policy reforms were developed

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and implemented like most other policy areas: gender equality was eclipsed by other concerns which were perceived as more immediate by decision-makers, and, to a large extent, also by the Czech public. Close observers have thus argued that until the end of 1997 "women's issues were the least of governmental and state administration concerns" (Deacon 2002: 31). Women were predominantly perceived as mothers, or in the case of single-parent households, as the head of the family. Only as a second thought were they regarded as the individual bearers of rights (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003: 134).

As a consequence, women's individual rights were made dependent on conformity with their roles as mothers: they were only entitled to state support as long as their needs did not enter into conflict with their social and family role as mothers. An example here lies in the restrictions imposed on placing a child in day care for even short periods during parental leave, a policy which made it difficult for women to pursue their own goals such as working or upgrading their skills while on parental leave.

II.2. The "Past" – Cultural Continuities: Norms, Values, Practices

In addition to the continuity of welfare state institutions and related values in the Czech Republic, the durability of conservative gendered values and gender stereotypes in the public sphere is another characterizing feature of the Czech situation. The strength and continuity of gendered behavioral patterns, role assignments, and justificatory methods in public debates is an illustration of the limited impact that policy has on

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gender culture, on the one hand. On the other hand, it also serves to illustrate how policy is embedded in a gendered cultural and political framework. The durability of gender conservatism despite the predominantly laic character of the Czech Republic should be highlighted: while arguments tend to focus on traditional gender culture as a reflection of a strong Church, the Czech Republic shows that conservative gender values can be strong even where the Church is weak.

Widespread gender conservatism was visible, for example, in the upholding of a traditional gender role division of labor with respect to unpaid and care work - a practice defended by both women and men - and in the reaffirmation of motherhood as a role model for women. There was a wide consensus across party lines in the upholding of a traditional gender order, as reflected in gender stereotypes and popular ideas about gender differences and gender roles.[143] In this respect, the strong conviction that mothers are by nature the main child-minders, and therefore have a secondary role on the labor market, can be regarded as a durable feature of Czech gender culture. It is noteworthy, however, that in the Czech context, gender conservatism has hardly ever implied the demand for a complete withdrawal of women from the labor market. Instead, women's role in the economy is recognized in combination with their traditional roles as mothers and caretakers. In this context, familial ideals were used to justify public support to the family.

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[143] The wide consensus on these matters is striking. It is surprising to see the dominance of familialist arguments despite the fact that Czech society is a secular society.

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The reaffirmation of a motherly identity became visible in the references to "good motherhood" which permeated the reform discussions during the 1990s. In the debates about the governing Social Democrats' proposal to lift the income restrictions associated with the parental allowance after 2002, right-wing parliamentarians were strongly concerned about Czech mothers becoming "bad mothers." Lifting the restrictions would allow mothers to focus on making money instead of caring for children and would thus lead to children being neglected and the positive role of families for society weakened (Marksová-Tominová 2003: 56). In the end, however, the governing majority won and the restrictions were lifted, allowing for a closer and more continuous connection of parents (in fact, mothers) on parental leave with the labor market, and thereby potentially facilitating their return to the labor market after the parental leave.

While institutional arrangements and behavioral patterns inherited from the past have shaped reforms, there was also considerable continuity with respect to the impact of gender role models and stereotypes reflected in Czech family policy. Persistently unequal labor market structures were accompanied by largely conforming, often stereotypical, individual choices with respect to labor market participation and family roles (Marksová-Tominová 2003, Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003).[144] Family policy did not deliberately aim at breaking up these patterns. Not surprisingly therefore, the negative

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[144] Saxonberg points out that already before 1990 women did not experience themselves as victims of such a role division. Instead, they were proud of being able to manage both roles, as worker and mother, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of a stereotypical role division (Saxonberg 2003).

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consequences for women's labor market position and economic security are quite visible, despite the continuously high (by European standards) labor force participation of women:[145] the Czech Republic has the greatest employment impact of parenthood on women among 30 European countries (Plantenga and Remery 2005: 39). In other words, when Czech women become mothers, a large number of them are, at least temporarily, pushed out of the labor market or withdraw from it (or often experience a combination).[146] They face serious obstacles when trying to make their way back into employment after a few years of family leave, and face a daily challenge in combining paid work with their family responsibilities.

With respect to men and the male role model institutionalized in family benefits, there was also no break with past traditions: during state socialism, policy did not treat men as fathers and workers simultaneously, and therefore did not offer support to the conjoining of both roles. Instead, in social security terms, men were assigned the role of family provider and primary breadwinner. While the reforms of the 1990s equalized access of women and men to family benefits in the Czech Republic, this did not have a

[145] The employment level for women in the 25-54 year old bracket was 73.7 per cent in the Czech Republic in 2000. This is above OECD average but it is lower than in Scandinavian countries. It is the same as in Austria, Germany, United Kingdom, USA, Portugal and Poland. And it is higher than in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy Hungary and Spain. The gender gap in labor force participation (i.e. the difference between women's and men's participation rates) was 15.6 per cent in the Czech Republic.

[146] Sirovatka reports a large gap in labor force participation when women with no children are compared with women with two or more children: The difference between these two categories is 28 per cent (gender gap compared to men of the same age category is only 5 per cent for women with no children and 33 per cent for women with two or more children) (Sirovátka 2003: 8).

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practical impact. The unequal division of work and responsibilities between women and men has not or at least not yet, entered political debates or decision-making regarding family policy; similarly, men have not become the explicit addressees of social or family policy in the interest of gender equality. The lack of a specific male focus in the distribution of family benefits is illustrated by the built-in tendency for parental leave and allowance to be used by the parent with the lower income, typically the mother.

While gendered values of policymakers and stereotypical individual choices of women and men have characterized family policy during the 1990s, there were also some disruptions to this pattern and changes in behavior that should not be underestimated. Throughout the 1990s, for example, Czechs drastically postponed marriage and childbearing. While the average age of a first-time mother was 22.3 in 1984, in 2003, it was 25.9 (Skochová January 11th, 2006). The reasons for the rapid postponement of births are under debate: some have argued that it was caused by a change in young people's value orientation and by circumstances complicating their start in life (such as difficulties to integrate into the labor market and to find affordable housing), and that young people are delaying or giving up their family plans (Sirovátka 2003: 10).[147] The decline in birthrates has prompted debates about the need, and possible effects, of pronatalism and more generous family benefits.

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[147] Increases in birth rates during the first decade of the century indicate that many women indeed only postponed their family plans, causing increased demands for state support through benefits and services (Skochová January 11th, 2006).

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In addition to the prevailing conservatism regarding gender roles, a noticeable anti-feminism characterized Czech public debates after 1990 (Vodrážka 1993, Smejkalova-Strickland 1993). The environment at the time did not facilitate debates about family policy reforms or international trends in state support for families, and the Czech women's movement was too weak to take a forceful stand. Prevailing anti-feminist sentiments were gladly taken up, or carried further, in parliamentary debates about the institutionalization of gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming.[148] In this context, Czech mass media tended to portray gender differences as unchanging "facts of nature" and described gender equality as "either a foreign or former-communist artifice" (True 2003: 53).[149] At the same time, particularly during the first half of the 1990s, there was considerable skepticism among Czech women activists and academics regarding Western feminism, and doubts about the applicability of Western concepts of feminist analysis and policy to the Czech situation (Šiklová 1993, Jung 1994, Havelková 1999).

III. External Influences – The Strategic Incorporation of EU Norms

Like economic and political reforms in other postsocialist countries, Czech family policy reforms were influenced by external contexts as well (Government of the Czech Republic 2009b, Bednarz 2006, Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009b). External influences on

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[148] Interviews with Anna Čurdová, Prague 18 May 2006, and Květoslava Čelišová, Prague 18 May 2006.

