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What is the direction of childcare policy in Visegrad countries?

(Advanced draft)

Abstract

This paper concerns childcare policy in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, its latest developments and especially its future prospects. Thus this paper focuses on electoral programmes of the Czech, Slovak and Hungarian parliamentary parties for the elections planned in 2010. The proposed measures in the childcare policy are being analysed using two viewpoints – policy motives and division of care.

Latest developments:

The Czech Republic

This part of the paper will introduce briefly the changes that have been made in the Czech family policy over the last 20 years. It will focus on the childcare measures and the changes in the parental leave provision that might have impact on the chosen type of care. First, we introduce the changes in the system of leaves and benefits, and then we focus on the institutional childcare¹.

Czech maternity leave accompanied by the compensation of income in the form of an allowance in pregnancy and motherhood has not changed significantly and is still provided to mothers for 28 weeks (37 weeks in case of multiple delivery or for a single mother). The compensation during the nineties was at a level of 90% of the previous income and has decreased to 69% in line with changes in the social insurance system (Kotýnková, Kuchařová, Průša, 2003). This allowance is only designated for mothers, is not means tested and is limited by a given ceiling.

Parental leave is dedicated to either the mother or father of a child until the age of 4. Since the beginning of the nineties fathers could provide full day care to their children, but only since 2001 have they the right to the financial compensation. The level of the compensation has changed several times, first as an amount given by the subsistence level time coefficient 1,1 and later 1,54. In January 2008 a multi-speed parental leave was introduced. The absolute amount is given for the chosen length of leave² (No. 117/1995 Col., as amended). The limits of income parallel to the parental leave were cancelled and parents are not restricted in their incomes since they ensure the day childcare by an adult person. Children under the age of 3 may not go to nurseries for more than 5 days a month and children older than 3 may not spend more than 4 hours a day in kindergartens in order for the parent to still have the right to the benefit. Since the multi-speed system has become effective, parents have the right to choose how long they stay at home with their children. In reality the immense shortage of nurseries cause that the shortest alternative (2-year long) can hardly be

¹ Here we refer to the chapter hereinbefore written by Plasová that shows more in detail the childcare measures.

² The amount is 11.400 CZK for the 2-year duration, 7.600 CZK for the 3-year duration and 3.800 CZK for the 4-year duration (No. 117/1995 Col., as amended).

taken up. The system of leaves and compensations is currently not interconnected to the system of institutional childcare.

Nurseries that provided care for children from the ages 0 to 3 started to be shut down in the nineties. In 1990 there were 1,043 nurseries with 39,829 places that went to 1,587 places within 47 nurseries in 2007 (Kuchařová a kol., 2009). Such a sharp fall in the number of nurseries meant that from 13,2% of children in 1989 (Saxongerg, Sirovátka, 2006) it diminished to 1% of children under 3 placed in nurseries in 1997 (den Dulk, Peper, Doorne-Huiskes, 2005). Even a certain number places in nurseries may sometimes be occupied by a larger number of children as they are used as “five-days-a-month” day care service (ÚZIS ČR, 2008). Children under 3 that have no access to nurseries may be taken care of in kindergartens. However, this is quite rare as the capacities of kindergartens are also short (Kuchařová, 2006).

Most of the children in nurseries are from 2 to 3 years old (54%), 23% of children are older than 3 and 22% of children in nurseries are between the ages 1 and 2. Younger children are almost not present in nurseries (1%) (Kuchařová a kol., 2009). Among the criteria for children to be taken to day care in nurseries are that at least one parent works (62%) and that the family has a permanent address within the locality (57%) (Kuchařová a kol., 2009). This shows that the highest demand for care is created by parents of 2 year old children that possibly may choose to take up the shortest alternative of parental leave. Apart from nurseries there is also formally a possibility to provide care for children younger than 3 years of age as an entrepreneurial activity. As Plasová describes in her paper hereinbefore the conditions to establish a private nursery are very complex and at the same time difficult to meet, so this would clearly have an impact on the price of such services.

For children from 3 to 6 (potentially 7 depending at what age the child starts the obligatory school attendance) the day care is provided in kindergartens. The number of kindergartens diminished from 7,335 kindergartens in school year 1990/91 to 4,808 kindergartens in 2007/08 (ČSÚ, 2008). The decrease was partially caused by the decentralisation of responsibility for kindergartens from national level to regional and local levels. Nowadays around 98% of the kindergartens are run by municipalities, the rest by regions and churches and some are private. The number of children from the ages 3 to 6 in kindergartens relatively increased. In 1989 78,9% of children from the ages 3 to 6 were placed in kindergartens where in 1999 it was already 85% and in 2002 it went up to 94,7% children in the mentioned age group (Saxonberg, Sirovátka, 2006; den Dulk, Peper, Doorne-Huiskes, 2005). The “four-hours-a-day“ attendance is not preferred by the kindergartens because of financial reasons, however teachers find a slow adaptation of children in this model quite positive (Kuchařová a kol., 2009). As long as the capacity of kindergartens is not sufficient, there exists a whole set of criteria that parents usually have to fulfil to have the right to place their children in kindergartens. It has been shown that the most important ones are permanent address within the city/town or city district where the kindergarten is based, age of child and both parents in paid work (Kuchařová a kol., 2009).

