CHAPTER 6

Reconciliation of Employment and Childcare in Austria, Germany and Iceland. Examples for Gender Equality in Family Life?

Sigrid Leitner

1 Introduction

The reconciliation of employment and childcare is usually facilitated by (a combination of) different politics: On the one hand, time rights and cash rights enable parents to (temporarily) drop out of work or to reduce and/or flexibilize their working time in order to look after (small) children, thereby guaranteeing the "right to care". On the other hand, the provision of childcare services facilitates the labour market participation of parents and therefore supports the right "not to care". The first type of policies has familizing effects since it supports the family actively in providing childcare. The second type of policies has de-familizing effects because it socializes or "marketizes" the caring responsibility of the family. Assuming that welfare regimes contain familizing as well as de-familizing reconciliation policies and that each of these has either a weak or a strong

S. Leitner (✉)
Institute of Management and Organization in Social Work (IMOS), University of Applied Sciences Cologne, Cologne, Germany

D. Auth et al. (eds.), *Gender and Family in European Economic Policy*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-41513-0_6

expression, then a four-field matrix emerges with which one is able to distinguish four ideal types of familialism (Leitner 2003).

Table 6.1 maps out that only three types of familialism do hold reconciliation policies at all: The explicit familialism provides time and cash rights, the de-familialism offers childcare services, and the optional familialism gives parents both: Childcare within the family is strengthened, but the family is also provided with the option to be (partly) unburdened from childcare responsibilities. The interesting question here is, how different reconciliation policies affect gender equality in family life and which type of familialism shows the best results with regard to mothers' labour market participation and fathers' engagement in childcare. As empirical case studies, I choose two countries that are traditionally labelled as conservative welfare regimes with an explicit familialistic reconciliation policy: Austria and Germany. Both have undergone major reforms during the last ten years and can nowadays be classified into the optional familialism. This gives us the possibility to compare the effects of the reforms on gender equality in family life. Thus, we will be able to directly compare an explicit familialistic and an optional familialistic reconciliation setting within the two countries over time. The de-familialism type of reconciliation policies will be represented by Iceland which has a rather short paid parental leave scheme which is followed by a rather comprehensive public system of childcare provision. Javornik (2014) labelled this policy design "supported de-familialism".[1]

The next section discusses the relation between reconciliation policies and gender equality in family life by giving the prevailing state of the art. Thereafter, the parental leave regulations and the provision of childcare services in Austria, Germany and Iceland are described (Sect. 3) as well as analysed with regard to their effects on gender equality in family life (Sect. 4).

Table 6.1 Four ideal types of familialism

Familizing policies	*De-familizing policies*	
	Strong	*Weak*
Strong	Optional familialism	Explicit familialism
Weak	De-familialism	Implicit familialism

Source: Leitner (2003)

The concluding section discusses advantages and shortfalls within different models of reconciliation from a gender equality perspective.

2 The Relation Between Reconciliation Policies and Gender Equality in Family Life

Our normative frame for the evaluation of gender equality in family life is the earner-carer model. It envisions a society "[…] in which men and women engage *symmetrically* in both paid work and in unpaid caregiving […] parents have the right to choose whether they will care for their own children or rely on substitute forms of care […]" (Gornick and Meyers 2008, 322; emphasis in original). Therefore, the question is, if and in which way reconciliation policies support an earner-carer model. Firstly, it can be assumed that the provision of childcare services has *no direct effects* on gender equality. But, since services partly unburden carers from their responsibilities they open up new possibilities for time-use—for example, the option to take up paid work—which have been out of reach before. Although there is no automatism between the provision of childcare services and labour market participation of parents (Leitner and Lessenich 2007), services represent an important opportunity structure for gender equality at the labour market. They "[…] (fairly unambiguously) raise the prevalence and stability of mothers' employment […]" (Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt 2010, 198) and therefore support family models beyond the traditional male breadwinner model. Although, the decision to use childcare services instead of providing home care depends on various factors: the availability (that is flexible opening hours), the affordability and, last not least, the quality of care (Schober and Spieß 2015). Thus, Gornick and Meyers (2008, 326) promote early childhood education and care "[…] that is high quality and publicly subsidized […]": Not only should the burden on parents be reduced but the options of families at different income levels should be equalized.