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family policy reforms came to bear in the Czech context mainly, and most directly, through EU norms and standards in the field of employment and social affairs. Over time, Czech policy actors selectively and strategically incorporated EU norms, as well as commonly agreed upon concepts and terms into the Czech family policy discourse.

Despite the fact that the EU has only a limited say over member states' social policies, the EU acquis on equal treatment and equal opportunities for men and women exerted important influences over Czech family policy (for example, in the field of parental leave regulations). Alongside binding legal norms, the integration of the Czech Republic into the EU policy coordination mechanism, institutionalized in the Open Method of Coordination on Employment and Social Integration, was another influential factor.

Observers have repeatedly pointed out that the Czech Republic was slow in adjusting to EU standards in social policy (Marksová-Tominová 2003, Pavlik 2008) For example, it was only in 1998 that the then-Social Democratic government developed a state-level equal opportunity policy, and it took until 1999 for the government to approve an amendment to the Labour Code which brought it in line with EU requirements. The amendments concerned, for example, the explicit prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination in the labor market. The process of implementing all EU directives concerning gender equality lasted several more years. Inadequate institutional

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[149] Coverage of gender issues in Czech media has changed only very slowly. One indication of change, however, was a popular reality TV show portraying men on parental leave, which was sponsored by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the first years of the century.

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arrangements also slowed down the adjustment to EU standards: The Division for Equality of Men and Women was only established in 1998, under the Department for EU Integration and International Relations at Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.[150]

Despite the fact that the implementation of EU requirements was so slow, international standards were important modernizing impulses for Czech family policy debates, in particular when the link between gender equality policy and family policy is considered (Cerami and Vanhuysse 2009b, Marksová-Tominová 2003). Women in the Social Democratic Party, for example, report that in their inner-party debates about the need to introduce explicit work-family reconciliation support into Czech family policy, they made reference to EU norms and international developments in this policy field.[151] Reflecting this slow progress, as well as an increasing awareness of family policy debates in the European Union, Social Democratic family policy statements shifted over time toward recognizing the dimension of work-family reconciliation, while still maintaining their more genuinely social democratic emphasis on income support and poverty reduction.

The absence of institutional spaces for family policy debate slowed the development of an informed discourse on competing policy proposals, while at the same time it restricted possibilities for the political participation of organized women's and

[150] This institutional arrangement symbolized the perception of gender equality as something alien to the Czech national political agenda, as a requirement from the outside.

[151] Interview with Anna Čurdová, Prague 18 May 2006, Michaela Marksova-Tominova, Prague, 16 May 2006.

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families' interests. At the same time, the absence of debates also inhibited the Europeanization of Czech family policy: family policy experiences in other countries could not be brought into the Czech policy context. Despite binding international commitments, the Czech Republic was slow to create institutional structures that would promote gender equality – and even slower to integrate a family policy dimension into equality institutions. It was only in February 1989 that a Department for Equality of Women and Men was established in the Ministry, working under the Section for European Integration and International Relations; but even so, its scope of tasks was wide, ranging from substantive advice to the promotion and monitoring of gender mainstreaming within the Czech government (Marksová-Tominová 2003). Moreover, its creation happened in response to pressures coming from the EU during the negotiations for Czech membership in the Union, rather than as a result of a growing internal commitment to the promotion of gender equality. It also did not reflect an increasing integration of Czech and Western European family/gender policy debates (Pavlik 2008). It was only with the establishment of the Governmental Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men (in October 2001), or in practice only when it started its activity at the end of the year 2002, that representatives of women's organizations had an institutionalized forum of exchange with governmental bodies.

A more explicit shift in attention towards reconciliation policies (but not necessarily agreement with reconciliation support) came only around the time when the Czech Republic became an EU member. With EU membership, official discourses

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address EU requirements and trends in neighboring countries more directly. Even where they opposed EU trends, Czech governments saw the need to position their approach against a more progressive external family policy environment, for example in statements about the provision and funding of childcare institutions (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) 2005). However, Czech governmental official at times opposed EU common goals and commitments very outspokenly. This became crystal clear years after the country had become an EU member, during the first Czech presidency of the EU, when the country attempted to water down EU targets in childcare provision. The Czech Minister of Labour stated that "a known request that 33 per cent of children under 3 years old should have access to collective care by 2010 appeared among the Barcelona goals for economic growth defined in 2002. This however, assumes that at least that number of children will be sent to these arrangements - regardless of the wishes of parents, regardless of the freedom of families, without anybody asking what's best for the children. I can fully and responsibly say here that the Czech Republic will not attain this request and will not achieve that goal." (Government of the Czech Republic 2009a). Alongside this assertion, the Czech government also stated its goal of limiting EU influences on the family policy of member states (Government of the Czech Republic 2009b).

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IV. Domestic Political Struggles Shaping Family Policy Reforms

Domestic politics were certainly a driving factor for family policy reforms in the decade and a half following 1990. It is important to note that decision-making in the field of family policy took place in an overall framework of a "hybrid 'social liberal' strategy for transformation" (Orenstein 2001: 61), characterized by economic liberalization, which was accompanied by social policy to compensate the losers of reforms and negotiated between contesting political actors committed to political compromise (Blejer and Coricelli 1995, Večerník 1996, Večerník and Matějů 1999, Orenstein 2001). Analyzing the first years of reform, True emphasizes that "[the] mixed approach to reform, combining neoliberal macroeconomic policies with compensatory social policies was a political compromise brokered between former dissidents with social liberal values (many of whom had been reform communists in 1968) and those radical neoliberal reformers (typically economists) who participated in the Civic Forum government." (True 2003: 12). More generally, Potůček describes the years 1992-1998 as characterized by a "strange mixture of neo-liberal and conservative rhetoric and centralist and etatist practical social policy," while pointing to the fact that tighter budgetary constraints restricted later attempts for more coherent reforms under the Social Democratic governments (Potůček 2001: 26). Confirming such an interpretation, former Minister of Finance and today's President Vaclav Klaus writes about the early reforms: "In the end, we did only what we were allowed to do by the social and political consensus of that

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time. But, it was far from being all that we dreamt about and that we considered to be correct" (Klaus 2006).

The political transformation during of the 1990s have been described as slow in opening spaces for political participation in social and gender policy debates: "Even if there were some organized interests seeking to participate in the policy network, political institutions provided few opportunities for them to do so" (Anderson 2003: 66). On the one hand, participation was difficult because political conflicts were carried out between different governmental bodies and behind closed doors. For example, family policy reform, like the social policy reform processes more broadly, was shaped by diverging opinions between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the Ministry of Finance advocating for restrictions in the access to family benefits and the setting of benefits ceilings.[152] In contrast, the Labour Ministry opposed means-testing; early on, it even argued for an expansion of family support in order to buffer the negative consequences of the economic reforms (Müller 1999).

At the end of the 1990s, and again early in the new century, the Christian Democratic Union – Czech People' s Party (KDU-CSL) proposed the creation of a new Ministry for Family Affairs in order to clearly assign institutional responsibilities and enhance the attention paid to family affairs (Mladá fronta Dnes 1991). In the absence of a special ministry, family policy remained within the Ministry of Labour and Social

[152] Müller shows, however, that in pension policy during the 1990, both ministries did not diverge much (Müller 1999: 136).

