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## Can Transitional Labour Markets Contribute to a Less Traditional Gender Division of Labour?

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# Can Transitional Labour Markets Contribute to a Less Traditional Gender Division of Labour?

## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to clarify how the Transitional Labour Market concept can contribute to building an institutional framework able to progressively transform the current 'parity caregiver' and 'universal breadwinner' models into a 'universal caregiver' model. To this end, the paper will analyse the social policies and institutions that have been put in place in a number of European Union member states, examining also their impact on gender equality.

## **Keywords**

gender, transitional labour markets, labour market, institutions

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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## Introduction

Much of the gender inequality on the labour market (e.g. lower employment and wages, higher part-time employment, more frequent (downward) transitions) is caused by women's dual role as workers and (potential) carers. In this constellation, women, because they combine unpaid and paid work, are penalised in terms of income, social security and career development, while men are not (sufficiently) stimulated by economic and social incentives to take over household and care activities in a manner that would contribute to a more equal distribution of labour market risks and opportunities. This situation leads also to overall welfare penalties on society, for example in the form of declining fertility rates and increasing skill deficits.

There exists, accordingly, an abundance of reasons to create and implement transitional arrangements that would mitigate the risks of parenthood and distribute these risks more equally between men and women. Examples of such transitional arrangements – which may be put in place either by the state or by social partners – are encompassing care infrastructures, generous and universal wage replacement and pension entitlement credits in case of parental leave, flexible working time arrangements, and incentives for men to participate more equally in household and care work (for instance take-it-or-leave-it paternity leave).

This paper aims to clarify how the concept of Transitional Labour Market (TLM) can contribute to building the institutional framework that can progressively transform the current 'parity caregiver' and 'universal breadwinner' models into a universal caregiver' model. To this end, it will analyse the social policies and institutions that have been put in place in a number of European Union member states, and examine their impact on gender equality.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The first section briefly discusses various gender equality models which imply different ways of organising, for example, child-care, parental leave and flexible working time. It then relates the discussion on gender equality to the TLM concept. Section two looks at gender inequalities in labour market outcomes, while section three discusses transitional arrangements in work, as well as between private households and employment, that can contribute to the achievement of more gender equality. To this end six countries – Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy – are taken as examples. This selection reflects different models of gender division of labour. Section four brings these elements

together and draws some preliminary conclusions.

## 1. Gendering TLM

Before examining the linkages between the TLM concept and gender equality, it is necessary to clarify the different conceptions of gender equality and how they relate to the design and introduction of policy measures or institutions. In Fraser (1997) the main argument is that there exist different roads to the achievement of gender equality, the essential difference between them relating to how they organise care work. Accordingly, the attempts of feminists to define gender equality can be grouped into three visions or models. The *universal breadwinner model* implies that family care work is brought to the market and/or the state; it hence promotes the vision of women taking on the same role as men, namely that of breadwinner. Under the *caregiver parity model*, care work remains within the family but is acknowledged and re-valued. According to this model, the gender division, while preserved, becomes cost-free in terms of income forfeited through failure to engage in paid work since public funding – in the form, for example, of a ‘caregiver allowance’ – is foreseen.

Under the *universal caregiver model*, the life course pattern of women becomes the pattern of both men and women. The gender contract is redefined as being based on shared roles in both care and breadwinning. Each of the above defined models leads to very different ways of organising, for example, childcare, parental leave and flexible working time. Through the 1980s and 1990s the universal caregiver model was steadily accorded credit as coming closest to how gender equality might be understood in contemporary society.

In Crompton and Le Feuvre (2000) the gender division of labour is theorised along a continuum and this provides a framework for analysing different policy options based on the three gender equality models presented above (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Gendered division of labour

<b>Caregiver parity model</b>		<b>Universal breadwinner model</b>	<b>Universal caregiver model</b>
Male breadwinner/ female carer	Dual earner / female part-time carer	Dual earner / substitute (state or market)	Dual earner / dual carer

Source: Authors' table based on Crompton and Le Feuvre (2000) and Fraser (1997).

In the cell on the far left, we find the traditional male breadwinner/female carer model which used to be the dominant pattern in Europe until the 1960s. The second cell represents a modified and more modern version of the caregiver parity model, where the breadwinner is complemented by a part-time earner/part-time carer. The third cell from the left illustrates the gender pattern where the state or the market take over care functions and thus allow both men and women to participate fully in the labour market. The cell to the far right depicts the dual earner/dual carer model which is currently not to be found in any European Union country (in spite of the introduction in some countries of measures that represent a step in the right direction).

Thus considered, the establishment of links between the TLM concept and gender equality becomes vital as transitional labour markets are organisational bridges that facilitate and secure transitions between different forms of employment, working time arrangements and private activities such as childcare or education, in ways that avoid enduring sub-standard employment or social exclusion. Transitional labour markets aim to contribute to enhanced flexibility and better employment outcomes by allowing socially insured transitions between different areas (private households, employment, education, unemployment and retirement) (Schmid 2002, pp. 175-204). In setting up and providing the security measures, the gender dimension of TML becomes visible as the institutions and incentives that are put in place will reflect the different visions of the gendered division of labour as described above. The areas that are relevant in the framework of this paper are transitions between private households and employment, and transitions within employment (for example between part-time and full-time work).

The research establishing a link between the TLM concept and gender has so far focused on the effects and outcomes of institutions and policies, rather than on conceptualising the TLM from a gender perspective. The papers have dealt mainly with transitions between private household and employment, the domestic division of labour and flexible working hours (compare the literature

review in de Gier and van den Berg 2005 and Gazier 2008). Several conclusions of relevance for shaping the TLM concept have emerged from this research. Firstly, institutions and policies do matter in shaping women's labour market participation and working time. In this regard, questions have been raised and suggestions have been put forward as to what kind of provisions should be considered in order to facilitate female labour market participation and distribute the risks associated with care more equally. Secondly, the research has also drawn attention to the importance of the negotiated nature of working time and the need to empower individuals in order to ensure 'good' working time transitions. Furthermore, the research has served to emphasise that it is very likely that new inequalities, unintended by the policy-makers, will occur with the appearance of new transitions and that it is important to understand what influence a decision taken at a specific point in time will have on the subsequent life course.