Secondly, the gender equality effects of paid leave schemes are less clear-cut.[2] On the one hand, parental leave reinforces the traditional gender division of labour because it aims at stabilizing the family as a place of welfare production: Since family childcare is mostly provided by mothers, parental leave is not only supporting the family as such but also attributing childcare to mothers. On the other hand, parental leave schemes can hold incentives for a gender-egalitarian earner-carer model. Thus, the effects on gender equality differ according to the policy design. Three elements seem to be most important:

1. *Non-transferable entitlements for fathers.* Parental leave entitlements that are freely transferable between the parents create "[…] a financial incentive for mothers to take any available transferable leave whenever, as is usually the case, the mother earns less than the father […]" (Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt 2010, 201). In contrast, parental leave periods that are exclusively reserved for fathers on a "use or lose" principle impose a gentle force on fathers to take their share of leave and care work: Fathers use non-transferable entitlements if they are high paid (Moss 2008). Thus, non-transferable entitlements for fathers hold a much higher incentive for shared parenthood than transferable entitlements.
2. *Generous benefits.* Given sex-segmented labour markets, unpaid or low-paid parental leave is unattractive for those with good earnings and reinforces the traditional gender division of work and care. In order to encourage fathers' engagement in childcare, high wage replacement rates are recommended (Bruning and Plantenga 1999; Gornick and Meyers 2008). If the generosity of the benefit depends on former income, there is also an incentive to be employed before the birth of a child. Thus, the labour market enrolment of women before giving birth is stimulated—not least for the benefit of overall labour market attachment of mothers.
3. *Short leaves.* On the one hand, parental leave seems to strengthen women's ties to paid work. Gottschall and Bird (2003) showed for Germany that the introduction of parental leave caused shorter spells of labour market exit and higher return rates of mothers. Re-entry in the labour market is especially facilitated by dismissal protection and re-employment guarantees. On the other hand, rather long leave periods might have negative effects on women's employment outcomes: "However, long leave periods may create difficulties in returning to the job if there have been significant changes in the technological and organisational context of the firm in the meantime" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1995, 188). Bruning and Plantenga (1999) recommend a maximum duration of one year in order to avoid negative employment effects for mothers. Gornick and Meyers (2008) promote six months of non-transferable paid leave for each parent. Rønsen (1999) argues that very short leave periods might also be harmful for labour market re-entry if there is a lack of childcare services for very young children. Part-time leaves might be an alternative solution to prevent mothers from exclusion processes.

Based on this short outline of the prevailing scholarly debate, we can assume that countries are most successfully supporting an earner-carer model if they provide flexible and economically priced quality childcare as well as a parental leave scheme with non-transferable entitlements for both parents, generous benefits and short leave periods.

3 Reconciliation Policies in Austria, Germany and Iceland

In the following, the three reconciliation policy designs of Austria, Germany and Iceland will be described in detail in order to analyse first on a theoretical level, which effects for gender equality are to be expected for each country.

3.1 Austria: Flexible Regulation with Ambivalent Effects

Austria was an early bird with regard to the introduction of paid leave for childcare. Since 1961, formerly employed mothers were entitled to one year of leave accompanied by a small monthly lump-sum payment. In 1990, the duration of the paid leave was expanded to two years and the entitlement was made transferable between working parents. From 1996 onwards, six months (out of the two years) were reserved for fathers on a "use or lose" base, but due to the small benefit attached, only 1 % of parents on leave were fathers. On the contrary, nearly all formerly employed mothers took advantage of the leave to its full extent. Their return-rates into the labour market were rather poor (Leitner 2013, 56–73).

A major reform of the parental leave regulation was implemented in 2002. The new *Kinderbetreuungsgeld* (childcare benefit) is available for all parents (not only for those who were employed before the birth of the child). It is still flat-rate and currently amounts to €436 per month. The childcare benefit spans a maximum of three years, if at least six months are taken by the father. Otherwise, the maximum duration is two and a half years. This expansion of the benefit span will probably result in even longer periods of labour market exits for mothers, since the low flat-rate will not motivate fathers to take leave. Moreover, the constantly low provision of childcare places hinders early re-entrance into the labour market: In 2014, only 23.8 % of children younger than three years had a childcare place (Statistik Austria 2015). The re-entrance of mothers into the labour market is furthermore complicated by the fact that the dismissal protection attached to the parental leave ends after the child's second birthday, whereas the benefit spans up to two and a half years for one parent.