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Affairs. However, even within the Ministry the responsibility for formulating family policy proposals was contested. There was no specialized department or unit for family policy during the first years of reforms. Similarly, there was no administrative responsibility assigned to either the development of gender policy or the monitoring of governmental commitments regarding the promotion of gender equality for most of the 1990s – despite international treaties to the contrary.[153]

As institutional responsibilities became clearer with the foundation of the Gender Unit, gender and family policy were not institutionally and conceptually linked; the Gender Equality Unit did not become a player in family policy debates, while the Department of Family did not get involved in the country's gender policy. These institutional divisions lasted until 2004, when (under the Social Democratic government that lasted from 2002-2006) the links between the country's family policy and gender equality commitments were discussed more forcefully. The new National Family Policy explicitly conceptualized the need for support to families as necessary to reconcile employment and family life, while at the same time it supported women's economic status (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) 2005).

While this could be considered a success of the head of the department, Michaela Marksová-Tominová, both fields were linked conceptually merely through the attention

[153] As a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action agreed at the UN World Conference on Women in 1995, the Czech Republic had committed itself to establish a National Machinery for the Advancement of Women to "to, inter alia, design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilize support for policies that promote the advancement of women," to be placed "at the highest possible level of government" (United Nations 1995).

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paid to the topic of work-family reconciliation. Under the leading role of the Gender Equality Department, reconciliation policies were placed more squarely on the agenda than they had been before. However, the more proactive role of the Family Policy Department under the Social Democrat Marksová-Tominová provoked intra-coalition resistance. The Christian Democratic KDU-CSL, which had controlled prior decisions about the personnel in this post, opposed the nomination of an outspoken feminist, as it also opposed her inclination to stronger statements in favor of a gender-equitable family policy.

Despite such instances of conflict between parties, on the whole, Czech parties shared a relative consensus with respect to family values and the need for state support to families.[154] This value-based consensus – which bridged different positions regarding the speed and direction of economic reforms - allowed politicians to employ family policy arguments and reform proposals in the interest of other political goals. Most notably, family policy proposals were formulated in the interest of reducing pressure on the labor market by "allowing" women to stay home with children. Similarly, family policy arguments essentially were formulated with an eye on public finances. Two examples may illustrate this instrumental use of family policy: first, the Civic Forum's initial social policy manifesto read: "A differentiation of incomes will gradually help to reduce the disproportionate economic activity of women, and [lead to] a rehabilitation of the family and the creation of better conditions for raising children." (quoted in True 2003: 59).

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[154] On the relative stability of the Czech party system, see, for example (Hloušek and Šedo 2008).

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Second and along similar lines, key Civic Forum representatives proposed to increase the length of the maternity leave in order to provide incentives for women to stay home in the "natural roles as mothers" (True 2003). In a 1990 interview, a senior aide to the then Czech Finance Minister, Václav Klaus, pointed out that "The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is preparing a program for young women so they can afford to stay home with small children, and we will aid them with social support. This policy in the end will save money because when women work they need state-supported care" (quoted in True 2003: 59). Indeed, in 1990, without any significant political conflict, the 3-year parental leave was introduced, accompanied by a flat-rate parental allowance. This was a noteworthy expansion of state support for families at a time when neighboring transition countries, including Poland, were debating significant cuts in welfare benefits.

The fact that family policies, as well as other social and economic policies, were controlled by a small domestic policy network that existed mainly within the government, is what facilitated the strategic use of family policy in the interest of other policy aims for such a long time. Before the change in government in 1998, a small inner circle of powerful ministers held sway over the development of reforms, so that "the "non-privileged (non-economic) ministers, tripartite partners, and MPs received bills that were in a relatively finalized state which rendered them difficult, if not impossible, to change" (Potůček 2001: 25). Similarly, Anderson describes how "discussions of future family policy legislation occurred exclusively within the walls of government buildings,

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specifically within and among the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs" (Anderson 2003: 65).

While this procedure illustrates a structural weakness of the parliament in the reform process, family policy at the time also suffered from a lack of interest on the side of most individual decision-makers and political parties, as well from the policy's constituency. During the 1990s, the center-Right Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS), the Christian Democratic Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová, KDU-CSL) and the Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, CSSD), and to a marginal extent the Communist Party (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM) became the main social policy actors, representing largely different macroeconomic and social policy proposals and different constituencies (Matějů and Vlachova 1997). There was considerable overlap in the family values and gender stereotypes that transpired between the statements of Czech politicians from various political parties. But family policy was not considered a highly relevant or popular topic with the electorate. Because of the lack of attention to the topic, the different policy proposals did not receive much attention in political or popular debates.

ODS considered social policy secondary to economic reform throughout its years in government, and assigned a marginal role to family policy within social policy, mainly utilizing it as an anti-poverty tool. While family policy statements were not prominent in ODS party documents, generally positive references to the role of the Czech families did form an important component of ODS's identity as an economically liberal, but socially

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conservative political force. The ODS party platform of 1995, for example, read: "Only the family is capable of providing truly complete education to create mature members of society. The family is a place where moral and cultural values develop and are maintained…" Along these lines, it was also clear that the party preferred a traditional gender role division to the goal of equal opportunities and women's equal labor force integration (Saxonberg 2003: 55). Regarding the relationship between the state and the family, the ODS party platform elaborates that the "[family] is the basis for appropriate functioning of municipalities and the state (…)."

Despite the party's pro-family statements, the debates that lead to the overall reform of state benefits in 1995 reflected the more residualist approach of ODS with respect to welfare benefits. ODS favored cuts to family benefits, in particular through a tightening of access to benefits. The party strongly advocated for the introduction of means-testing of the previously universal child allowance.

The Christian Democratic Party, in turn, adhered to a so-called social-market doctrine, with repeated references to the German and Austrian policy models. The party had an important position in the formation of governments, repeatedly becoming a partner in governmental coalitions, either with ODS, or with the Social Democrats through necessity (Szikra and Tomka 2009). With respect to family policy, Christian Democrats engaged in relatively constant pro-family lobbying that was predicated on the basis of a conservative family ideal. For example, in the 1995 reforms, it was mainly the intervention of Christian Democratic politicians that blocked the introduction of strict

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means-testing of benefits (for example, the child allowance). Instead, more moderate limits for the means-test were introduced: a number of families who had lost their eligibility status according to the initial proposal retained it, and merely half of the state social support benefits became income-tested (Kuchařová, Kotynková, and Průsa 2003). Večerník therefore concludes that "On the whole, the social reform [1995/96] was less radical than anticipated. Not only the opposition parties (the Social Democrats and Communists) but some coalition parties [KDU-CSL] did not give their support to some of its key elements" (Večerník 1996: 203).

At other moments, Christian Democrats were not as successful in their lobbying efforts, such as the time when a feminist Social Democrat with a clear activist history became the head of the Department for Family Policy in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, replacing a Christian Democrat in the post. KDU-CSL was not able to block that CSSD decision.

There was a shift away from the more liberal and conservative social and family policies, and a movement towards placing social issues back among the top political priorities when the Social Democrats took over the Czech government in 1998. The CSSD expressed its commitment to maintaining (or reestablishing, in the case of the child allowance) a universal benefit system, and to making benefits more generous. Already in its 1992 campaign, the CSSD had emphasized the importance of the state in social policy, for example, in the provision of care institutions (Anderson 2003). However, in frequent references to the Scandinavian welfare state models, Czech Social Democrats did not

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intend to abolish the principle of social insurance, or the earning relatedness of social security benefits (Anderson 2003). The acceptance of the European Social Charter by the Czech Parliament in the spring of 1999 was thus a symbolic victory for the Social Democrats against the political resentments of the previous ODS government under Václav Klaus. Another example is the elaboration of the Social Doctrine of the Czech Republic. Its purpose was to build a broad national consensus concerning the future orientation, goals, priorities, and corresponding instruments of Czech social policy. The document, elaborated by a group of experts from various disciplines and with various political affiliations, was mentioned in the coalition agreement statement of the political parties that were in power in July 2002. It was taken as the starting point for further development of the government's social policy, priorities, and methods for the period up until 2006 (Potůček 2004).