Schmid (2001, 2006 and 2008) conceptualises the gender aspect of TLM while displaying a clear evolution with regard to the manner in which the link is made. In Schmid (2001) the focus is on how the TLM concept can secure and reshape the transitions that women face in relation to parenthood. However, no consideration is given to the facts that women and men do not have the same starting point on the labour market and that they have different bargaining power when negotiating these transitions. In response to this criticism, Schmid (2006) and (2008, pp. 295-299) discusses how the risks of parenthood can be shared more equally between men and women; here the crucial aspect of collectively provided solutions is brought to the fore, as is the need to bind men (for example by way of incentives) to the task of care.

This article aims to take the research on TLM and gender further by gaining a better understanding of the institutions that support transitions in and out of labour markets, as well as between different working time regimes, and their impact on gender equality understood in the sense of the universal caregiver model. The article will do this by examining six European Union member states with rather different gender equality outcomes, based on institutions that support transitions between private household activities and employment and within employment. Conclusions will be drawn as to the impact of these institutions on gender equality in the sense of the universal caregiver model and some policy recommendations will be given as how to design transitional bridges suitable for promoting the universal caregiver model.

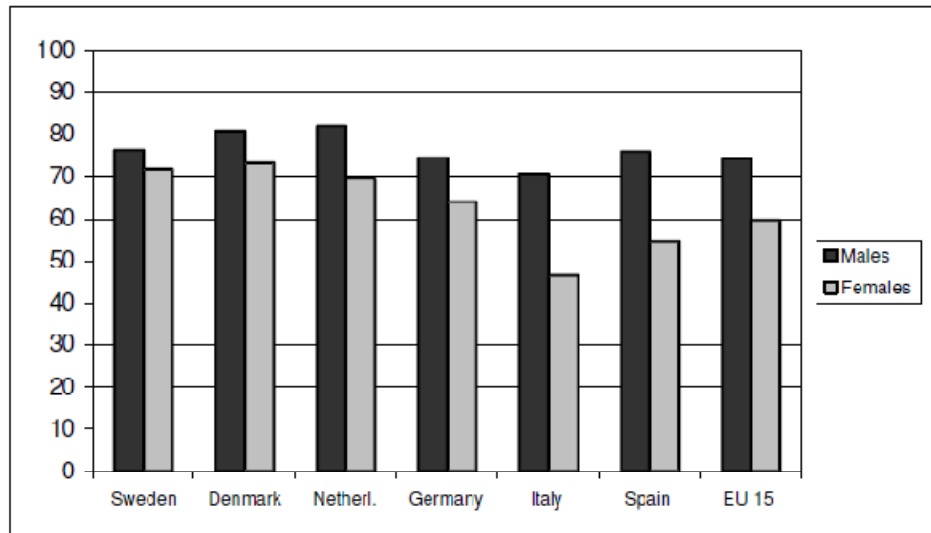
## 2. Gender differences in labour market outcomes

In the following section, gender differences in labour market outcomes will be analysed for a set of countries (Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Spain), insofar as they represent contrasting welfare regimes (compare Esping Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996) as well as gender regimes (Compton and Lefevre 2000). The focus will be on employment rates, working time and contract type, equality of pay and division of household tasks. Equal sharing of paid work, money and unpaid time are three of the four dimensions<sup>1</sup> stressed by Plantenga *et al.* (2009) in their attempt to construct a gender equality index.

Total *employment rates* for the 15-64 years age group are lowest in Italy (58.7 percent) followed by Spain (65.6 percent), while they are highest in Denmark (77.1 percent) and the Netherlands (76 percent). The gender gap in employment rates remains large and is most pronounced, by far, in Italy and Spain and least pronounced in Sweden and Denmark. The Netherlands and Germany occupy midway positions in this regard (compare Figure 1). Germany and the Netherlands especially, but also Spain and Italy – albeit to a lesser degree – have seen convergence in the employment rates of men and women over the last 20 years. In Denmark and Sweden the employment rates of women have been comparatively high for a long time already.

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<sup>1</sup> The other dimension is decision-making power which is not linked, or less clearly so, to labour market outcomes.



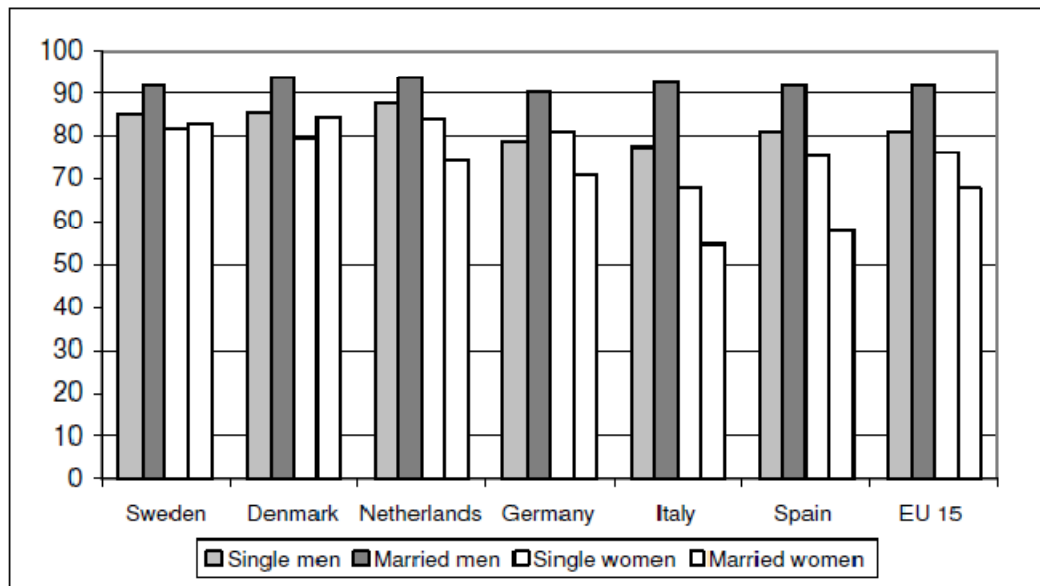
**Figure 1:** Gender gap in employment rates, 2007 (15-64 years)

Source: Eurostat: European Labour Force Survey (annual averages).