Kindergartens are more popular among people than nurseries. The preference to place children in nurseries is very low whereas it increases when it concerns a child above 3 years of age to be placed in a kindergarten (Sirovátka, Bartáková, 2008). Parents of children above 4, prefer day care outside family in 65-75%. Families claim that they prefer financial help to institutional day care for children under 3 but preferences for father leave are quite low (Sirovátka, Bartáková, 2008). This shows the strength of gender discourse that women should be the caregivers. Table no. 1 also shows that Czech men ensure care for their children by their partners whereas Czech women count on their relatives or on institutional care. Least they rely on care for their children provided by their partners.

Table 1 **Main type of care used by the employed persons between 20 and 49 years old for own/spouse's children up to 14 while working, 2005**

<i>Type of care</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total</i>
Institutional childcare (including nanny)	136,9	101,5	238,4
Partner living in the same household	97,1	499,6	596,7
Relatives/ neighbours/ friends	205,2	110,9	316,1
No type of childcare used	131,4	86,3	217,6

Source: Eurostat, 2009

The last elected government had prepared and in 2009 proposed a great amendment to the laws and regulations concerning childcare and family policy – so called “Pro-family package”. It contains several proposals of which some are related to the childcare and some to the leaves and allowances. It proposes to facilitate the establishing of a system of mutual parental assistance and mini-kindergartens in companies. The other measure enables that the companies with mini-kindergartens would be tax-preferred. The package counts on implementing the paternity leave and wants to change the financing of foster care (Soubor prarodinných opatření - Prarodinný balíček, 2009).

Mutual parental assistance and mini-kindergartens in companies is especially of interest for this paper. The first of these measures means that parents who want to get back to work and do not have an opportunity to place their child/children in institutional care would use the service of other caring parents who care for his/her child under 7 years of age. Such a “nanny from the neighbourhood” – the provider of the service – would need to be registered and would need to fulfil conditions given by this law (space, food, hygiene). The number of children cannot exceed 4 including own caregivers child/children. The caregiver can not be paid more than 5.000 CZK per child per month and thus the earnings would not exceed 15.000 CZK per month. Such income is tax-free. This measure has been criticized because the quality of provided care is hard to assess and the conditions are much vaguer than those for kindergartens or private kindergartens. The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs argued however that opening new state institutions of care to cover the demand by strong cohorts would be too costly and once the baby boom is over they would need to be closed again. According to Nečas (2008) the mutual parental assistance would help to satisfy this increased demand for places in kindergartens and would help those who have no access to institutional care because of geographic insufficient coverage.

The mini-kindergartens can be run by employers for children of their employees, non-governmental organisations and public regional and local bodies. Such service provided to parents should be not-for-profit and it should not be provided for more than 4 children at the same time. The family character of this service should be kept. It is targeted at children from the ages 6 months to 7 years and it is an alternative to the institutional care provided by the state. The provision of the service is tax-free for the providers and this should reinforce companies to offer this kind of service to their employees.

Slovakia:

Maternity leave: Similarly as in the Czech Republic the maternity leave used to be provided for period of 28 weeks for mothers and 37 weeks for lone mothers or mothers of twins. Compensation was at the value of 90% of the previous income, which was reduced to 55% in 2003. In 2010 the length of maternity leave was increased to 34 weeks. Lone mothers are eligible for 37 weeks and for mothers of twins it lasts for 43 weeks. From 2011 a gradual increase in the compensation of maternity leaves is observable. In 2011 it meant 60%, in 2012 65% of previous wage. Access of maternity allowance requires 270 days of insurance in the last 2 years before the birth.

Parental leave – parental allowance: parents (both mothers and fathers) are eligible for parental leave until the child's 3rd birthday or until the 6th birthday of a disabled child. Labour market activities of the recipient parent used to be limited in hours and in amount of salary. Recently the legislation allows parents to get employed, however the child cannot attend public childcare facilities. In 2011 the parental leave system has been amended. According to the new system parental leave can be interrupted. Upon an agreement with the employer the parents are allowed to utilize the 3 year long parental leave until the age of 5 years of the child. In case of disabled child it is utilizable until the age of 8 years. The amount of parental allowance has changed several times. Recently it means 199,60 EUR per month, which is increased by 25% in case of multiple delivery.

Childcare allowance: Childcare allowance was introduced in 2008 for families, in which children under 3 attend childcare facilities and the caregiver parent works or studies. The allowance is intended to cover the expenses of childcare services. Therefore its amount depends on the type of childcare received. In case care is ensured by a facility, legal or physical person (entrepreneur) the amount reaches 230 EUR per month recently. In case care is performed by a physical person the compensation is 41,10 EUR per month.