The reform, however, also entails a new policy element, which points to the earner-carer model: Parents are allowed to receive income from employment during the benefit period. Currently, the amount of €16,200 per year can be earned in addition to the full flat-rate benefit. This possibility of parallel part-time employment during parental leave supports the continuous labour market participation of mothers and acknowledges the dual role of women as mothers and workers. Thus, we indeed see a change in the implemented gender-role model: while men still cannot enjoy a realistic option to take parental leave, women are no longer restricted to their role as mothers, even though the universality of the childcare benefit allows for this restriction and even though institutional childcare is still underdeveloped in Austria, thus restricting the options of employment for mothers with young children (Leitner 2010, 461).

Since 2008 (respectively 2010), parents have two (three) alternatives to the regular childcare benefit:

1. If they claim the benefit for a maximum period of 20 months (24 months if the other parent takes at least four months), the benefit increases to €624 per month.
2. If the benefit is claimed for a maximum period of 15 months (18 months if the other parent takes at least three months), the benefit increases to €800 per month.
3. If the benefit is claimed for a maximum period of 12 months (14 months if the other parent takes at least two months), the benefit amounts to 80 % of the former income or at least to €1000 per month.[3]

These options support the early return of parents to the labour market and—especially in the short break models with higher benefit levels—set incentives for shared parenting. It will be interesting to see how parents choose between the different options given the restrictions in the availability of childcare.

3.2 Germany: Gender Equality on the Rise

In Germany, a paid maternity leave of six months with a capped earnings-related benefit was introduced in 1979 in order to protect working women's health and well-being. Fathers and non-employed mothers were excluded from the regulation. Paid parental leave was only introduced

later in 1986. The so-called *Erziehungsgeld* was available up to the second birthday of the child for all parents: mothers or fathers, employed or not employed. Similar to the Austrian case, the very low flat-rate benefit did not attract average fathers to take parental leave anyway; it rather called for a male breadwinner in order to support the mother on leave financially. The more so, because the parental leave period spans until the third birthday of the child, thus only the first two years of the leave are paid for. These regulations supported a traditional family model with a non-employed wife and stay-at-home mother, as well as a "modernized" breadwinner model involving a three-phase model of (1) female employment before giving birth, (2) parental leave and (3) (part-time) return to the labour market when the child started to attend the kindergarten. This was complemented by a very low level of childcare places for children aged less than three years and the introduction of the right to a (half-day) childcare place for every child older than three in the second half of the 1990s (Leitner 2010, 462f).

In 2007, the childcare benefit was reformed fundamentally (see also Auth and Martinik in this volume). The new benefit called *Elterngeld* (parental benefit) replaces 67 % of the parent's previous income (with an upper limit of €1800 and a minimum amount of €300). The benefit is still universally available to all parents, including also formerly non-employed parents who are entitled to the minimum benefit. The benefit span has been shortened from two years to one year and can be prolonged for another two months if these are taken by the other parent (generally the father). Furthermore, part-time employment up to 30 hours per week can be combined with part-time *Elterngeld*, and both parents are allowed to take part-time leave simultaneously. It can be expected that the incentive of a reasonable replacement rate and the non-transferable entitlement will increase fathers' take-up of parental leave. At the same time, mothers might react to the shortened paid leave period with an early re-entry into the labour market, although a long unpaid leave period until the third birthday of the child is still possible—especially for mothers with a high earning breadwinner. But the expansion of childcare places for children under three has also been speeded up: Since 2013, every child has the right to a childcare place from its first birthday. Thus, the new reconciliation policy shows a move towards the earner-carer model and at the same time actively enables parents to return to the labour market early on because of the expansion of institutional childcare.

