

The relative generosity of the EU-15 member states' child policies towards dual-earner families

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In order to investigate the influence of social policies towards dual-earner families on parenthood choices, we have analyzed those state interventions that are likely to affect working women's fertility decisions: provisions supportive of maternal employment such as public childcare and early childhood education but also more general family policies such as child allowances, tax deductions. Moreover, the specter of policies regarding maternity as well as opportunities to take parental leave have also been studied. This paper summarizes all the information that was gathered and treated throughout this research which was based on the collection and in-depth analysis of available, accurate, quantitative and qualitative data covering the former 15 European countries. These data have given rise to an extremely rich data base which we have consequently used in order to build synthetic indicators.

We apply the linear scaling technique to our harmonized data (used by the UNDP for the calculation of the Human Development Index) in order to make comparison and build synthetic indicators in each dimension. We compare this method to another one called Decision Lab when it is possible. Results show that both methods lead to same classifications.

We believe the value of our study to lie in the extreme richness of our data set which provides very detailed and accurate quantified information on all relevant dimensions of child policies and allows for the construction of all sorts of indicators. Because of the richness of our underlying dataset, our results show that we can effectively avoid those reductionist amalgams that persist through some of the much less detailed typologies.

Keywords: public policies, child care, parental leave, tax & cash benefits, dual-earner model, typology, building synthetic indicators

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