Childcare services: The issue of childcare services under 3 years is a highly neglected. Although during the socialism early childhood care was a common service, after the fall of the regime it almost ceased to exist. It used to belong under the competence of the Ministry of Health. Nowadays there is no legislation, no standards in force concerning daycare services under 3 and there is no central authority responsible for it (Bodnárová). Establishment and maintenance of childcare services lies wholly in the competence of municipalities. There are no central statistics, and only unofficial, probably incomplete register is available. According to the Transmonee data in 2009/2010 only 2.8% of children under 3 used some kind of childcare facility. Most of the facilities function as nurseries – public or private. In contrast to nurseries kindergartens –falling under the field of education – enjoy higher political support. Kindergartens are open for children from the age of 3 to 6. However exceptionally children at the age of 2 can be admitted as well. From the age of 5 attendance is compulsory for all. Altogether 71,7% of the children at the specified age use these services. So called child centres or family centres registered as non-profit organisations function as a place, where mothers and their children gather and organize common activities, workshops, etc.

Hungary:

Maternity leave: The length of maternity development remained 24 weeks in Hungary. Maternity allowance corresponds to the 70% of the previous income. The length of the required insurance has been raised from 180 to 365 days in the last 2 year period before the birth.

Parental leave: The parental leave system consists of three types of allowances – an insurance-based, a flat-rate benefit and an additional allowance for parents of 3 and more children for a longer period of time. The system has been several times amended during the past two decades. Variations between insurance-based and flat-rate benefits as well as the length of the benefits were the main concerns of changes.

The length of insurance-based benefit (GYED) has been reduced from 3 to 2 years in 2009. Eligible are both mothers and fathers. The caregiver is not allowed to get employed while being on the benefit. Its amount is 70% of the previous income, however there is an upper limit determined at the 70% of the double of the minimum wage, i.e. recently 137 200 HUF (465 EUR).

Although the flat-rate benefit was also decreased to 2 years period in 2009, it has been quickly reversed and 3 years long benefit has been reintroduced by the Orbán Government in 2011. In case of disabled child it is 10 years. Similar tendencies are observable in regard the employment possibilities of the allowance recipient parent. Firstly parents got entitled to full-time employment from the age of 1 of the child. Recently, if the child reached the age of 1 year, parents are entitled to work full-time only in case of telework or to engage in part-time job limited to 30 hours per week. The amount of the benefit varies from time to time. Recently it is 28 500 HUF (96 EUR).

The third type of parental allowance is the so called GYET, for which parents raising 3 or more children are eligible from the age of 3 to 8 of the youngest child. The amount of the GYET is the same as the GYES.

Childcare services: Although the network of childcare facilities was quite well-developed during socialism, the 1990s brought serious decline in the number of facilities and number of users. In year 2010/2011 12.6% of children under the age of three years attended such facilities. Besides nurseries so called family day-care centres³ as well as unified kindergarten nurseries provide these services. Most of them are public, however for-profit and non-profit sector also got involved. Access to childcare services is very limited. The facilities lack capacities. As the children of employed parents are advantaged during the admission, it is rather a privilege of the better-off families.

³ The services is provided by one adult taking care of max. 5 children from the age of 20 months to 14 years usually at his/her home. By the presence of one more assistant 2 more children can be admitted. Family day-care service can be run by a non-profit organization or it can operate as an enterprise. According to the latest regulations the person caring of the children has to attend a course preparing her/him for the job. The number of children attending family day-care services is dynamically rising – in 2005 it was 706, while in 2008 their number was around 1400, in 2010 it reached 3920.

What childcare policy measures do parliamentary parties propose in their electoral programmes for elections in 2010?

This analysis will focus only on childcare policy measures, such as the above mentioned nurseries and kindergartens and other measures that concern care about children at pre-school age. For this analysis the proposals in electoral programmes of parliamentary parties will be taken into account.

First a theoretic framework will be introduced followed by clarification of method for analysis and analysis itself.

Theoretic framework

For analysis of proposals by political parties we choose to centre our attention at:

- A) policy motives to implement certain types of care;
- B) a division of care that certain types of care contributes to.

There are various policy motives that may lead to the implementation of public childcare systems. Scheiwe and Willekens (2008) distinguish two groups of motives for public childcare – the idea that children at pre-school age need public education and the idea of facilitating work-care reconciliation (as shown in Table 2). The idea that small children need education might be based on various notions. One is *child-centred* assuming that for a good development a child needs to be in the company of other children and an adult (or adults) from outside family. The other concept is *state- or society-centred* and considers the public education for small children as a chance to equalize the opportunities among these children.

