

Gender equality incentives within the childbirth-related leave arrangements in Slovenia and their consequences

Slovenia is an interesting, though less known case of childbirth-related leave arrangements that include the maternity, paternity and parental (childcare) leave and earnings compensation. The fathers' entitlement to parental leave was enacted as early as 1974, that is, in the same year as in Sweden. Since 1986 there is a whole year of fully compensated maternity and parental leave, and since 2003 there are also three more months of paternity leave (with full earnings compensation during 15 days). Nevertheless, the fathers have not been (very) eager to make use of their entitlements or to take many days of leave, which is particularly true for the parental leave. The share of fathers who took some of the parental leave stood at about 1% for two decades and has increased to 2% in the 2000s. In 2008, 5.6% of fathers took a part of parental leave, as compared to only 0.6% in 1999. A shift was registered in 2003 and is attributed to a higher awareness of the fathers' entitlements following the introduction of the paternity leave. Sixty-three per cent of fathers took up to 15 days of fully compensated paternity leave in 2003 (when it was introduced), and some two-thirds in 2005. About three-quarters of fathers took up to 15 days paternity leave in 2006-2008, but only 15% of leave takers took more than 15 days in 2008.

The paper makes use of two databases. The first one is the Slovenian database of fathers who were the parental- and/or paternity leave beneficiaries from December 2005 to April 2009. This database contains information about the number of days of parental and paternity leaves taken by the fathers, modes of use of these leaves (as a continuous leave or by days), the fathers' and the mothers' age, the number of children, the fathers' employment characteristics, family income, and some other details. We can distinguish between three different types of paternity/parental leave taken by fathers: (1) up to 15 days of paternity leave with 100% earnings compensation, (2) up to 75 days of paternity leave without earnings compensation but with social security contributions (based on the minimum and not actual wage) paid, and (3) up to 260 days of parental leave with 100% earnings compensation. Using this database, we have found out who were the men who took (paid and non-paid) paternity leave and (paid) parental leave. The impact of various variables (like the father's age, the number of children, father's employment characteristics, income, etc.) is estimated. On the basis of these results, a rough evaluation of the effectiveness of the Slovenian leave policy from the gender equality perspective is provided.

Another database was obtained by the survey conducted in Slovenia in June 2010. A representative sample of 1,000 persons aged 20-49 years was surveyed. Some of the questions from the 2000 International Population Policy and Attitudes Survey (IPPAS) were repeated and some new added. The questions relevant for our analysis include those on the fathers' take-up of parental- and paternity leave in the observed period and the reasons for not having taken more days. Other questions enable us to identify: (a) the changes in the paternity/parental leave arrangement that would stimulate fathers to take

(more days of) the leave; (b) an impact of the fathers' take-up of leave on the women's decision making regarding having a(nother) child; and (c) the arrangement(s) involving fathers that would motivate people to have a(nother) child or to have it earlier. The repetition of some questions enables the identification of changes in opinions/attitudes in the period 2000-2010.

In order to obtain answers to our research questions, descriptive statistical analyses and multivariate analyses were performed.

The purpose of the paper is to provide policy makers with empirical evidence as the basis for shaping and introduction of appropriate incentives in the childbirth-related leave arrangements. The aim is to increase the fathers' take-up of the leave and consequently promote equal opportunities of both parents on the labour market through a better/easier balancing of professional work and motherhood.