While giving greater importance to social policy in general, the CSSD was neither a natural protagonist of gender equality policies, nor of linking family policy and gender equality policy. Thus, the Czech case contradicts the widespread understanding in comparative welfare state research about the role of Social Democratic parties in the expansion of welfare states. In Czech family policy, Social Democrats have not been advocates for an expansion of benefits or the opening up of gender equality policy during the 1990s.[155] In particular, with respect to the inclusion of gender equality as an explicit

[155] An exception, to some degree, was the raise in the level of the parental allowance by the outgoing Social Democratic government in 2006. Yet, the incoming coalition of ODS and KDU-CSL did not disagree, but rather followed the path of implementation.

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political goal, women in the Social Democratic Party fought an uphill struggle to shift the party's position and politics, and only with limited success.

Instead, the "old-boys" network and gendered power relations in the CSSD and the absence of women in positions of power, or, for that matter, in the cabinet in 1998, provoked major internal debates in the party. In March 2000, for example, MP Volfová established an entire women's shadow cabinet, juxtaposing it to the all-male cabinet, and provoked an important public debate about women's political participation in the country. Nevertheless, even in 2002 there was still no women in the Czech cabinet under the CSSD / KDU-CSL coalition (True 2003: 146). As a sign of greater awareness for existing gender inequalities in Czech society, as well as of greater awareness of the relevance of the topic and of the international commitments that the Czech Republic had signed, the ČSSD was the only party in the June 2002 elections that included the issue of equality between men and women in their program.

Nevertheless, politicians did not necessarily keep to the party program when they could also make more populist pro-family promises. For example, during his campaign, to-be Prime Minister Zeman, promised very generous income support to families, including universalizing the child allowance again, and a 50,000 crown gift to all newborns. A year later, Minister of Finance Bohuslav Sobotka admitted that "The promises were not put in a realistic economic framework…Our promises don't hold up in

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the face of reality. We'd be fools to insist on what isn't economically feasible and push the country into a bigger deficit just to fulfill our promises" (Inglot 2009).[156]

The party furthest to the Left in Czech politics, the Communist Party (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM), never developed a strong family policy profile. Instead, a universal state protective system was the party's key social policy demand, and matters of gender equality and family-state relations were at best marginal concerns to the party.[157] Others have emphasized that the party's conceptual weakness was partly due to its strong focus on internal party questions and high dependence on the expectations of party members (Grzymala-Busse 2002). The party's members were relatively old and therefore more ready to engage with pension policy over family policy.[158] While having only weak backing from their party both on gender and on family policy, women MPs from the KSČM did collaborate at some instances with Social Democratic women. However, they did not directly develop innovative family policy measures and their overall Euroscepticism blocked a critical reflection on family policy experiences in other countries.

The Czech trajectory of family policy reforms illustrates that in the years 1990 to 2004, left-wing Czech parties, including the CSSD, were laggards in developing

[156] Single-handedly, Prime Minister Paroubek made a similar populist announcement shortly before the 2006 elections: He announced an increase in the childbirth grants and a big hike of the parental allowance. Social policy experts, even those from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs council on family policy, were taken by surprise.

[157] Interview with Květoslava Čelišová, Prague 18 May 2006.

[158] Interview with Květoslava Čelišová, op cit.

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initiatives for a progressive family policy or remained at the margins of political decision-making. While some of the smaller, left-leaning parties such as the Humanistic Alliance or the Green Party acknowledged gender equality, and to some extent the need for a change in gender role behavior, they did not obtain the 5 per cent of votes necessary for admission to the Chamber of Deputies.[159] By comparison with Western Europe, even left-wing Czech parties were slow in integrating gender equality considerations with family policy. Instead, both the Czech left and the center-right exposed considerable gender conservatism in family policy discussions. For example, advocating for "family friendly" policies for the Czech Social Democrats meant support for women to stay at home, or, at the most, support for women to combine their caring roles with a limited role in employment.[160] Social Democratic women did not succeed in convincing their party to advocate for a breakup of stereotypical gender roles (at home or in the labor market).

Given the reluctance of political parties to move away from stereotypical gender images supported by family policy, the influence of civil society became crucial for family policy progress. However, the absence of appropriate structures and institutions for participation in decision-making made it very difficult for Czech civil society to influence policy and the public agenda, or for academic research to be taken up in the political realm. Večerník rightly emphasizes the lack of academic research and debates

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[159] The Czech Green party, having obtained 2.4 per cent of the vote in the 2002 elections, received 6.3 per cent of the vote and thus won six seats in the lower house in the 2006 elections. It was part of the governing coalition, together with the Civic Democrats (ODS) and the Christian Democrats (KDU–ČSL) between 2007 and 2009.

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on social policy, and highlights the absence of social actors in the reform process (Večerník 2004). However, as compared to the Polish case, the Czech example illustrates at least some resonance between research, civil society debates, and formal politics. This was not necessarily intended on the side of the state, but rather it was provoked by the pressure and knowledge that originated in academic research bodies (such as the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) affiliated with the Labour Ministry, as well as, the Gender Studies Department at Charles University, Prague and the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University Brno, and NGOs dealing with family matters, often in connection with women's rights (e.g. Aperio, or various mothers' centers).

Yet, as emphasized above, the widespread suspicion against "Western" feminism created a special environment for the growth of Czech women's organizations. Additionally, the engagement of civil society organizations in Czech family policy illustrates the difficulties that exist in the development of contemporary family policy. Among these were the contestations and struggles over: the creation of better conditions for families on the basis of traditional gender roles, the support for women's economic independence and social security through employment participation, and support for a shift in the traditional gender role model. In this context, and among the wide array of topics to address, the newly developed women's organizations tended to not prioritize family matters, but to focus, for example, on political participation. Nevertheless, Czech

[160] Interview with Michaela Marksová-Tominová, Prague, 16 May 2006.

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women's organizations were important actors for the promotion of reconciliation policies, for example, acting jointly with the Social Democrats.

In turn, there were other organizations that focused more strictly on family matters, but were not necessarily allies in the fight for institutional childcare or for the promotion of changes of the Czech gender regime. The Czech Mothers' Centers, for example, over the course of the 1990s developed into a large network of grassroots women with small children (Gupta 2009), (Kolínská). Originating from self-help groups, mothers centers were focused on (re-)validating motherhood while at the same time empowering women to act as citizens and agents of change: "The Czech Mothers have successfully politicized their roles as caregivers and use this as the basis of creating a strong political voice that influences public policy in response to grassroots women's priorities as both mothers and workers" (Gupta 2009: 1). The Mothers' Centers engaged in topics such as safe neighborhoods for families, family-friendly spaces and infrastructure in societies, and the participation of family representatives in local planning processes. At the same time, however, they did not prioritize the (re-)integration of women into the labor market nearly as much. And their engagement in the demand for more childcare institutions was even more limited (in particular they did not demand childcare services for children below 3 years of age). Mothers' centers were important in

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the mobilization against the restrictions tied to the parental allowance, concerning the use of childcare facilities.[161]

V. Summary and Conclusion

While the preceding chapter 5 offered a concise overview of the reforms in Czech family policy, focusing on leave and benefits, as well as care services, this chapter focused on three variables that influence the behavior of Czech political actors. Family policy reforms are regarded as an outcome of domestic political conflict. First, the Czech case, similar to the Polish, shows the relevance of institutional continuities for today's reforms. Both the discussion about the introduction of means-testing in family benefits, as well as the reform of childcare institutions were strongly shaped by continuing commitments to the old institutional setups. Therefore, by and large, Czech reforms did not break with previous traditions of family support, nor did they alter childcare traditions. Traditions are particularly strong in the field of institutional childcare services for children below three years of age. Before 1990, the poor reputation which crèches had