Table 2 **Simplified overview of the institutional dimensions affected by the different goal-setting of public childcare system**

Institutional Dimension	Educational Model	Work-care Reconciliation Model
Approach	Universal	Targeted
Entitled person(s)	Children	Parent/ child with special needs
Pedagogic concept	Pedagogic objectives (education)	Mainly care
Size and organization of groups	Relatively large groups (similar to school classes)	Smaller groups
Fees	No school fees	Both (state and parental contribution)

Source: Scheiwe a Willekens (2008)

The table shows how educational and work-care reconciliation models differ and it definitely mirrors in the design of care. The educational model can be more associated with public nurseries and kindergartens whereas the work-care reconciliation model can be more connected to mini-nurseries, mini-kindergartens and private nannies.

When it comes to a division of care, we may identify actors that play roles in childcare provision. Traditionally, the key actors are mothers. This is connected to the strong male “breadwinner” tradition where men were breadwinners and women caregivers. The feminists have criticized the disadvantages connected to not fully commodified labour of female caregivers (Gornick, Meyers, 2003). Rubery, Smith and Fagan (1999) distinguish among various intensities of the male breadwinner model – strong, modified and weak. In the strong model men are the breadwinners and women and children are dependent on him. Social benefits and services are connected to the work of a man and support childcare in families. The weak male breadwinner model is typical for its individual approach in the benefit system

and the state facilitates the part-time work. The modified model is a mixture of measures from both of the above mentioned models. Sainsbury (2001) proposes a division to two models – male breadwinner (in any intensity) and individual. This is embedded in the welfare system and in the individual model all citizens are treated the same and have a right to benefits depending on their own activity and situation. Korpi (2000) proposes a distinction among models of general family support, the dual-earner model and the market-oriented model. In the first one, mothers are the key caregivers, in the second one, both parents and the state share the childcare, and in the third one, both parents and the marketized carer divide the childcare. Although some European societies that are individualist may seem to provide good conditions for equal childcare division among parents, the measures supporting the care in families (of whatever length) are still used and taken up mostly by women. That is why a concept of “universal caregiver” based on the ideas of gender deconstruction emerged. It simply suggests that current life patterns and strategies of women in the field of work-care reconciliation should become a norm for everyone (Borchorst, Siim, 2002).

Table 3 **Division of work in the Czech households according to sex (%)**

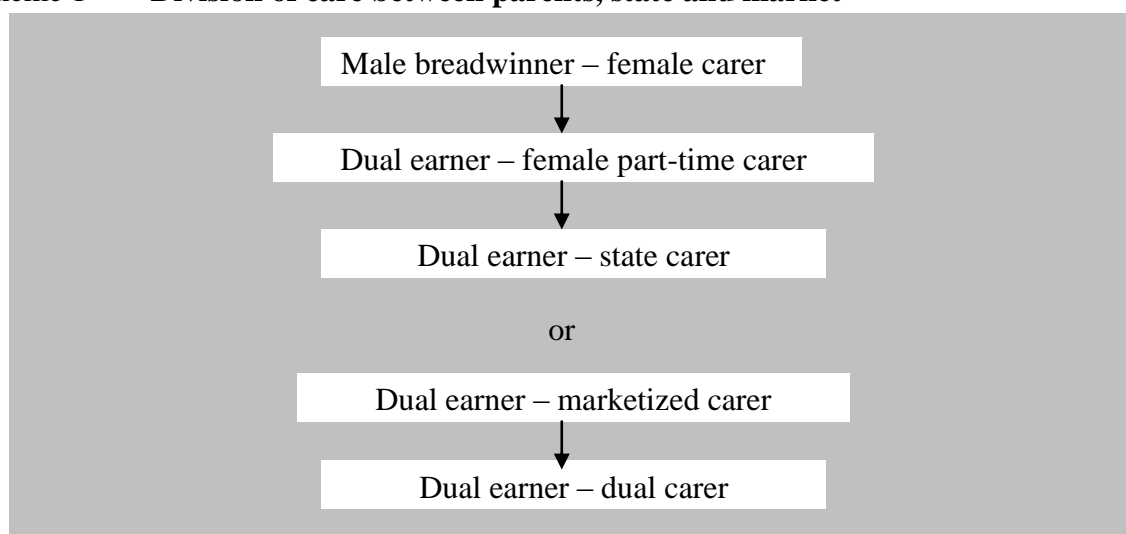
Activity	1998	2000	1998	2000	1998	2000
	Man		Both equally		Woman	
Cooking	4	3	10	10	86	87
Shopping	21	5	38	27	41	68
Housework	1	1	21	25	78	74
Childcare	0	0	27	28	45	50
Earning money	48	51	46	45	5	4

Source: Kalnická (2000)

Such suggestion is however far from being feasible in the Czech context. As shown in Table 3 women bear most of the housework and childcare obligations and work in a paid job at the same time.

The care providers thus might be mother, father, state institutions, and organisations and individuals on the market or not-for-profit sector or a combination of all these providers. Crompton mentions (1999) these key actors in childcare when developing a scheme of the way from traditional to the “ideal”⁴ division of care.

Scheme 1 **Division of care between parents, state and market**



Source: Rosemary Crompton (1999)

⁴ Dual earner – dual carer may seem to be an ideal model of division of care and unpaid labour for feminist scholars, however it does not have to be ideal division for the Czech families.

