Contradiction between policies and attitudes – the case of Estonia

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Republic of Estonia

- Estonia gained independence in 1918 and reindependence in 1991
- Population 1.3 million
- Total fertility rate 1.54
- Minimum monthly wage in 2016 is 430 EUR, average monthly wage in 2015 was 1065 EUR (income tax is 20%, 170 € per month is deductible)
General characteristics

- High female education and employment
- Low part time working
- High rate of single parents (92% of them women) and children born out of marriage

- Gender neutral family policy
- Same-sex partnerships were legalized in January 2016
Aims of Estonian family policy

- Promote births
- Reconcile work and family life
- Support child rights and well-being
- Reduce child poverty
FAMILY BENEFITS

• Estonia’s family benefits are designed to partly cover the costs families incur in caring for, raising and educating their children
• There are 10 different types of family benefits and they are funded from the State Budget
• Mix of universal, selective and means-tested family benefits
Family benefits

• Universal family benefits with focus on large families
  – 50€ per 1st and 2nd child (55€ from 2018 and 60€ from 2019)
  – 100€ per 3rd and every next child
  – 170€ for a family with 7 and more children + pension and health insurance (200€ per family with 3-6 children and 370€ per family with 7 or more children from 2017)

• Additional benefits for single parents and lower income families + minimum income scheme

• Maintenance Scheme (from 2017) – 100€ per child per month

• Home benefit for large (3+ children) families, benefit from 8000 - 14 000€
In-kind support

- Free school meal from grades 1 to 12 (compulsory education + high school)
- All children (0-18) have health insurance, including free dental care
- Access to hobby schools for all children
FAMILY LEAVES

• The aim of family leaves is to support the reconciliation of work and family life and maintain family`s income.
• There are 7 types of family leaves and 6 types of benefits connected to them.
Parental leave system

- **Maternity leave**
  - 20 weeks (70 to 30 days before birth)
  - Fully paid (100%), no max or min

- **Paternity leave**
  - 2 weeks (10 working days)
  - 2 months before to 2 months after the birth
  - Fully paid (100% of fathers` average income), max 3 times national average

- **Parental benefit**
  - 435 days (62 weeks)
  - Starting from maternity leave or child`s birth
  - Until the child gets 70 days only for mother, then shareble
  - Fully paid (100%) with min (390 or 430€) and max (2724€)

- **Child care allowance**
  - Up to child gets 3 or 8 years old
  - Flat-rate benefit (ca 40 €)

- **ECEC**
  - 435 days (62 weeks)
  - Starting from maternity leave or child`s birth
  - Until the child gets 70 days only for mother, then shareble
  - Fully paid (100%) with min (390 or 430€) and max (2724€)
Parental leave and parental benefit

• Leave and benefit are not connected
• Relation to working – A parent may work or earn income during the period in which they receive the parental benefit, but if the income exceeds the rate of the benefit, the amount of the benefit is reduced:
  • Formula – benefit – (income – rate of benefit)/2

Persons have right to get at least half of the benefit granted to them. It is also prohibited to reduce the amount of the benefit under the limit of the benefit base rate.

• Flexibility – possible to change the recipient every month and parental leave can be used by anyone who takes care of the child (the child’s actual custodian)
• Solidarity – benefit paid also to those who have had no previous work relationship and income
In addition

• Leave to take care of a sick family member
  - 80% of previous salary in case of nursing a child under 12 years of age (up to 14/60 days in a row) or nursing a sick family member (up to 7/10 days in a row).

• Adoptive parents leave
  - 70 days for a person who adopts a child under 10 years of age, financing similar to maternity leave.

• Paid child leave (additional vacation)
  - 3 days for a parent with one or two under 14y olds per year financed in the amount of minimum salary
  - 6 days for a parent with at least three under 14y olds or a child under 3y per year financed in the amount of minimum salary
  - Additional day in a month if a disabled child under 18y, financed in the amount of average salary.

• Unpaid child leave
  - 10 working days for a parent with a child under 14y or until 18y if disabled child.
ECEC SYSTEM

• Local governments are obliged to secure a place in a childcare facility to all children at the age between 1.5 – 7 years of age who live in their catchment areas.

• The max fee for parents cannot exceed 20% of min wage (86€)

• State covers child-care service fees in a fixed amount for children with a severe or profound disability aged 0-18
The receivers of parental benefit among men and women

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<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>2014</td>
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<td>91.0</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>91.1</td>
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Average size of the parental benefit among men and women

Average benefit

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Women</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

EUR

2011 2012 2013 2014 2015

200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600

2011 2012 2013 2014 2015

Average benefit
The users of parental leave by sex and type of child care allowance

Source: Estonian Social Insurance Board
Employment rate and employment gap of males and females aged 20-49 by presence of children, 2015

Gender pay gap in 2014, %

Source: Eurostat
Average time use in a day, minutes

Source: Statistics Estonia, Time Use Survey 2009-2010
New directions in family leave policy

• Compunding of leaves and benefits
• Introducing father`s quota (?)
• Giving more flexibility to fathers
• Changing the leave for adoptive parents (role of fathers)
• Playing around the child care allowance
• Putting more flexibility into the system of ECEC
Bottlenecks of introducing the fathers` quota

• To take the quota from existing period or add it?
• Money?
• What if the father doesn`t use it – ECEC places, risk of poverty for women
• High number of single parents
• Social fathers vs biological fathers
• What if the woman goes back home?
Challenges in promoting gender equality with family policy measures

- Gender neutral family policy doesn`t often support gender equality
- Policy vs norms and values
- Best examples from other countries might not work if not the whole picture is taken into consideration
Thank you!

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