The latest development in German reconciliation policy was the introduction of the *Elterngeld Plus* in 2015. The new regulation gives additional options to parents who combine part-time employment (up to a maximum of 30 hours per week) and part-time paid parental leave. Each month in part-time prolongs the duration of part-time paid parental leave: The benefit of part-time parental leave is reduced according to the income from part-time work (e.g. half of the benefit if working half-time), but for each month on part-time leave another month of part-time leave is granted. Thus, the span of the paid parental leave period can be expanded up to a maximum of 24 months (plus four months for the other parent). If both parents are on part-time leave simultaneously for a minimum of four months, another four months of paid part-time leave are granted to the couple.[4] The *Elterngeld Plus* clearly fosters shared parenthood and the employment of both parents in the frame of a part-time earner/part-time carer model. Whether parents will adapt to this model has to be seen.

3.3 Iceland: Parents as Workers

For a long time, Iceland was lagging behind the other Nordic countries with regard to parental leave regulations: The leave span of six months was very short, the flat-rate benefit attached was low and fathers were not entitled to parental leave at all. In the 1990s, society debated more and more about the unequal division of labour within the family and the resulting inequalities between men and women at the labour market. As a result, a major reform of parental leave took place in 2000 (Gíslason 2012). The new Icelandic parental leave regulation called *Faedingarorlof* is an entitlement for formerly employed parents and provides a wage replacement benefit that amounts to 80 % of former earnings up to a ceiling of approximately €6000 per month. After the economic crisis hit Iceland in 2008, the ceiling was reduced several times and now is set at €1945.[5] The parental leave comes in three parts: Three months of leave are reserved for the mother (one of the three months can be taken before birth), three months of leave are reserved for the father, and another three months of leave can be shared between the parents as a transferable right. In addition, each parent may take 13 weeks of unpaid leave until the child's eighth birthday (Einarsdóttir and Pétursdóttir 2008).

The Icelandic model therefore sets a strong incentive for the participation of fathers in childcare and for an early return of both parents into the labour market. Although childcare places are available for 53 %[6] of children

under three years, there are not enough places for all children older than nine months. Usually, preschool begins around the age of two years. This childcare gap after paid parental leave varies in duration depending on the place of residence. In many cases grandparents or private nannies fill the gap, in other cases parents (mostly mothers) reduce their working time or extend their (unpaid) leave (Gíslason 2012; Arnalds, Eydal, and Gíslason 2013).

In 2012, the parental leave was planned to be extended to 12 months (five months of non-transferable leave for each parent plus two months to share between the parents) but the implementation of the reform was delayed due to financial difficulties in the aftermath of the economic crisis (Arnalds, Eydal, and Gíslason 2013). The plans to extend parental leave and to raise the maximum benefit are presently re-proposed by parts of the parliament.[7]

4 …And Their Empirical Effects on Gender Equality in Family Life

To analyse the degree of gender equality in family life within the three countries, data on parental leave sharing and on the employment status of parents will be taken into consideration. In a gender-equal earner-carer model, we would expect that fathers as well as mothers engage in both childcare and employment.

4.1 Parental Engagement

Our empirical indicator for parental engagement is the take-up of parental leave by mothers and fathers. We would expect a high take-up rate of fathers in the case of non-transferable rights and high wage replacements. Comparing our three countries, we would expect Icelandic fathers to show the highest take-up rate, German fathers to show a considerable take-up rate and Austrian fathers' take-up would depend on the chosen variant of the parental benefit.

Until 2008, the empirical evidence for *Iceland* shows that about 90 % of all fathers take their non-transferable right to parental leave. The non-transferable leave is not taken to the full extent in 25 % of all cases but another 25 % of fathers on non-transferable leave claim a part of the transferable leave for them. Thus, the average leave span of fathers (including non-transferable and transferable leave periods) is three months. In comparison, 99 % of all mothers take their non-transferable right to parental