Figure 2 shows that prime-age married men have on average higher employment rates than single men, whereas this is true of married women only in Denmark and Sweden.

In all other countries considerable differences between married and single women exist in favour of single women, the difference being greatest in Spain and Italy.





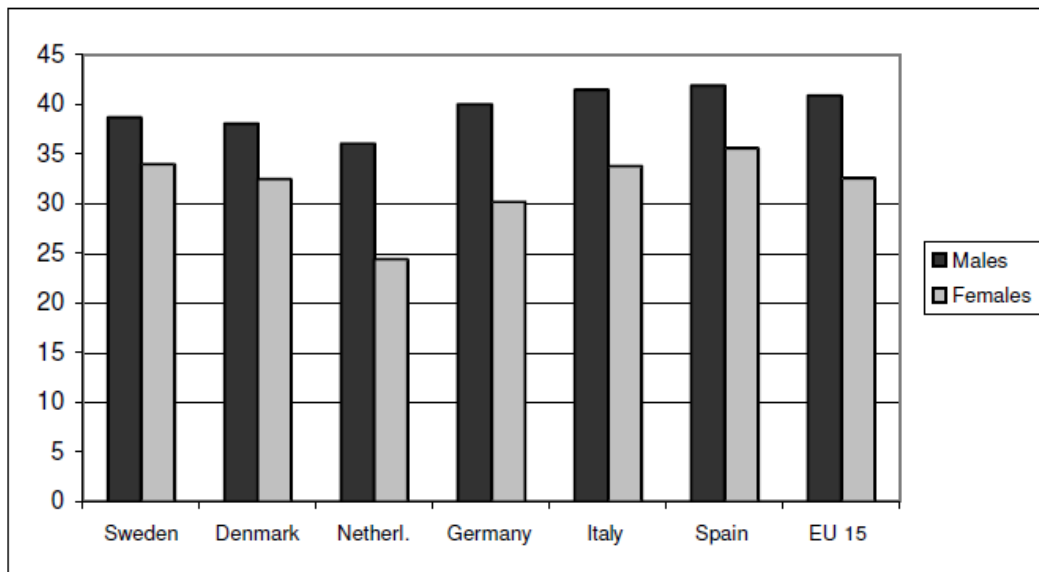
**Figure 2:** Employment rate differences between single and married men and women, 2006 (25-54 years)

Source: Eurostat: European Labour Force Survey (annual averages).

This finding is also supported by maternal employment rates which are considerably lower than average female employment rates not only in Italy and Spain but also in Germany, while they are higher in Sweden and almost equal in Denmark. The Netherlands performs better than Germany (but worse than Scandinavian countries) in this respect but, as will be shown below, this is mainly due to part-time employment among women (compare OECD Family Database 2008, LMF2; on the differences between the Netherlands and Germany compare Vlasblom *et al.* 2006). The same country rankings can be found if we look at age-employment profiles of men and women (compare OECD Family Database 2008, LMF4).

Not only are women less likely to be employed but those who *are* employed are much more likely to work part-time and their average working hours are significantly below those of men. The largest gender differences in *working hours* are evident in the Netherlands where women work 24.4 hours per week on average and men 36.1 hours (Figure 3). The differences are also large in Germany where women on average work about ten hours per week less than men. Here again, Denmark and Sweden are the best performers with gender differences of about five hours. Spain and Italy take the middle position; in

fact average working hours of both men and women are comparatively high but this again has to be contrasted with relatively low female employment rates. Only in Denmark and Sweden has equality in working hours increased over the last decade.



**Figure 3:** Gender gap in total average usual working hours, 2007

Source: Eurostat: European Labour Force Survey (annual averages).

In this light, how are *household tasks* divided between men and women? Table 2 shows how often male and female employees are involved in cooking and housework. While huge gender differences emerge in all countries, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands display a much larger involvement of men in household tasks than the other three countries. In all countries but Spain more than 70 percent of surveyed women state they are involved in cooking and housework every day for at least one hour, whereas this is true of about 40 percent of men in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, of about 20 percent of men in Spain and Germany, and of 14 percent of men in Italy.

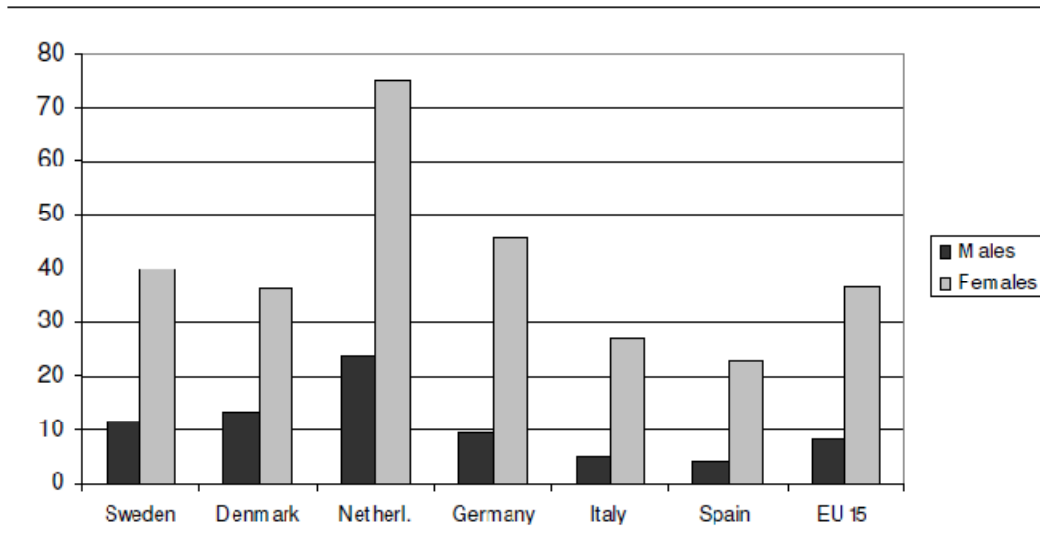
Fewer than 10 percent of men in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands respond that they are never, or only once or twice a year, involved in household tasks, whereas this is true of the majority of men in Italy and Spain and of more than one third of German men.