We will use this description of process simply as a composition of models of the care division. It proposes a quite complex overview of models, however for our analysis we will disregard the process of change from one model to another.

Thus our analysis will show if the proposed measures are based on educational or work-care reconciliation models. At the same time the proposed measure will be assessed for the viewpoint of care division among the key childcare providers.

Method

This analysis will focus on the policy motives for the implementation of childcare measures. It will apply the two-model approach defined by Scheiwe and Willekens (2008) and the attention will be paid to ideology behind any proposed measure. Thus all proposals will from this point of view be divided into educational centred and work-care reconciliation centred.

The analysis also shows divisions of care among defined key actors in childcare that would be supported by various proposed measures. For such analysis the composition of models developed by Crompton (1999) will be used.

The method used in this paper is analysis of documents. This analysis is carried out using the electoral programmes of parliamentary parties for the elections in 2010. The clear proposals as well as clear refusals of any childcare measure are taken into account and analysed. However, this paper is not using a critical discourse approach. It does not match ideological objectives and aims with the language and expressions used in the text. Currently, in the Czech Republic it concerns 6 political parties of which 5 won their mandate in the last parliamentary elections and 1 was created meanwhile and is composed of members of the Chamber of Deputies. Namely, the programmes of ODS (Neo-liberals), ČSSD (Social Democrats), KSČM (Communists), KDU-ČSL (Christians Democrats), SZ (Green Party) and TOP09 (Conservatives) are taken into account. In Slovakia 7 political parties are included – SDKÚ, KDH, Smer, SNS, MKP-SMK, Most-Híd, SaS. In Hungary the Fidesz-KDNP coalition, the MSZP, LMP and Jobbik political parties are analysed.

For the analysis a two-dimensional framework based on the above mentioned approaches was created and the childcare measures were distributed in the framework according to the characteristics of the used categories (see Table 4). The measures placed in Table 4 comprise of:

- *childcare measures* – private/public nurseries, kindergartens, mini-nurseries, mini-kindergartens, private caregivers (“nannies”), mutual parental assistance, public family care, part-time attendance in nursery or kindergarten, mother and family centres;
- *leaves* that have a clear impact on the division of care – long-term leaves, paternity leave;
- *advantages and special conditions* that have a clear impact on the division of care – support for part-time jobs for caring mothers, support for part-job for caring parents, tax deductions of costs on private caregiver, allowance for childcare outside home.

Table 4 **Distribution of childcare measures using the two-dimensional model**

	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Educational Model		part-time jobs for caring mothers part-time attendance in nursery or kindergarten mother and family centres	private nurseries private kindergartens mother and family centres (providing childcare)	nurseries kindergartens public family care	
Work-care Reconciliation Model	long-term leaves	part-time jobs for caring mothers private caregivers (“nannies”) tax deductions of costs on private caregiver allowance for childcare outside home	mutual parental assistance private mininurseries private minikindergartens private caregivers (“nannies”) tax deductions of costs on private caregiver allowance for working parents for childcare outside home	Mini-nurseries Mini-kindergartens	paternal leave part-time jobs for caring parents quota for sharing care

Source: own distribution

The analysis itself is done by rating the programmes giving them + or – for every measure proposal or refusal mentioned in the programme. Only the above defined measures are rated in the analysis and it fully disregards other measures connected to family policy, such as allowances and benefits not connected to full day care.

Analysis

The Czech Republic

The political programmes use different discourses to speak about family policy, gender and childcare. The gender-equality discourse as an outcome of European Union efforts (e. g. A Roadmap towards equality) is used quite frequently in the programmes of the Neo-liberals, the Green Party and the Social Democrats. The programme of Christian democrats is family-centred and the communist programme likewise.

The starting point of the Czech Republic is not neutral. As described earlier it is mainly kindergartens that provide institutional day care for children although not in sufficient extent. They were established based on ideas coherent with the educational model. Thus those parties that speak only about maintenance of the current system are somehow supporting measures within the educational model. However, most of the analysed electoral programmes in their proposals go beyond the simple maintenance of these institutions.

In regard to the policy motives for implementing childcare measures the programmes differ quite extensively in the number and variety of proposed measures. As shown in Table 5 Conservatives mention only one measure connected to the childcare whereas the Green Party comes up with a wide range of measures. The Conservative Party proposes only tax deductions on provable expenses on private childcare and housework⁵ (TOP 09, 2009). The Neo-liberals propose many various measures but at the same time claim that the existing kindergartens should remain maintained and should still serve as a main pillar of pre-school education. Among the work-care reconciliation measures there is the mutual parental assistance, mini-kindergartens and allowances for working parents for childcare outside home⁶ (ODS, 2009). The Christian Democrats are in line with the Neo-liberals concerning the mutual parental assistance and private mini-kindergartens. These two measures were proposed in the pro-family package elaborated by the coalition composed of the Neo-liberals, the Christian democrats and the Green Party. They also proposed to establish mother and family centres. These three parties are rather focussed on the work-care reconciliation but keeping the existing kindergartens based on the educational motives (KDU-ČSL, 2009).