leave and 90 % of all mothers take transferable leave. On average, mothers spend six months on parental leave (Gíslason 2012). It has been shown for Iceland "[…] that financially better off fathers are more likely to use their right than others and they use more days […]" (Arnalds, Eydal, and Gíslason 2013, 328), whereas fathers who do not live with the mother are those most unlikely to take leave. It has also been shown that leave taking by fathers has sustainable effects: It "[…] increases the likelihood of fathers being involved in childcare […]" (Arnalds, Eydal, and Gíslason 2013, 335) and changes the division of care between parents in the long run. This finding is quite astonishing since three quarters of the parents are on leave together at the same time, 20 % even spend 11 or 12 weeks on leave together. Together with the fact that about 60 % of fathers divide their leave into several short spans, it can be argued that fathers are still the secondary caregiver. They pop out of work when it seems convenient, they "[…] design their leave around their paid employment […]" (Pétursdóttir and Einarsdóttir 2008, 88). This picture of the father as the mother's assistant seems to prevail and even become stronger during the last few years. When the ceiling for the maximum benefit had been lowered in 2010 and afterwards, the take-up rate of fathers continuously decreased to 78 % in 2014[8] and it is feared that fathers will spread parental leave even more than before.[9] This emphasizes the importance of high benefits when fathers take their decision about parental leave.

In *Germany*, the take-up rate of fathers has increased steadily since the introduction of the new parental leave regulation in 2007. Before the reform, less than 5 % of parents on paid parental leave were fathers. Shortly afterwards, 20 % of fathers with a child born in 2008 were on paid parental leave, and now even 32 % of fathers with a child born in 2013 were on paid parental leave; 79 % of these fathers on leave took up to two months of leave, the average duration of fathers' leave is 2.8 months. In comparison, 96 % of all mothers with a child born in 2013 were on paid parental leave. Most mothers on leave (92 %) took 10–12 months, on average mothers were 11.6 months on leave. Thus, the non-transferable right of two months paid leave for "the other partner" was mostly used by fathers. The average benefit for fathers amounted to €1143 per month, the average benefit for mothers was €601 per month (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015). This mirrors wage differences between the sexes before the birth of the child as well as higher rates of female non-employment before motherhood. Fathers with higher education and fathers with a female partner who has been employed before giving birth are more likely to take parental leave. Fathers who do

not take parental leave mostly do so because of financial reasons (48 %) or due to employment-related restrictions (35 %). Only 20 % argue that childcare is a mother's task (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2008). Thus, the financial needs of young families are not met by the 67 % replacement rate which is an important factor for fathers' decision not to take parental leave, but the situation at the workplace, that is the lack of a family-friendly working culture, also influences the (low) take-up rate of fathers. Only 8 % of fathers on leave divide their leave in two or more short spans. But 38 % of fathers on leave take leave simultaneously with the mother of the child (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2009). Thus, we can see a similarity to the Icelandic fathers and their role as secondary caregivers. Fathers with longer spans of parental leave share care work more equally with their female partners even after the leave ends and they rank their relationship to the child as more intense in the long run (Pfahl et al. 2014).

The *Austrian* case is the most complicated since it offers parents a variety of options. Recent data show that 35 % of parents take the longest version of parental leave (30 + 6 months), 27 % opt for the second longest version (20 + 4 months) and another 26 % opt for the shortest leave span (12 + 2 months) in combination with the wage replacement benefit. The 15 + 3 months as well as the 12 + 2 months in combination with the flat-rate benefit are less popular (see Table 6.2, third column).

With regard to the take-up rate of fathers, the shortest leave span (12 + 2) with replacement rate as well as with flat-rate benefit and the second shortest version (15 + 3) seem to hold the most attractive options (see Table 6.2, fourth column). In comparison to the take-up rate of German fathers, Austrian fathers lag behind with an overall take-up rate of only 18 % in the year 2015. Within the variant most similar to the German parental leave model (12 + 2, 80 % wage replacement), Austrian fathers show only a marginally lower take-up rate than German fathers. The non-transferable benefit span varies between the different versions of parental leave and so does the average length of the leave span that is taken by fathers (see Table 6.2, last column). It is noteworthy that on average fathers on leave take longer leave spans than their non-transferable rights would suggest. Fathers' reasons for not taking parental leave are mostly job related, but also due to financial issues and—traditional role models also hinder more gender equality in childcare (Rille-Pfeiffer and Kapella 2012, 41). All in all, also Austrian fathers can be labelled as secondary caregivers.