[161] In 1997, a complaint filed with the authorities in a small town called Litomy stated that the Mother Centres were in fact childcare facilities, which meant that those using the Centers for more than three days a month were violating the rules governing the family allowance. Leaders of mothers' centers were forced to enter into a dialogue with the government to address this issue. In spite of their efforts, Mother Center leaders Rut Kolinska and Jitka Hermannova failed to convince the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs that, on the one hand, the Mother Centers were not a childcare facility, and on the other, that families should be allowed to access childcare services for more than three days a month. The government's stand was that women should stay at home to take care of children since the government paid them to do so. It took several years of advocacy for the government to amend the law to increase the number of days which families were permitted to use other childcare services from three to five days a month (Gupta 2009: 7)

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during socialist times resulted in avoidance where-ever possible (for example through the birth of a next child and extended childcare leave), in a lack of opposition to their closure after the 1990s, and in limited political pressures for increased investment in accessible and affordable services today.

Second, and another illustration of the importance of the "past," was continuity with respect to norms and practices within the family. Gender stereotypes and assumptions about traditional role divisions pervade the statements and proposals of the public as well as political actors across the board. It is particularly noteworthy that the widespread Czech gender conservatism (i.e. traditional understandings of the division of care responsibilities and unpaid work between women and men, combined with recognition of women's labor force participation – although constrained by women's care responsibilities) has proven strong and durable despite the predominantly secular character of the country.

A third variable that helps explain Czech family policy reforms is, as in the case of Poland, external influences, mainly the influence of the EU norms and standards. European norms and trends were key modernizing impulses for Czech family policy debates. EU concepts and terms were - over time, selectively, and strategically – incorporated into the Czech family policy discourse. A real approximation of policy features to European trends in family policy, however, could not be seen before the country joined the EU in 2004. Indeed, the slow Europeanization remains contradictory: the 2007/8 reforms of the parental leave/allowance scheme are an incorporation of

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European standards of some kind. Childcare services, however, continue at the margins of family policy debates, and European standards (and commitments) regarding the provision of institutional childcare are directly opposed by Czech decision-makers and in public debates.

Domestic politics, under the influence of the "Past" and the external context, decided family policy reforms after 1990. While social policy reform broadly followed a "social-liberal" pattern, family policy took a turn toward the more conservative (as seen, for example, in the promotion of and support for home-care of children). This was a result of the need for political compromise in political coalitions which had a marked impact on family policy, and demonstrated some continuity of party programs in the field. But even more importantly, national political actors used family policy strategically, either in the interest of other political goals (e.g. relieving pressure from the labor market, cost-saving through institutional reforms in the field of childcare), or to position themselves ideologically through family-related statements. Alongside parties, civil society was an important actor pushing for the modernization of family policy. Yet civil society's influence was divided: on the one side, groups advocated for more generous family policy, based on a reaffirmation of motherhood and of gender diversity (such as the Mothers' Centers) – on the other side, the growing movement of critical and feminist women's organizations did not prioritize family policy because they resisted the reaffirmation of traditional gender roles. Contacts between party insides and civil society groups were nevertheless important in transforming the family policy positions of the

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Czech Social Democrats, who adopted a more progressive discourse on family policy as gender equality and work-family reconciliation in recent years.

The influences of the "Past" in the sense of institutions, norms, and behavioral patterns, and in relation to the external context (mainly the European Union's legal norms and policy), as well as the particular national dynamics and interaction of the key policy actors provide a multifaceted explanation for the particular reform course in the country. Together, they are able to explain the peculiar return to more conservative family policy patterns in the Czech Republic at a time when other policy fields underwent processes of modernization and European integration.

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Chapter 7

Conclusion

I. Introduction

How can we explain the divergence of family policy reform trajectories in two postsocialist countries that share much of their historical legacy and have faced a similar reform environment? Does mainstream comparative welfare state research apply to a postsocialist European reform context? What are the implications of the experience of two postsocialist countries for welfare state research and for research on the gender–state nexus?

These are the guiding questions for my concluding chapter. It offers a summary of the key insights resulting from the empirical analysis of both countries' family policy reform trajectories in order to derive broader conclusions for understanding family policy reforms in postsocialist, as well as Western European, countries. In particular, the research presented here contributes to a broader understanding regarding the role of external influences on national family policy reform trajectories. The chapter concludes with suggestions regarding further comparative welfare state analysis and feminist research on family policy, in Europe, and beyond.

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II. Reconsidering Variation in Family Policy Reforms

Family policy reforms were a necessary consequence of the circumstances that both Poland and the Czech Republic faced at the beginning of the 1990s. Failing to reform family policy was not an option, given the serious implications of the economic and political reforms, as well as demographic developments. Yet over the course of the 1990s, family policies in both countries developed in two different directions. In Poland they became more liberal, leaving families largely to care for themselves. In the Czech Republic the greater state commitment to family support was maintained, but in support of a traditional family and gender role model. Why did reforms differ in both countries?

II.1. Preferences of National Actors

The analysis in this study has focused strongly on the preferences of political actors in the reform process, as reflected in the reform discourses, as well as their interaction during the reform process. The politics of post-1990 family policy reforms was as much a struggle over ideas and norms, as it was a result of the problem-solving interactions of political actors. Differences in family policy discourses of key political actors in both countries, in particular the normative content of family policy discourses, are central for explaining variations in reform outcomes.

Ideas and proposals about state-family relations, the shape and generosity of the postsocialist welfare state, and normative assumptions about the family played important roles in the promotion of change in family policy. Neoliberal ideas about a reduced role

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of the state and increased individual responsibility served as an impetus to the transformation of the economy and the welfare state, and were reflected in proposals for the increased targeting of family benefits.

Moreover, in Poland, all family policy debates were crowded out by the debate about access to abortion throughout the 1990s. As a result, anti-abortionists successfully claimed family policy as "their" territory. Consequently, family policy proposals were developed and debated in relation to very limited access to abortion. Other relevant issues, such as the situation of single mothers, or the lack and insufficient quality of childcare services received only marginal consideration in family policy debates. In the Czech Republic, in turn, family policy debates focused on Social Democratic calls for state engagement on the one hand, and neoliberal demands for a state withdrawal from public spending for social matters on the other hand. Here, the Christian Democratic Party took on a mediating role in the conflict, a position which was largely absent in the Polish debates: drastic cuts in family benefits were avoided and a moderate level of universality of family allowances maintained.

II.2. Unexpected Reform Outcomes

Reforms in postsocialist Poland and the Czech Republic produced a number of unexpected outcomes. In at least four ways, reforms did not happen in ways that I hypothesized: *first*, the political Left in both countries was not a strong force in favor of the expansion of state support for families, nor was the Left a strong advocate for the

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incorporation of gender equality into family policy. *Second*, undeniably, the role of the Church in social policy reforms has been strong in Poland. However, the Church has not effectively resisted the establishment of a liberal-individualist family policy regime in the country. *Third*, while the Czech Republic is one of the most secular countries in Europe today, a conservative family ideal (as one would rather expect in a religiously influenced environment) with stereotypical role divisions has constrained the development of family policy. In particular, the persistence of conservative gender ideas in the male-dominated Czech Social Democracy has been striking. *Fourth*, despite the growth of women's movements in both countries after 1990, the influence of organized women in family policy reforms in both countries was more limited than expected.