**Table 2:** Gender differences in the shares of employees involved in cooking and housework, 2005

	Sweden		Denmark		Netherl.		Germany		Italy		Spain	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Every day for one hour or more	40	72	43	73	40	77	18	71	14	75	22	63
Every day or every second day for less than one hour	28	20	24	19	22	13	16	16	9	7	8	7
Once or twice a week	22	6	19	6	22	5	20	6	14	9	11	9
Once or twice a month	4	2	6	0	6	1	9	1	9	2	7	2
Once or twice a year or never	6	0	7	2	10	4	36	6	54	7	53	18

Source: Own table based on Eurofound (2005) European Working Conditions Survey.

Figure 4 shows that it is, for the largest part, women who work *part-time*. The Netherlands, with 75 percent of women working part-time, also displays the highest share of male part-time employment, but the gender difference remains striking and, what is more, men who work part-time are often either students or at the end of their career and hence not providing for a family (Knijn 2001). Sweden and Denmark, which have low gender differences in employment rates, show the usual profile of high part-time employment shares among women (around 35-40 percent), and relatively low shares among men. These two countries saw some decline in part-time employment rates of women during the late 1990s and early 2000, while in all other countries part-time employment has increased. This trend of declining part-time employment rates has now come to a halt as, since the mid-2000s, part-time employment rates of women have again been growing in both Sweden and Denmark.



**Figure 4:** Gender gap in part-time employment rates, 2007

Source: Eurostat: European Labour Force Survey (annual averages).

The over-representation of women in part-time work can, to a considerable extent, be attributed to their much stronger engagement in household and care activities (Eurostat, table on main reason for part-time employment, not shown).

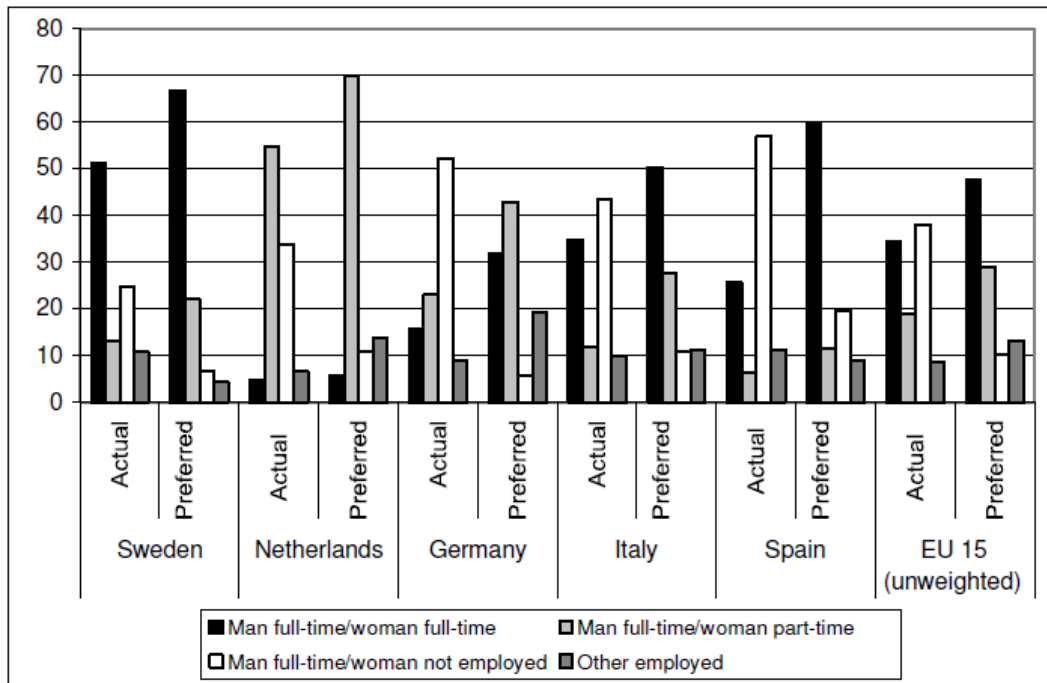
Women still earn considerably less than men and not only does this have an effect on their social benefit receipts, such as pensions, but it will also influence important decisions within couples. If, for example, parental leave is unpaid, or is compensated only on a flat-rate basis, it is likely that the partner with the lower earnings will take it up. Among the six countries considered here, the *gender pay gap*<sup>2</sup> is largest in Germany (22 percent), followed by the Netherlands (18 percent). In contrast to other labour market indicators, where Sweden and Denmark perform comparatively well, these two countries display relatively high gender pay gaps of 16 percent and 17 percent respectively.

In both countries sectoral gender segregation is very much in evidence because it is for the most part women who take over the (caring) tasks that have been outsourced and such work usually does not pay very well. Spain and

<sup>2</sup> The gender pay gap is defined as the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.

especially Italy have relatively small gender pay gaps of 13 percent and 9 percent respectively, but this is in the context of very low female employment rates. The gender pay gap focuses on hourly earnings and thus does not take into account the reduced earning capacities of women due to their predominance in part-time employment. Except for the Netherlands, where the gender pay gap decreased from 23 percent in 1994 to 18 percent in 2006, there have been no improvements on this indicator – rather to the contrary (Eurostat, table on gender pay gap, not shown).

Last but not least, we look at the question of how far men and women are happy with their working patterns. We consider *actual and preferred working patterns* among couples with children under 6 years (Figure 5). For all countries (no data for Denmark available), the combination of a full-time working father and a non-working mother is much more common in actual fact than at the level of stated preferences. In Germany, Italy and Spain this is in fact the most common working pattern in couples with children under 6. In Sweden the most common pattern is full-time employment of both partners and in the Netherlands full-time employment of the father and part-time employment of the mother. In Sweden, Italy and Spain, the majority of couples would like both partners to work full-time, while in the Netherlands a combination of male full-time work and female part-time work is by far the most preferred option. In Germany preferences are more mixed, since about 40 percent of couples prefer the female part-time option while about 30 percent would like both partners to work full-time.