Table 5 **Rating of electoral programmes regarding the policy motives in the childcare**

Political Party	Educational Model	Work-care Reconciliation Model
Conservative	0	+
Neo-liberals	+	+++
Christian Democrats	+	++
Green Party	++++	+++
Social Democrats	+++	0
Communists	++	0

Source: own rating

⁵ The ceiling for acceptable provable costs is proposed at a level of minimum wage. This measure should be effective until 10 years of age of the child.

⁶ This measure is targeted at the working parents that do not take up parental leave and have no access to public childcare (e. g. feeble geographical coverage). The condition to have rights to this allowance is 40% co-financing by parents. The ceiling is at a level of 2.000 CZK per month and the allowance can be given only until the child is 6 years old.

The Green Party is quite outstanding among all because of the wideness of the range of measures. They want to reinforce work-care reconciliation and at the same time they want to extend the public care based on the notion of flexibility that is central in their programme (SZ, 2009). Apart from the support to already established nurseries and kindergartens they want to create more mother and family centres and private kindergartens. Also mini-nurseries and mini-kindergartens should be created and conditions for private caregivers (“nannies”) should be simplified. Otherwise all the services should be flexible and part-time attendance in nurseries and kindergartens is to be facilitated. The Social Democrats offer the support to the nurseries and kindergartens as well as strengthening the system of leisure activities for children in public organisations (such as schools) (ČSSD, 2010). Although they mention that companies should be more family-friendly, the programme does not contain any policies that could lead to promoting a family-friendly approach. Communists do not propose any new measures but want to support the existing ones (KSČM, 2009). The system of nurseries and kindergartens should be strengthened. Quite surprisingly next to the investments into the public care they propose the parental allowance of 3-year duration at a level of 14.000 CZK per month which may lead to the outflow of children from public day care.

The parties from the right wing of the political spectrum propose policies that are rather based on the work-care reconciliation model. Their arguments to support thus measures are basically the following: (1) facilitating work-care reconciliation; (2) the creation of additional workplaces; and (3) savings in public expenditures⁷. The leftist parties want to extend the capacities of the existing services (nurseries and kindergartens) and other key concepts in their programmes that concerned families are connected rather to allowances and benefits. The Green Party supports various measures to facilitate work-care reconciliation but also to provide pre-school education. Their measures are from both defined models (educational and work-care reconciliation).

Various proposals by political parties contribute to different divisions of childcare among the key actors. The right-wing parties prefer such measures that would be provided by the market and would not be public (see Table 6). The role of “marketized carer” increases and enables the traditional female caregivers – mothers – to return to the labour market. Among rightists the Neo-liberals also propose one week of paid paternity leave claiming that fathers should also have the right to stay home and care for their children. This may contribute to the “dual earner – dual carer” division of labour. The Christians in this sense propose part-time jobs for caring parents. Such measures may strengthen the “dual earner – female part-time carer” model but may also lead to the “dual earner – dual carer” model division of childcare.

Table 6 **Rating of electoral programmes regarding the division of childcare**

Political Party	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Conservative	0	0	+	0	0
Neo-liberals	0	0	+++	+	+
Christian Democrats	0	+	+++	0	+
Green Party	-	+	+++	+++	+++
Social Democrats	0	0	0	+++	0
Communists	+	0	0	++	0

Source: own rating



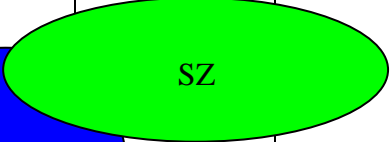
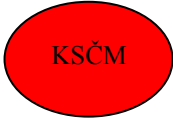
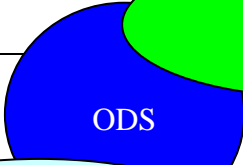


⁷ The demand for day childcare is recently quite strong because of “baby-boom”. State may save financial means on not opening new public day care institutions that later, once the “baby-boom” is over, would need to be closed for the reason of insufficient demand. However, the demand would not necessarily need to decrease if in the meantime there was a shift in the public opinion about childcare.

The Green Party is the only one that clearly refuses the “male breadwinner – female carer” model and supports such measures that engage market, state and father much more in the childcare than it is now. To promote the “dual earner – dual carer” model they would provide paid paternity leave, part-time jobs for caring parents and quota for sharing care⁸. The role of the state in childcare should be according to the Green Party strengthened by supporting the existing public childcare facilities. Also private childcare providers should be supported to reinforce the role of the market in childcare. The Social Democrats and Communists basically want to strengthen public childcare.