Each of the four points will be further elaborated on below. However, the small-n comparative approach and the focus on explaining variation in reform outcomes chosen throughout this dissertation has served to bring them to light. It is evident that to adequately address and resolve each of these unexpected outcomes would entail embarking on four individual research projects.

First, the political left in both countries turned out not to be a strong force in favor of the expansion of state support for families, nor has the left been a strong advocate for the incorporation of gender equality into family policy. In light of mainstream comparative welfare theories following after the Esping-Andersen's work, this is unexpected. In Poland, the postsocialist Left, as represented mainly through the SLD in government, was concerned with reducing the state's role and thus focused seriously on

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streamlining the welfare state and achieving fiscal consolidation. In light of the difficult financial situation of the country, it proposed cost-cutting rather than benefit expansion, and increased targeting rather than the universalization of benefits. In the Czech Republic, the Social Democratic Party did not venture as much to the side of liberal reforms as in Poland. But in the area of family benefits at least, the CSSD did not turn out to be a force for welfare state expansion either. For example, when the Social Democrats took over the government in 1998, they had promised to switch back to a universal child allowance. Yet they never seriously pursued that project, arguably because of the high cost that a universal allowance would have implied.

Second, both countries differed considerably with respect to the Church's role. It only played a significant role in Poland. Here, however, the Catholic Church, along with other actors who were influenced by the Church, were key agents in the reforms. So, what would the observer's expectation be in terms of the Church's behavior? One would expect the Church to intervene to protect family benefits from neoliberal cutting and streamlining, and to advocate for more generous family benefits. At the same time, one would expect the Church to oppose family benefits that aim to promote gender equality. One would also expect the Church and others close to it to strengthen the moral tones in family policy debates and promote maternalist family policies.

Indeed, in Poland, the Church's influence was particularly strong at the level of family discourses, invoking a very conservative family ideal and gender role division. Effects of the Church's role are visible, for example, in the extension of maternity

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benefits and the introduction of the birth grant. The Church was also a clear opponent of policies to promote gender equality. Yet the Church did not focus strongly on opposing the overall reform trend of cutting and restricting benefits, and did not clearly raise its voice with specific demands for increased family support. Instead, its preferences with respect to the role of the state in family support were divided: with respect to general family benefits, it seemed to prefer limiting state engagement – as seen by its lack of interest in universal family benefits.

On the other hand, the Church advocated for strong state engagement in the area of reproductive rights, in particular abortion. It is here where the Church's impact on the social policy agenda was the strongest. Restricting access to abortion was one of the top priorities of the Church in the early 1990s, and the topic has remained on the top of the Church's agenda despite the passage of a very restrictive law in the country. The strong priority on abortion explains, on the one hand, why the family policy agenda was narrowly focused. On the other hand, one could argue that there existed a tacit -rather than explicit- agreement that the Church would not get as involved in other family benefit reforms, instead maintaining its "natural" focus, i.e. on benefits that address motherhood and the birth of a child.

A *third* unexpected moment in the reforms was the strength and durability of a conservative family and gender role model in the Czech Republic. Literature would lead one to expect such cultural conservatism in a religious country, but not necessarily in a secular environment like the Czech Republic. In fact, religion did not play a role in

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family policy reforms in the Czech Republic, and maintained only a moderate and indirect influence through the Christian Democratic Party. Rather, the Czech example proves that conservative gender ideas and family ideals also prevail in a secular society, and the interpretation needs to go beyond simplistic understandings of culture and gender inequality.

In this context, the position of the Social Democratic Party is particularly noteworthy. Throughout the 1990s, and somewhat less forcefully thereafter, the party's predominantly male leadership resisted the demands of female members and functionaries to make gender equality a priority and to actively link family policy and gender policy.[162] While the CSSD has been committed to the principles of equality and social justice, the slow integration of gender equality into its commitments and programmatic priorities has certainly been an important obstacle to the development of a more progressive family policy in the Czech Republic.

Fourth, the analysis of family policy reforms in both countries illustrates that the presence and political influence of civil society was a relevant, but not a decisive factor to explain family policy dynamics and variation. Louder and better organized women's voices were not necessarily able to achieve expanded state support for families, or reach decisions for family benefits that more directly reflected a concern for gender equality by, for example, facilitating the employment-family reconciliation. In both countries, the weakness of women's civil society can be, at least partially, explained by internal

[162] Interview Anna Čurdová, Prague, 18 May 2006.

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divisions: on the one hand, many elected women, as well as civil society women's groups argued in favor of maternalist family policy. They called for more generous support for mothers through extended leave and higher benefits (as proposed for example by Mothers' Centers in the Czech Republic, as well as by women linked to PiS and organizations close to the Catholic church in Poland). On the other end of the specter, some organized women demanded the creation of a link between gender policy and family policy, yet remained in a marginal position in the political debates (these were women's NGOs, in particular feminist organizations in both countries, as well as women close to the CSSD and the Czech Communist Party).

The analysis of comparative family policy reform in Poland and the Czech Republic clearly demonstrates the importance of organized women's voices for the adaptation of family policy to contemporary family forms and work-family relations, and for the forging of an opening into international family policy debates. Women's voices have been particularly important for integrating concerns for the promotion of gender equality into family policy. Indeed, only through the influence of women's organizations has it been possible to foster a link between family policy and gender equality policy. However, family policy was not a priority for the latter type of organizations. Other topics more important, e.g. political representation of women, the impact of labor market policies on women's employment opportunities and, mainly in Poland, sexual and reproductive rights.

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The comparison of Poland and the Czech Republic has produced a number of additional insights worth highlighting. National political actors employed family policy for ideological and populist purposes. The differences between policy models in both countries are, to some extent, glossed over by a striking similarity of family policy discourses. It seems that in both countries, family policy became a signifier for the normative commitments and ethical standards of political actors across the board. Examples from both countries that serve to document the instrumental use of family policy discourses are similar: for example, the Polish AWS (center-Right) referred to the state's role in provisioning for the family as connected to the goal of providing for the nation. Likewise, the Czech government, during the first Czech EU presidency, attempted to renegotiate agreed upon standards for the provision of childcare services under the justification that Czech "culture" was not being respected by the EU.

In both countries, the overall social policy discourse that was employed by political actors and the practical family policy implemented differed significantly. In the CR, the dominant welfare state reform discourse was liberal, including calls for a streamlining of family benefits. However, the practice was more moderate than the discourse, with perhaps the best example being the protracted and softened income-testing of the family allowance that the Christian Democrats achieved. Conversely, in Poland, the policy discourse of all main social policy actors was decidedly pro-family - but the practice of reforms was liberal, combining prior traditions of very limited state

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support for Polish families with the liberal welfare state ideology that came to dominate Polish social policy during the 1990s.

Ironically, the fact that references to the family as a traditional social institution became so important in social policy debates contributed to widening the gap between discourse and practice in both countries. Policymakers on all sides felt compelled to emphasize their normative and pro-family commitments. However, while all of the involved actors agreed on the level of proclamations, nobody monitored the implementation of the promises, or the actual impact of policies on family living standards and gender relations.

II.3. Strategic Uses of Family Policy

In Chapter 2, this study provides a description of four contemporary family policy regimes: conservative-statist, liberal-individual, choice-oriented and gender equality-promoting family policy. The models relate closely to other welfare regime typologies, including those covering postsocialist Europe (Esping-Andersen 1990, Leitner 2003, Szelewa 2006, Szelewa and Polakowski 2008). Based on the empirical analysis of the years 1990-2004, it is apparent that Poland has moved from a state socialist family policy model to a liberal-individualist, and the Czech Republic toward a conservative-statist model. Despite these differences in outcomes, reforms in both countries have diminished the role of the state and have increased the responsibility of the family for social

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provisioning, thus reinforcing previously existing familialist elements in their family policies.