**Figure 5:** Actual and preferred working patterns in couples with children under 6 years, 2001\*

Source: OECD Employment Outlook 2001, chapter 4, table 4.3.

Note: no data for Denmark.

\* To our knowledge no more up-to-date information on this indicator is available.

As can be seen from the above analysis, women are at a disadvantage in the labour market in all six countries – least so in Sweden and Denmark and most so in Italy and Spain. Women are less likely to participate in the labour market, more likely to work part-time, and their wages remain on average below those of their male counterparts.

Furthermore, women employees are considerably more likely to be involved in cooking and household tasks. In a number of indicators, we see some instances of convergence over time but the situation remains far from equal.

### **3. Transitional arrangements between private household activities and employment, and within employment**

The following condensed institutional analysis will shed some light on policies that can act as transitional labour markets and thus facilitate a more equal participation of women in the labour market. After providing some information on the extent and type of spending on families, the focus will be on childcare, parental leave and flexibility of working time options. Policies in these three areas are usually deemed to be important in facilitating transitions between employment and private activities and within employment. Whether or not they will contribute to more equal labour market outcomes for women and men will crucially depend on the ways that they are designed.

Table 3 shows that not only the extent of spending on families but also its structure varies considerably between the six countries analysed here. Total spending is highest in Denmark and Sweden (3.4 and 3.2 percent of GDP, respectively). Germany has total spending of 3.0 percent, and the Netherlands of 2.3 percent. Italy and Spain, with only 1.3 percent and 1.2 percent of GDP, spend far less on families. In all countries but Germany spending on services – which are known to enhance the labour market opportunities of women – is at least somewhat higher than spending on cash benefits. Tax breaks towards families, which tend to favour families with higher income, are non-existent in Sweden, Denmark and Italy but relatively important in the Netherlands and especially in Germany. Germany stands out in that it spends twice as much on cash benefits as on services.

**Table 3:** Spending on families in cash, services and tax measures (in percentage of GDP), 2005

	Cash <sup>3</sup>	Services <sup>4</sup>	Tax breaks towards family <sup>5</sup>	Total
<b>Sweden</b>	1.5	1.7	0.0	3.2
<b>Denmark</b>	1.6	1.8	0.0	3.4
<b>Netherlands</b>	0.6	1.0	0.6	2.3
<b>Germany</b>	1.4	0.7	0.9	3.0
<b>Italy</b>	0.6	0.7	0.0	1.3
<b>Spain</b>	0.5	0.7	0.1	1.2
<b>OECD-26</b>	1.3	0.8	0.2	2.3

Source: OECD Family Database.

Note: Public support accounted here relates only to public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas, such as health and housing support, also assists families, but not exclusively so, and is not included here.

### **Child care – the basic prerequisite for gender equality on the labour market**

The most important service to families, and the best guarantee for enabling women to participate equally in the labour market, is clearly care facilities. Due to data limitations in relation to elderly care which is becoming increasingly important in the public debate, the focus here will be on childcare alone. The availability of childcare places is the primary consideration here, but their affordability and quality are also important.

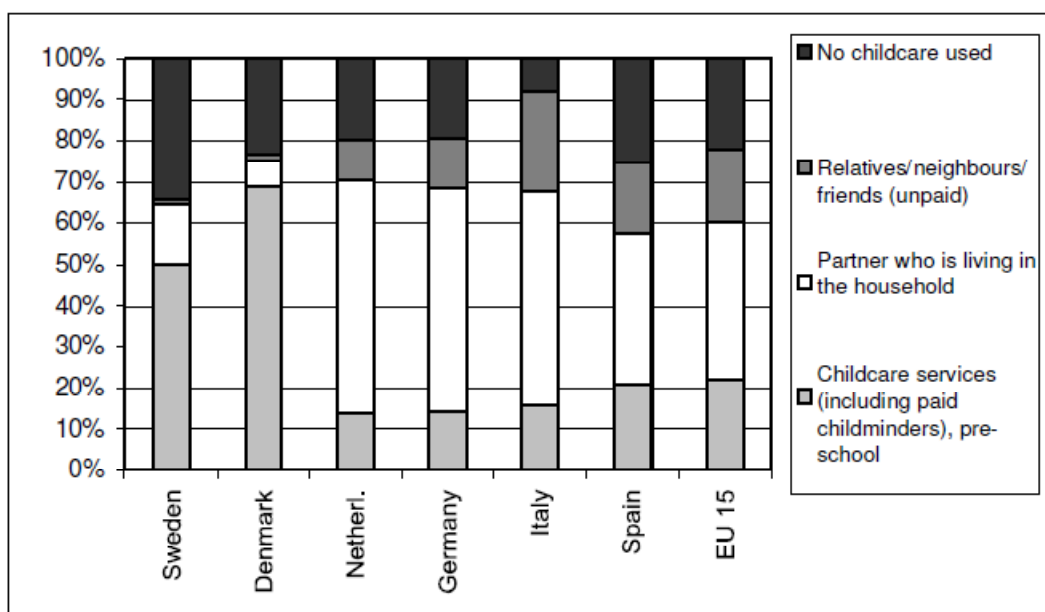
<sup>3</sup> This includes child allowances, public income support payments during periods of parental leave, income support for sole parent families, and public childcare support through earmarked payments to parents.

<sup>4</sup> Direct financing and subsidising of providers of childcare and early education facilities, public spending on assistance for young people and residential facilities, public spending on family services, including centre-based facilities, and home help services for families in need.

<sup>5</sup> Tax expenditures towards families include tax exemptions; child tax allowances, child tax credits, amounts that are deducted from the tax liability. Tax advantages for married people, as exist in, for example, Belgium, France, Germany and Japan, are not included here.