Table 6.2 The leave choices of Austrian parents

	December 2015[c]		*March 2015*[d]	*May 2014*[e]	
	Number of parents during first year of benefit	*%*	*Fathers on leave as a percentage of all fathers*	*Mothers on leave as a percentage of all mothers*	*Duration of fathers' leave in days*
30 + 6 months	21.201	35 %	11 %[a]	No data	No data
20 + 4 months	16.313	27 %	18 %[b]	97 %	174
15 + 3 months	3.636	6 %	27 %	97 %	125
12 + 2 months flat-rate	3.458	6 %	28 %	84 %	110
12 + 2 months replacement rate	15.922	26 %	29 %	96 %	83
Total	60.530	100 %	18 %	No data	No data

[a]Reading advice: Of all parents who chose the 30 + 6 variant, 11 % of fathers took part of the leave

[b]Of all parents who chose the 20 + 4 variant, 18 % of fathers and 97 % of mothers took part of the leave

[c]*Source*: Monatsstatistik zum Kinderbetreuungsgeld (December 2015), https://www.bmfj.gv.at/familie/finanzielle-unterstuetzungen/kinderbetreuungsgeld/monatsstatistik.html, 28.01.2016

[d]*Source*: Auswertung zur Väterbeteiligung beim Kinderbetreuungsgeld (March 2015), https://www.bmfj.gv.at/familie/finanzielle-unterstuetzungen/kinderbetreuungsgeld/statistik-vaeterbeteiligung--auswertung.html, 28.01.2016

[e]*Source*: Ministry of Family and Youth (May 2014), http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/AB/AB_01151/imfname_352830.pdf, 29.01.2016

4.2 Employment of Parents

Our empirical indicator for gender equality in employment is the employment rate of mothers and fathers. The more similar their employment rates in terms of overall numbers and weekly working time, the more egalitarian is their participation in the labour market.[10] Short leave spans might give an incentive for both parents to re-enter the labour market quickly, but the provision of childcare will be a crucial enabling factor. Thus, we will expect again Iceland to be most egalitarian in terms of labour market participation; Germany and Austria hold contradictory incentives for the employment of mothers: they offer short *and* long benefit spans.

In Iceland, the employment rate of women is among the highest in the OECD: 80 % of women and 84 % of men are in employment.[11] Unfortunately, there are no data available on the employment rate of Icelandic parents. A study has shown that after the reform of parental

leave in 2000, mothers returned earlier into the labour market than before and their weekly working hours were the same before and after parental leave (Gíslason 2012). Nevertheless, it has also been shown that the childcare gap after paid parental leave and before the beginning of preschool is mostly filled up by women at the cost of their (full) labour market participation.

In Germany, the employment rate of mothers has risen considerably since the introduction of the *Elterngeld*, especially among mothers with children between one and three years. Whereas in 2006 only 33 % of mothers with a child between one and two years were employed, the percentage rose to 41 % in 2012. And while 42 % of mothers with a child between two and three years were employed in 2006, the percentage climbed to 54 % in 2012. Thus, the new paid parental leave regulation seems to support the early re-entry into the labour market for mothers. Although the increase is most of all an increase of mothers' part-time work (15 to 32 hours per week), whereas a stable 10 % work less than 15 hours per week and only 11–15 % work full-time. However, it is also interesting to see that the employment rate of mothers with a child under one year has decreased from 17 % in 2006 to 10 % in 2012 (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2014). This shows that the new earnings-related benefit enables more mothers to stay at home during the first year of the child than the old flat-rate benefit. When we consider fathers' employment, it seems to be steadily between 82 and 85 % independent from the age of the child, and only 5.6 % of fathers work part-time (Keller and Haustein 2014). Data show that in families with a child less than three years, both of the parents work only in 33 % of all cases. In 59 % of these families, only one parent (mostly the father) is employed; 60 % of families with young children between one and three years wish that both parents share employment and childcare equally, but only 14 % can live their dream of an earner-carer model at the moment. First data for the new *Elterngeld Plus,* which strongly supports the earner-carer model, show that 14 % of all parents with a child born after 1st July, 2015, have already taken advantage of the new *Elterngeld Plus.*[12] Often mothers would like to re-enter the labour market earlier but are hindered by bad surrounding conditions: the lack of adequate childcare, the lack of flexible working conditions and the lack of shared parental responsibility are outstanding factors in this regard (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2014, see also Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2012).