In different combinations, all types of family policy combine measures that are targeted at partially compensating families for the costs associated with raising children and with meeting demographic goals, but also with normatively grounded, and deeply gendered, interventions of the state in social life. This dissertation emphasizes strongly the role of policy discourses inspired by norms, ideas, and expectations, both with respect to the state's role in family policy, as well as with respect to gender roles and the gendered division of labor in the family and the economy as they pertain to shaping family policy. The analysis has shown that family policies are contextually-specific, as well as regime-type dependent combinations of measures that effect income redistribution, women's employment participation, birth rates, and gender equality.

Institutional traditions have proven to be key factors for influencing the course of reforms. In both countries, despite important changes, the overall benefit setup and traditions about childcare institutions stayed in line with the state socialist past. There was a tradition of limited state support for the family in Poland even during state socialist times, as well as limited investment in childcare. In turn, there was continuity with respect to more extensive state support for families in the Czech Republic (though at a considerably lower level than before), as well as continuity within childcare traditions: the prevailing pattern is for small children to not attend childcare institutions, but there is a large acceptance for pre-schools for children above 3 years of age.

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Beyond the analysis of why and how countries have moved from one family policy regime to another, the comparison has demonstrated other aspects of reforms. Family policy was employed strategically in both Poland and the Czech Republic in the pursuit of other policy goals. In both countries, family policy was used to foster social support for the political and economic transition process initiated in the early 1990s. Echoing Vanhuysse's analysis of the role of social policies during the transition process, the dissertation demonstrates that family benefits also served the goal of "pacifying" the population (Vanhuysse 2006). The creation of the image of an effective postsocialist state was particularly relevant. In Poland, popular support for reforms was most important in the early years 1990s, when the impact of economic transformation was most felt, and maintaining (at least the appearance of) state care for families was most needed. In the Czech Republic, the negative consequences of economic transition were felt more strongly toward the mid-1990s, which again coincides with increased attention being placed on family benefits (and other social security benefits).This trend was reflected in the creation of the state social support system through the 1995/96 reform.

Another example of the instrumentalization of family benefits in the interest of the labor market was the extension of the parental allowance in the Czech Republic in 1995. This change was presented as a measure to reduce unemployment by holding women back from the labor market. A similar example from the Polish context is the politics of maternity leave, which repeatedly was extended and reduced. Advocates for extended leave would argue that a longer leave would better protect women from the perils of the

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economy and excessive demands of employers, while those opposed to the extension argued that increasing maternity protection would instead cause even greater discrimination against women on the Polish labor market because employers would become more reluctant to hire women.

III. Family Policy in Postsocialist Europe and Beyond

III.1. Country Cases

Studying family policy reforms in two postsocialist European countries can be instructive for understanding the dynamics of European family policy making, and for grasping the gender politics of family policy. Numerous reform steps in the field of family policy have happened in Poland and the Czech Republic after both countries joined the EU in 2004, or rather, after the years encompassed by my analysis.

A look at reforms in other European countries reveals patterns in family policy reforms beyond the cases of Poland and the Czech Republic. There appears to be a widespread trend of "selective emancipation" through the joint effects of family and gender equality policy in Europe (Auth, Buchholz, and Janczyk 2010). As a consequence, women who are well integrated into the labor market and not amongst the lowest income earners tend to benefit the most from current family policy efforts. They can make direct use of measures for employment-family reconciliation and also tend to benefit directly from measures aimed at involving fathers in child care work.

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Reform trends, however, are far from uniform throughout Europe. Germany, for example, qualifies as conservative-statist family policy regime which has come under reform pressure in recent years. The Netherlands' tradition of non-interference by the state in family matters shares some similarity with Poland at first sight. Yet the absence of the state is made up for through collective solutions negotiated between employers and employees, so that the case of the Netherlands serves instead as yet another illustration of the weaknesses of Polish family policy. Along similar lines, the United Kingdom compares to Poland as a case of a liberal-individualist family policy model. However, its recent reform history illustrates the impact of European policy debates on national policies, in particular when it comes to the European focus on women's employability and its impact on work-family reconciliation policies and childcare infrastructure.

Germany

Germany qualifies as an example of a conservative-statist family policy regime which has come under reform pressure in recent years. During the 1990s, important debates about the need for state policies to support women's employment were initiated, although the crucial round of reforms in this respect happened only under the grand coalition in 2005, which transformed an extended low flat-rate income-tested parental allowance into a one-year wage-related benefit. In addition, German family policy integrated European-style policy elements, such as an increased commitment to state-subsidized childcare services and increased attention to men as addresses of family

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policy. Previously uncommon features focusing on the choice of parents to decide on the division of parenting responsibilities received increased attention. In general, however, Germany continues to uphold conservative policy elements, such as joint taxation which is a significant benefit of male-breadwinner families. The new proposal of a "home-care benefit" (*Betreuungsgeld*), paid to families (de facto, mothers) that "choose" to not make use of childcare facilities but to care for a child below primary school age at home is a prime example for the current trend in German family policy, which the former Minister for Family, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth Ursula von der Leyen has termed "conservative feminist."[163]

The Netherlands

Another Western European country undergoing family policy reforms would be the Netherlands. Unlike Germany, the country chose to abandon the conservative male-breadwinner model over the course of intense debates during the 1990s. Instead, it has adopted measures that focus on work-family reconciliation, but has also developed policy measures that address both mothers and fathers (O'Hara Kathy 1998). However, the Netherlands combines its tradition of non-interference by the state in family matters with a widespread practice of the development of solutions through collective employer-

[163] Under von der Leyen (between 2005-2009, she was Federal Minister for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth under the Grand Coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) the term "conservative feminism" gained public recognition, implying a combination of support for women's increased labor market involvement through publicly supported childcare with support for mothers (and partially fathers) in their roles as parents and family care providers.

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employee negotiations. As a consequence, the country has been a frontrunner in the EU field of family policies and the development of work-family reconciliation measures, via its efforts to bring individual choice into the area of employment, i.e. choice between various working-time models, for example (and not so much "choice" between employment and non-employment/ traditional family life like in Germany).

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom may serve as a third example of family policy trends in an "old" EU member state. The tradition of the country is often-described as that of a liberal welfare state, which is reflected in its reluctance towards state interventions in family matters through family policy, and limited explicit state support for families (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999). It combines its liberal tradition with support for the traditional male-breadwinner, female-caretaker model of a family (O'Hara Kathy 1998). In line with the liberal tradition, and in some ways similar to Polish family policy, British policy toward families in the recent past has focused on targeted interventions with the goal of poverty reduction. To some extent, a traditional family discourse has also been emphasized, although it does not resonate well with the high rates of single-headed families, mostly single mothers. Policy has therefore shifted toward a focus on the employability of mothers, and as a result has become increasingly concerned with childcare infrastructure and work-family reconciliation.

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II.2. Is There European Convergence in Family Policy?

Although limited by national priorities and traditions, over the past two decades there has been at least some degree of convergence between family policies in Western Europe, particularly amongst EU member states (Gauthier 2002). Family policy has increasingly become regarded as an instrument that can be used to influence the labor market, as well as the economic situation of families: state measures are developed to increase the overall participation of women in the labor market and, to some extent, to boost the involvement of women already on the labor market. Simultaneously, the Europeanization of family policy has also implied that there is increased political attention being paid to the links between family policy and demographic development, or more explicitly, to the promotion of family policy as a tool to increase declining birth rates in Western Europe. Labor market goals and demographic concerns both strongly influenced the development of work-family reconciliation measures. The European Employment Strategy and member states' national action plans on employment can be used as evidence of this trend.