From Table 6 it is clear that almost no parties prefer the traditional “male breadwinner – female carer” model. This shows a small shift in public thinking about care giving. The wave of refamilialisation that was very strong in the nineties might probably be over if at least some of these proposed measures are implemented. On the other hand, the political parties, apart from the Green Party, do not strongly articulate a support to the “dual earner – dual carer” model. Most of the childcare should thus be done either by private organisations and private caregivers or in public institutions.

The changes in the childcare policy however depend on the results of the elections and possible created coalitions. Table 7 shows where the political parties can be placed within the “policy motives – division of childcare” framework and what they may have in common. The Green Party has a wide range of measures and may thus find common fields with either Social Democrats or Neo-liberals and Christian Democrats.

Table 7 Location of political parties within the “policy motives - division of childcare” framework

	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Educational Model				  	
Work-care Reconciliation Model			  		

Source: own placement

⁸ If both of the parents exchange the role of caregivers for a significant period of time, they should be financially advantaged.

The Neo-liberals also have great potential to find common ground with other parties because they have many various measures in their programme. In general, right-wing parties rather prefer to support private providers to get the market involved in childcare and left-wing parties prefer to keep the state involved extensively in childcare. Also the motives differ – leftists base their proposals on the notion of education whereas rightists might rather stress the work-care reconciliation. This is not fully the case for the Neo-liberals who claim that public care as pre-school education must stay a key player in the childcare provision.

Slovakia

Starting points:

In Slovakia the discourse on childcare services is highly neglected. Institutional childcare under three years is not widely accepted in the society. It is often problematic to identify whether reference to childcare services includes nursery services at all or only kindergartens.

SDKÚ (center-right-wing party)

In order to improve the prospects of families, especially young families, SDKÚ proposes to increase length of maternal leave to one year and increase the amount of compensation to the 100% of the previous income with an upper threshold 1.5 fold of minimum wage. To ensure the presence of fathers the party is willing to introduce a week-long leave within 2 months after the birth of the child. The electoral programme intends to make the current parental leave much more flexible. On the one hand, this would mean that the 3 year long parental can be utilized until the child's 5th birthday. In addition to this they offer to distinguish several phases during the parental leave. The first, post-birth period requires mothers' involvement, however in the later phases both fathers and mothers could get involved and take parental leave interchangeably in accordance with the needs of the family. Furthermore the party promises to support and improve childcare services making them more flexible and more responsive to parents' needs and requirements. The party is ready to diminish the barriers preventing establishment and functioning of these institutions and facilitate the engagement of private and non-profit sector. In addition to this SDKÚ intends to shift attention to educational functions of these facilities instead of purely care services. The paragraph refers to services for parents and children – nurseries are not particularly specified as such. The party approaches work-life reconciliation encouraging employers and companies to introduce pro-family measures – flexible work-time arrangement, atypical employment, launch of the measure of bank of hours enabling to accumulate the worked hours and later, in case of need utilize them.

Policy motive for childcare:

The programme devotes smaller attention to the childcare facilities and access to them, but SDKÚ intends to shift childcare services from mainly care to educational functions, which clearly refers to the educational model.

Division of care:

The SDKÚ is more than determined to influence the state of family policy to a dual earner – dual carer model. On the one hand it highlight several measures for effective family-work reconciliation – flexible timing of parental leaves, sharing of parental tasks, tips for work-time managements. On the other hand they advocate fathers' involvement as caretakers. These

measures qualify the mixture of dual earner –marketized care, dual earner –state carer, but especial dual earner – dual carer. The programme is very attractive except the fact, it lacks clear support for childcare facilities, which is one of the biggest barriers to implement the models initiated in the programme.

KDH (Christian-democratic party)

The Christian-democratic party aims to limit discrimination of fathers in regard parental leaves. It proposes the introduction of a week-long leave after the birth of the child. The Christian democrats also envisage ensuring childcare services including kindergartens and child/family centres, playgrounds and centres of free time activities. No reference to nurseries implies the lack of support of the party for institutionalized care of children under the age of 3. The party supports gender equality. In order to reduce gender pay gap and differences in economic activities of men and women, they highlight the need to acknowledge that family care work is not exclusively the job of women. They intend to support family-work reconciliation by extending access to services aimed for parents and children.

Policy motive for childcare:

No clear position in regard childcare services, especially under three years.

Division of care:

Clear shift to dual earner – dual carer model what is surprising from a Christian-democratic party. On the basis of the electoral programme it is difficult to assess whether they promote state carer or marketized carer models.

SMER SD (Social democratic party)

The party acknowledging the recent challenges facing families and the low fertility rates in Slovakia, it approaches the issue from the aspect of legislation. SMER proposes to amend the law on the families putting emphasis on the balance between the economic and social functions of families as well as clarifying the competences of the state and non-state actors in this sphere. Furthermore they intend to prepare and adopt a new strategy of family policies in the timespan of 10 years until 2020, in which the direction, methods, approaches and techniques would be elaborated on highlighting the social functions of the families and their role in raising quality of life. In order to increase fertility, the party intends to change financial support mechanism for families, however there is no further description of future measures. In line with these initiatives the party endeavours to advocate gender equality and promotes its institutionalisation and close monitor its implementation.