In Austria, the new regulation allows parents on leave marginal employment up to an income of €16,220 per year without benefit reduction. About 25 % of mothers on leave use this possibility to work in minor jobs and thus stay attached to the labour market. 18 % of mothers with a child younger than one year are employed (only 7 % full-time); the employment rate rises to 31 % (7 % full-time) of mothers with a child between one and two years and to 58 % (9 % full-time) of mothers with a child between two and three years (Fuchs and Marik-Lebeck 2014). The *Kinderbetreuungsgeld* has ambivalent effects on mothers' employment: It intensifies the mother's general emphasis on employment *or* on childcare. Those mothers with high affinity to the labour market try to stay close to the labour market early on although on a very limited scale. Those mothers with high affinity to childcare realign their job perspective in order to facilitate the reconciliation of employment and care (Leitner 2013, 76ff). On the contrary, 92 % of fathers with a child younger than one year are employed (only 7 % part-time); this is the same for fathers with a child between one and two years and rises to 93 % (8 % part-time) for fathers with a child between two and three years. Thus, the male breadwinner model and its modernized one-and-a-half earner model still dominate Austrian family life (Fuchs and Marik-Lebeck 2014).

5 Advantages and Shortfalls Within Different Models of Reconciliation

The analysis has shown that fathers' involvement in paid parental leave is facilitated by high-paid non-transferable rights. Nevertheless, the effects differ between countries: Whereas the lowering of the income ceiling in Iceland still produces a fatherly take-up rate of 78 %, comparable benefit levels in Germany and Austria only evoke 32 % and 28 % take-up of fathers. In all three countries, even under favourable leave conditions, most fathers take only short spans of leave and do not become primary caretakers. These facts point out that leave policy is only one way to encourage equal sharing of childcare. Family-friendly workplaces and the cultural turn from traditional to egalitarian gender roles are equally important factors; all the same when we look at mothers' employment. The German and the Austrian cases still rely strongly on the (modernized) breadwinner model and the employment of mothers with young children is—if at all—mostly part-time or marginal hours. But, the expansion of childcare places also led to a rise of mothers' employment. On the other hand, the lack of

childcare places hinders mothers' employment, as has also been shown in the case of Iceland. Thus, we can see an influence of the institutional framework: It enables or hinders gender equality. But, we can also reason that institutional change does not automatically mean cultural change. It takes more than institutional regulations to overcome the traditional gender division of labour.

Iceland scores best with regard to gender equality, even since the benefit level for parental leave has been reduced. But this model of supported de-familialism gives parents only very short time spans for exclusive childcare at home. The focus is on the early re-entry of parents into the labour market, even though the enabling structure of childcare for children younger than two years is lacking.

Germany and Austria started from the explicit familialism with paid parental leave that did not hold incentives for fathers and took mothers out of the labour market for quite long time spans. The reforms during the last decade changed not only the regulations for paid parental leave, but also expanded the provision of public childcare. The conditions for fathers' take-up of parental leave have improved and led to rising take-up rates although two thirds of fathers in Germany and 80 % of Austrian fathers are still not taking any leave at all. Furthermore, the employment of mothers has been stimulated by shorter leave spans as well as by better childcare provision. Whereas the German model sets stronger incentives for an early re-entry of women into the labour market, the Austrian model gives more options for mothers to take longer leave spans and to take up marginal employment. The realignment of reconciliation policy in Germany and Austria towards optional familialism thus can be classified as a step towards more gender equality in family life. But at the same time, both countries still have shortfalls with regard to childcare provision and the Austrian childcare benefit is still supporting a (modified) breadwinner model.

Notes

1. Javornik sharpens her analysis of Slovenia and Lithuania as follows: "Namely, these two states first explicitly invest in familialism, whereby they also promote active fatherhood. Then, they invest in de-familialism, with the crossover point between the two types located at the child's first birthday. Such a policy combination suggests that countries pragmatically shift social investment from familial childcare to public childcare in order to facilitate women's continuous employment" (Javornik 2014, 253).

2. The analysis is restricted to parental leave regulations and neglects flexible working time regulations, which are also important for the reconciliation of work and childcare.
3. https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/8/Seite.080601.html, 20.01.2016.
4. http://www.familien-wegweiser.de/wegweiser/stichwortverzeichnis,did=211804.html, 20.01.2016.
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