Figure 6 illustrates the huge differences in the use of public childcare between the two Scandinavian and the other countries. While in both Denmark and Sweden the main type of childcare used by the majority of married couples with children is external childcare services, in all other countries a partner who is living in the household is the most important carer. In Italy and Spain especially, informal services provided by unpaid relatives, neighbours and friends also play a significant role, but in Denmark and Sweden these forms of childcare are of negligible importance.



**Figure 6: Main type of childcare used by employed persons for own/spouse's children up to 14 years while working (married couples, 20-49), 2005**

Source: Eurostat: European Labour Force Survey.

In fact, if we look at enrolment rates of children in childcare we see that differences are especially large for children under two years while there is less pronounced variation among countries in enrolment rates for children aged between three and five (Table 4). Germany and Italy emerge especially badly, although in Germany strong differences are found between the East with traditionally high enrolment rates (fostered during the GDR period) and the West with very low enrolment rates. Even though enrolment rates for children aged between three and five are relatively high in all six countries, it must be borne in mind that full-time places are not offered in all countries. As concerns out-of-school hours care, the two Scandinavian countries again do best with

enrolment rates of young school children in excess of 80 percent. In the Netherlands the enrolment rate is around 44 percent whereas in Germany and Spain it is as low as 7 percent and 4 percent respectively (no information on Italy).

As concerns affordability, in all six countries a large share of costs, especially for children older than three years, is covered by public funds. For very young children the Netherlands performs worst and Sweden best. With GDP shares of 1 percent and 1.2 percent, Sweden and Denmark spend by far the largest amounts on childcare and pre-primary education. The shares in the other four countries are around 0.5 percent of GDP. Another quality indicator is the child-to-staff ratio which seems to be most favourable in Denmark but also relatively good in Sweden and the Netherlands, while it is less favourable in Germany and worst of all in Spain<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 4:** Enrolment rates of children in childcare and out-of-school-hours care (% of respective age group) as well as expenditure on childcare (% of GDP)

	0-2 years (2004)	3-5 years (2004)	Out-of-school- hours care (2005/2007)	Expenditure on childcare and pre-primary education (2005)
Sweden	39.5	86.6	80.2 (6-8 years)	1.0
Denmark	61.7	89.7	86.2 (6-8 years)	1.2
Netherlands	29.5	70.2	43.7 (4-12 years)	0.5
Germany	9	80.3	7.4 (5-8 years)	0.4
Italy	6.3	100	No information	0.6
Spain	20.7	98.6	3.7 (6-11 years)	0.4

Source: OECD Family Database.

<sup>6</sup> The child-to-staff ratio is as follows: 3.3 (0-2 years) and 7.2 (3-5 years) in Denmark; 7.5 (0-2 years) and 12 (3-5 years) in Germany; 7 in Italy; 4 (1 year), 5 (2 years) and 6 (3 years) in the Netherlands; 13.7 (0-2 years) and 25 (3-5 years) in Spain and 5.5 in Sweden (OECD Family Database 2008, PF14 and for DE and SP De Henau 2006, p. 53).

## Parental leave, its link to the labour market and involvement of fathers

Parental leave regulations can support a fairer gender division of paid and unpaid work, their benefit not being confined to the specific leave period, but their value in this respect will crucially depend on the way they are designed. If parental leave creates incentives to spend long periods outside the labour market, it can have adverse effects on gender-equal labour market outcomes. According to Bruning *et al.* (1999), three dimensions of parental leave benefits are relevant in this regard: the strength of the relationship with the labour market; the share of men among the average number of leave-takers; and the percentage of (female) leave-takers who return to the labour market after the leave period.

Table 4 gives an overview of parental leave legislation in the six countries under analysis. Apart from Germany and Italy, the other countries all offer paternity leave (taken around the time of the birth) ranging from two days in Spain and the Netherlands to ten days (two weeks) in Sweden and Denmark. A more relevant factor in terms of achieving a better gender balance in care work and labour is the question of the extent to which a certain period of the parental leave is reserved for fathers (or the partner who does not take parental leave), as well as the replacement rate, as these function as strong incentives for fathers to take over a part of the parental leave<sup>7</sup>. In Sweden and also, since 2007, Germany, two months of the overall period are reserved for the partner who does not take the leave (on Sweden see Pylkkänen and Smith 2004). In Italy one additional month of leave is granted if the father claims at least three months of leave. The other three countries have no ‘take-it-or-leave-it’ rules.

When it comes to maintaining labour market attachment, systems that link the compensation to the former wage are most beneficial. This is the case in Sweden, Denmark and, since 2007, Germany, which grant relatively high shares of the former wage up to a maximum. Italy also links parental benefits to former earnings but the replacement rate is only 30 percent. In Spain parental leave is unpaid, while in the Netherlands payment depends on favourable collective agreements or civil-servant status. In a situation where women are in many couples still the ones who earn less, parental benefits that are linked to the former wage – in contrast to flat-rate benefits or no compensation – can act as an incentive for fathers to take over part of the parental leave, especially if ceilings are high. In order to avoid discrimination in the recruitment of young women, the parental leave benefit should be paid by the

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<sup>7</sup> A good example of how parental leave can influence and change the gender contract is the Icelandic case (compare Gíslason 2007).

state, or specific collective funds, and not by individual employers.