A similar influence of Europeanization on postsocialist family policy is far more difficult to detect, as the empirical study conducted here illustrates for two of the countries concerned. In Poland and the Czech Republic, family policy reform has come with a progressive withdrawal of state support for families and a progressive shift of responsibility for the well-being of families onto the family. Thus, this dissertation concurs with other research in suggesting an opposite trend exists in postsocialist Europe:

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one of familialization, decreasing support for women's employment, and a discursive turn to a conservative model of the family (Dokmanovic 2005, Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006, Szelewa and Polakowski 2008).

Despite formal commitments to EU-wide goals in the field of employment and social affairs, postsocialist EU member states have not made concerted efforts to meet the agreed benchmarks in the field of childcare services. Agreed upon goals for EU member states in areas that fall within the scope of family policy (such as benchmarks for the provision of childcare services) were of marginal concern in policy debates in most postsocialist member states (with the important exception of Slovenia). Women's organizations sometimes try to raise awareness of the existing gaps between international commitments and the national situation, but they have not received much public recognition for their efforts. Recently, when the Czech Republic held the EU presidency for the first time, it even advocated for a revision to the agreed upon standards in the area of childcare services and family support.

IV. Implications for Feminist Comparative Welfare State Research

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of this study for further comparative research on welfare states and social policy reforms, as well as for discussions about the gender–state nexus and gender policy, in particular for feminist analyses of family policy.

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First, I would like to return to the fact that reform dynamics in both countries did not go along with mainstream comparative welfare state research in various ways. In particular, the political Left in both countries has not been a clear and/or strong advocate for the expansion of family benefits, as one would have guessed. Instead, in Poland, the reformed socialists were responsible for cuts in benefits levels or the length of entitlement periods (as in the case of the maternity benefit) and for increased targeting of benefits. Czech Social Democrats, in turn, while not being in power during the most significant reforms in 1995/6 did not follow through with their electoral promise of restoring family benefits.

In my view, there are at least two components to an explanation of this surprising constellation. One points to the importance of the political context for shaping the positions of Left and Right with respect to social policy; the other highlights the particularity of family policy as a policy field which may defy mainstream comparative welfare state analysis. On the one hand, the Left in both countries after 1990 is different from the Left as seen by Esping-Andersen. Left parties in postsocialist states had to position themselves in a new political landscape with changed meanings for Left and Right, and they had to confront the legacy of their "Left" predecessors from the Communist Parties (Cook, Orenstein, and Rueschemeyer 1999, Grzymala-Busse 2002). Additionally, and maybe more importantly for social policy, the reformed Left was faced with very populist statements and family policy proposals coming from their political opponents, especially in the case of Poland. In light of this, proposing the streamlining of

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welfare benefits and cutting back on expansions legislated under the Post-Solidarity Right seemed like the only viable policy option.

On the other hand, it may be the nature of family policy which provokes the unexpected behavior or political agenda of important actors. The difficulties faced when even trying to delineate the borders of family policy as a policy field may be a real challenge for observers who are trying to assess the behavior of collective actors. More importantly, the role that family policy statements play as tokens for the strong normative commitments of political actors across the political spectrum, limits the explanatory potential of welfare state research for understanding family policy reforms. This may imply that family policy is not actually a representative area for a welfare regime, particularly in cases where the gap between pro-family discourses and real-life benefits and services is wide, as it is in postsocialist Poland and the Czech Republic. In my view, both aspects deserve further attention in future comparative family policy/welfare state research.

Second, this study contributes additional insights to comparative policy analysis with respect to the need for "historicizing" policy analysis. In this respect, my approach of emphasizing institutional continuities and the durability of conservative family and gender values across changing political/economic systems is similar to the one chosen by Cerami and Vanhuysse (2009b). While the evidence offered here supports a view of family policy reforms which emphasizes their path-dependent character, it may be necessary to go further: continuities in the gender order and in family values, norms,

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ideas, and practices between state-socialism (possibly even prior to the establishment of state socialism) and the postsocialist transition years are not only path-dependent. Instead, they illustrate the durability of gender relations and norms despite the fact that the economic and social system in which they had developed disappeared, a phenomenon that Offe has described as "culture lag" (Offe 2009: 240).

Third, the evidence presented in the preceding chapters illustrates the need for a more explicit integration of external influences as independent variables in family policy research. How can their impact be measured and evaluated? Why do we observe a process of Europeanization –limited as it may be– through social learning in family policy reforms in Western Europe on the one hand, and an opposed trend of refamilializing family policy in the East? While there is a growing body of research concerned with the influence of the European Union on gender policy in new member states and countries in the process of EU accession, it has not addressed family policy explicitly so far (Sloat 2004, Baer and Hoheisel 2008, Domsch, Ladwig, and Tenten 2003, an exception is True 2003). Conversely, comparative family policy research has not yet set out to explain the process of family policy making or formulated satisfactory proposals as to how we should conceptualize the influence of EU policy coordination and exchange on member state's national policies (Hantrais 1999, Hantrais 2004, Gauthier 2002, Haggard and Kaufman 2009). Both fields of research could provide each other with productive inputs.

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Fourth, this study illustrates some of the challenges for a feminist analysis of social policy in general, and family policy in particular. While this comparison modifies existing typologies of family policy regimes when discussing reform outcomes in Poland and the Czech Republic, the evidence questions the applicability of regime typologies. Typologies need criteria that are more clear-cut than those yet available for feminist assessments of family benefits. The level of state spending on family benefits may serve as one example: higher spending on family benefits clearly does not necessarily imply that the benefits are in the interest of women – they can, as in the conservative-statist policy model, well serve as incentives for women to remain in a position of economic dependence. Another example would be the case of long leave entitlements. While extended leaves were considered women-friendly for some time, more recently a consensus has formed around the opinion that long leaves are an obstacle to women returning to their jobs and to further career advancement. A last example may be the case of parental benefits that are linked to a parent's previous income. They are discussed as appropriate measures toward a more equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, because they set a greater incentive for men to take parental leave. However, given the prevailing gender inequality in the labor market and women's lower activity rates, as well as higher unemployment rates, wage-related benefits certainly reproduce existing gender discrimination.

So – what is a feminist's assessment of family policy in postsocialist Europe, and possibly beyond? While employing a more narrow focus at this stage, this dissertation

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has prepared the ground for further research linking the analysis of the politics of social policy reforms with a feminist evaluation of reform outcomes. Such a project could focus, for example, on a comparison between more notably different postsocialist countries than the two Central European examples chosen here. Or else, further research could include postsocialist and Western cases in a comparison, or perhaps extend its scope beyond family policy. All three options, it seems, could bring new impulses to feminist comparative welfare state analysis.

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List of interview partners

Titles and affiliations are for the date interviewed.

Czech Republic

Čelišová, Květoslava. Member of Parliament (Communist Party, (KSCM), Chair, Parliamentary Commission for Family and Equal Opportunities. Prague, 18 May 2006

Čurdová, Anna, Member of Parliament (Social Democratic Party), Member Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. Prague, 18 May 2006

Drbalova, Vladimira. President, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, 15 March 2002

Hajna, Zdenka. President, Cesky svaz zen (Czech Women´s Union). Prague, 13 March 2002

Haskova, Hana Researcher. Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic. Prague, 18 May 2006

Věra Kuchařová, Researcher. Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic, 14 March 2002, 17 May 2006

Marksová-Tominová, Michaela. Director, Department of Family Policy and Social Work, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Prague, 16 May 2006

Nesporova, Olga. Research Institute for Labor and Social Affairs (RILSA). Prague, 17 May 2006

Popelková, Hana. Senior Advisor, Czech Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS). Prague, 16 March 2002

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