**Table 5: Parental Leave (+ maternity/paternity leave)**

	Duration	Age Limit	Payment	Other	Paid father quota	Maternity/paternity leave
SE	480 days to be shared between the parents, 60 days reserved for father or mother, respectively	8	First 390 days: paid according to sickness cash benefit rate (appr. 80% of qualifying income, min. SEK 180 (€20) per day); next 90 days: SEK 60 a day (6.4 Euro)	Parental leave is fully flexible; may be divided in full days, half, ¼, 1/8 (one hour)	60 days	7 weeks at 80% of earnings (min €19 day); 10 days paternity leave
DK	32 weeks per child to be shared (in continuation of maternity/paternity leave) + individual right of 8 unpaid weeks (can spread 32 weeks payment over total 40 weeks leave)	9	Total of 32 weeks 90% up to maximum (DKR 3115 (€418) per week) to be shared	Possibility to work part-time with reduced payment accordingly		18 weeks at 100% of earnings up to DKR 3115 (€418) per week; 2 weeks paternity leave
NL	3 months per parent per child (6 months if part-time work)	8	Unpaid, except civil servant (75%) or favourable collective agreements	Leave to be taken in blocks of at least one month; legal right to change working time		16 weeks at 100% of earnings; 2 days paternity leave
DE*	12 months, 2 additional months reserved for the partner who does not take the leave	3 (8 if employer agrees)	Minimum of 67% of the net income (at least €300 at most €1800 per month), replacement rate is increased to 100% if net income is less than €1000	Part-time work up to 30 hours possible (but allowance will be reduced accordingly); young siblings bonus of 10% of parental allowance (at least €75)	2 months	14 weeks at 100% of earnings; no paternity leave
IT	10 months, if the father claims at least 3 months, an additional month is granted	8	30% of earnings	3 months at 30% for self-employed during first year		21 weeks (5 months) at 80% of earnings; paternity leave only if mother ill
SP	3 years	3 (6 if part-time)	Unpaid	Reduction of daily working time possible		16 weeks at 100%; 2 days paternity leave (10 weeks of maternity leave can be transferred to father if both parents work)

Sources: European Commission 2007; OECD Family Database 2009; Gesetz zum Elterngeld und zur Elternzeit 2006.

\*New regulation in place since 1 January 2007. The former regulation included a flat-rate benefit that was not tied to labour market experience and there were no incentives for fathers to take up parental leave.

Moreover, in order to uphold labour market attachment during parental leave, flexible parental leave rules that allow combinations of part-time work and leave, or the take-up of parts of the leave period when the child is older, are useful. In Sweden parental leave is fully flexible and may be taken in instalments of as little as one hour per day.

In Germany and Denmark a combination of part-time work and parental leave is possible but will entail reduced payments of parental leave benefits. In Spain a reduction of daily working time is possible and in the Netherlands (and to a more limited degree in Germany) there is a legal right to a change in working time which also includes the reversibility of this decision (compare Anxo *et al.* 2007).

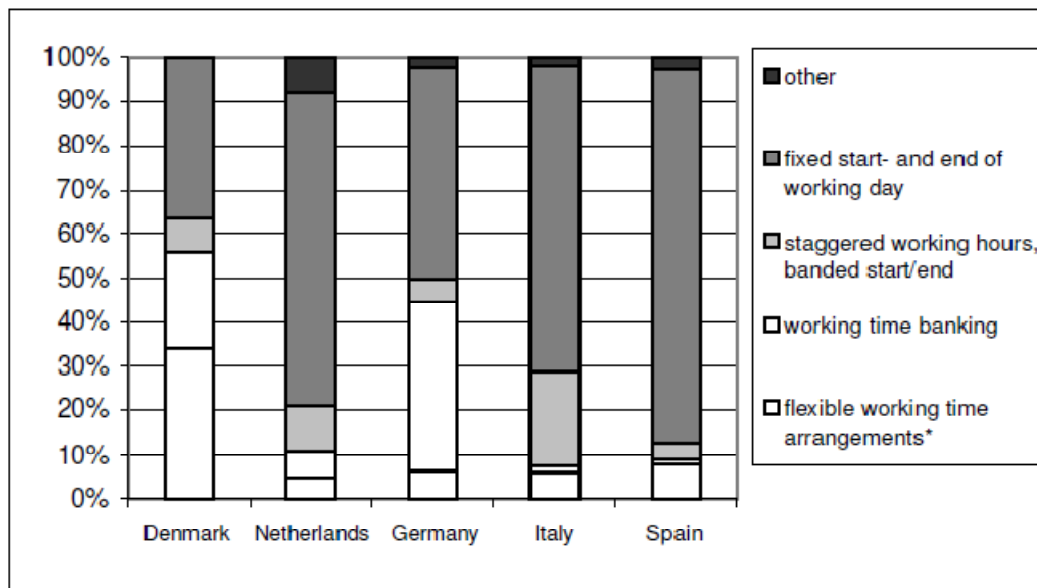
According to de Henau *et al.* (2008), parental leave take-up rates of fathers were below 5 percent in Denmark, Germany and Italy; they were 9 percent in the Netherlands and 75 percent in Sweden (no information on Spain). Thus, in fact, only in Sweden, which makes use of a “paid father quota” of two months, do fathers seem to take up parental leave to a large degree. Nevertheless, the leave periods of Swedish men are on average much shorter than those of Swedish women (de Henau 2006). In this regard, it is noteworthy that in Germany the share of fathers taking parental leave increased – from 3.5 percent before the introduction of the new parental leave benefit that includes a “paid father quota” in January 2007 – to 16 percent in 2008. However, in two thirds of the cases fathers used only a short leave period of one or two months (BMFSFJ 2008).

### **Working time flexibility**

Another factor that can support more equal labour market participation for men and women, regardless of family circumstances, is working time flexibility. The crucial question is, however, which of the partners will make use of the flexible working time options even if they are available for both men and women? Large country variations are to be observed in the flexibility of working time regulations, as shown by Figure 7 for prime-age women (very similar results for men). The most flexible working time regulations exist in Denmark, followed by Germany, and the least flexible ones in Spain. Indeed, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain all have very inflexible working time regulations (no data for Sweden<sup>8</sup>).

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<sup>8</sup> For Sweden compare Eurofound 2005 and 2008.



**Figure 7:** Working time regulations of dependent employed prime-age (25-49 years) women, 2004

Source: Eurostat 2007.

Note: the distribution of working time regulations is very similar for prime-age men in the respective countries but at somewhat higher levels of working time flexibility.

\*Start and end of working day varying by individual agreement/determines own work schedule (no formal boundaries).

About 70 percent of women and somewhat fewer men have a fixed start and end of the working day in Italy and the Netherlands and the share is as high as 85 percent in Spain. Working time regulations in these countries are thus very inflexible and presumably make it more difficult to combine work and family tasks. It has to be noted, however, that in the Netherlands much of this inflexibility is offset by the strong prevalence of part-time work (especially among women). The share of employees with inflexible working hours is much lower in Germany, at around 45 percent, and particularly in Denmark, at around 35 percent. While Germany uses working time banking (working time accounts) to a considerable degree, making less use of individually agreed or non-formal flexible working time arrangements, Denmark uses a combination of both forms (on the use of working time accounts in Germany and the Nordic countries see e.g. Anxo *et al.* 2006 and Seifert 2007). It is not always clear whether working time accounts are actually

beneficial to the work-life balance, insofar as they allow the employer, to some extent, to adapt working time to company production needs, so that the control of time is not always in the hands of the employee. Furthermore, the gender aspect is also rather ambiguous as long-term time accounts will be used differently by men and women, as can be seen to be the case today with leave credits. Women use the possibility to take time off to satisfy family care commitments, while men use the possibility to leave the labour market close to the retirement age, hence treating it as an early retirement arrangement.

#### **4. Discussion and conclusions**

A careful analysis of the institutions supporting transitions seem to show that the most successful countries in terms of women's continuous labour market participation – Sweden and Denmark – offer a whole range of transitional arrangements to ease the combination of work and private activities (compare also OECD 2002, 2005 and 2007). Spain and Italy, the countries with the worst outcomes in regard to equal labour market participation of women and men, offer the fewest transitional arrangements. The Netherlands and Germany occupy a mid-way position.

Coming back to the different models of gender division of labour as depicted in Table 1, it has to be concluded that all six countries are very far from having achieved gender equality in the labour market and in the household sphere in accordance with the dual earner/dual carer model devised by Crompton and Le Feuvre. Sweden and Denmark come closest to the dual earner/substitute carer model but they surely have not achieved a dual earner/dual carer model. In fact, relatively large shares of women are still engaged in part-time work and the drop in this share seems to have come to a halt. Men are more likely to contribute to household tasks than in Spain, Italy and Germany but the gender distribution is nevertheless far from equal. Germany and the Netherlands display a more traditional gender division of labour consisting of the dual earner/female part-time carer (substituted in Germany, to some extent, by female carer) model. Important differences between these two countries are that the enrolment of very small children in childcare is considerably higher in the Netherlands and that Dutch men are much more likely to participate regularly in household and cooking tasks. Spain and, even more so, Italy still make strong use of the male breadwinner/female carer model, with gender differences in employment rates remaining large, and in evidence over the whole life course, with hardly any men taking – or considering taking – parental leave, and the majority of men never – or almost never – participating in household tasks.

The above findings on institutional settings and their impact on gender equality can provide information about the conditions required for TLM to enhance gender equality in the sense of promoting the universal caregiver model. One condition seems to be the need to build institutions and bridges that complement each other rather than substitute each other, e.g. part-time versus childcare versus leave schemes.

In its current form, the TLM approach addresses primarily the issue of how to secure labour market or life-course flexibility in order to ensure a win-win situation for both employers and employees. The question of how paid and unpaid work is and should be divided between men and women, and how institutions can contribute to this goal, is much less central. The mere provision of secure transitions and flexibility that enable women to combine paid and unpaid work can contribute to reinforcing stereotypes and even exacerbating existing gender gap(s). This is a perspective rarely accorded much attention in current academic research and policy debates (Jepsen 2005, 2006, 2008).

An element of prime importance in the future will be a scenario that enables women to have continuous careers and men discontinuous careers. To this end, it is necessary to establish a more general framework designed to facilitate negotiations on how to allow for variations and fluctuations in working time over a shorter or longer period of an individual's working life. Establishing rights in this respect will have to involve both the state and the social partners and will require a global rather than a local approach in order to allow for equity and guarantee the transfer of rights. However, the actual application and adaptation of these rights in practice will call for a more local approach, one able to take into account the specific circumstances of different companies and individuals. However, the granting of new or more rights is not devoid of implications for gender equality. Certain precautions should be taken to ensure that gender equality is not undermined, and that a shift in working culture and norms actually takes place.

There is a definite need to move towards the individualisation of social security rights and taxation, as individual choices in the labour market should be accompanied by individual rights (Esping-Andersen *et al.* 2002; Jepsen *et al.* 1997; Klammer 2000; Leschke 2008; Schmid 2001). This is particularly important when developing the framework of transitional labour markets which is very much based on the concept of entitlement to certain facilities that make it easier to cope with labour market transitions of various types. New rights to vary working time over shorter or longer periods must be individual rights, and the same should apply to all other rights granted in the context of social security and tax systems. The failure to individualise rights means that



second earners will continue to be penalised, increasing the incentive to refrain from engaging in paid work.

Rights to child and elderly care leave should also be granted, as part of combination security, on an individualised basis. Such rights would enable women and men to take control of their work/life balance. Internal flexibility cannot do away with the need for formal care provision but can complement it. For example, rights to full-time nursery places and out-of-school-hours care will make it neither possible nor desirable for all women to work full-time but it will make it easier for men and women to negotiate and distribute the remaining unpaid work between them.

It is also important to draw attention to the need for generous earnings-related replacement rates for various care-leave schemes, since a genuine TLM approach should also contain provision for income security. A generous replacement rate, furthermore, is a prerequisite for more widespread use of these rights by men.

However, in order to provide incentives and signals to men that they should engage in unpaid work, a part of care-leave schemes – especially of parental leave – should be exclusively reserved for them. In the longer run, this will also help to change general attitudes to the gender division of labour and care work. Only by including men in unpaid work, and hence redistributing the responsibilities of unpaid care work between men and women, will women have a genuinely free choice with regard to paid work. How can we create an environment which provides for such genuinely free choices, rather than choices restricted by in-built constraints? One conclusion that seems to emerge is the need to build bridges and services that complement each other rather than substitute each other. Another conclusion is that the question of free choices should be at the heart of the TLM approach, not only with regard to the need to combine family and work but in relation to all the numerous transitions inherent in the ways men and women work and conduct their lives.

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