Based on the electoral programme the party can be hardly situated in the theoretical design of the study...

SNS (far-right party)

The SNS is the only party proposing the lacking legislation on funding and maintenance of nurseries in order to enable parents' employment. The party promises equal opportunities and standards for all service providers, thus encouraging the establishment of both public and private facilities. The party intends to amend Labour Code to make flexible work-time arrangement and atypical forms of employment accessible for lone mothers and ensure autonomy for all mothers to choose in what form they want to work.

Policy motive for childcare:

Proposing a more universal and state-centred approach the electoral programme of the SNS can be classified rather to the educational model.

Division of care:

According to the programme the party also shifts to the dual carer model promoting both private sector and state involvement in establishment and maintenance of childcare facilities (nurseries). The party also supports dual earner – female part-time carer model.

SMK (Party of Hungarian Coalition) – out of Parliament

The party adhering to the value of social solidarity refuses policies generating conflict between people belonging to various social strata and ethnic groups. The party supports the establishment of infant centres and proposes to incorporate family friendly taxation to the family policy measures. It aims to diminish the financial discrimination faced by part-time worker – care taker parents and facilitates flexible employment policy.

Policy motive for childcare:

Nothing relevant in relation to children under three. Emphasis is put on pre-school education in kindergartens.

Division of care:

No clear tendencies. Proposal regarding employment policies imply a dual earner – part-time female care-taker model.

New parties: **Most-Híd** (Center right-wing party, regional party), **SaS** (liberal party)

The electoral programmes lack policy visions in respect the researched measures within the field of family policy.

Table 8 **Rating of electoral programmes regarding the policy motives in the childcare**

Political Party	Educational Model	Work-care Reconciliation Model
Far-right wing Party	++	0
Centre-right wing Party	++	0
Centre-right Regional Party	0	0
Liberals*	0	0
Christian Democrats	+	0
Leftist Party	0	0

* Information based on electoral programme for 2012 elections

Table 9 **Rating of electoral programmes regarding the division of childcare**

Political Party	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Far-right wing Party	0	+	+	+	+
Centre-right wing Party	0	++	+	+	+++
Centre-right Regional Party	0	0	0	0	0
Liberals*	+	0	0	0	0
Christian Democrats	0	+	+	+	++
Leftist Party	0	0	0	0	0

* Information based on electoral programme for 2012 elections

Table 10 **Location of political parties within the “policy motives - division of childcare” framework**

	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Educational Model					
Work-care Reconciliation Model					

Hungary

Starting points:

In contrast to the Czech and Slovak republic in Hungary there is a public discourse on childcare services for children under three years and an increasing demand for these services. However the status of kindergartens is still more dominant, socially accepted and enjoying significantly higher political support. Due to the Programme against Child Poverty launched in 2005 the discourse has been shifted to the role of early childhood education in social integration of socially disadvantaged children and in poverty reduction.

Fidesz – KDNP (right-wing coalition) – in power since 2010

As the title of the electoral programme implies social policies are one of the big national issues the coalition is seeking to improve. Considering the family as a fundamental value and primary pillar of social policies, it highlights the nation preserving function of childbearing and views each child as investment in the nation's future. The purposes in the field of family policy are formulated in a way how to reduce the barriers preventing families of childbearing. Intension directed at low fertility.

Although the reduction of possible poverty risks of childrearing is present, the coalition clearly distinguishes its aims from the measures of the previous government and their accent on the support of the most disadvantaged groups. As the programme clearly states, the coalition of Fidesz-KDNP aims to protect all families including the ones on the periphery of the society as well as the middle class families inclined to fall into poverty. The programme mentions de-familiasation intensions - creating a safeguarding system for the families on which they can rely. This implies the increase of active role of the state. However there is no clear direction the coalition plans to take.

Their generally defined objectives are *“to ensure family-friendly environment, support home-creation, family- and employment-programmes, ensure childcare services, family support and mental services based on the value of solidarity, development of equal opportunity generating education system, more effective protection of families and support of community-based and civil initiatives.”*

Policy motive for childcare:

Although mentioning nurseries and kindergartens as well, the educational policy motive appears rather in relation to primary schools and extra-curricular activities. Strengthening the agenda of equal opportunities for all is mentioned, but without any details of its primary scope.

The lack of explicit initiatives in relation to early childhood services mirrors a limited interest and support for these facilities. The coalition does not take position in relation to any types of, and any sectors providing these services. De-familiasation intensions imply rather a universal approach to childcare services as well as greater state involvement. The coalition inclines to support community-based approaches as well as civil initiatives.

In regard to policy motives it is more than clear the main purpose is to increase fertility rates and save the nation from further demographic decline.

Division of care:

The programme consistently refers to families. In the centre of attention is the parents' employment. The coalition expresses its support for work-family reconciliation policies, to which they are willing to devote labour market policy programmes as well as adaptation of the labour law. The coalition advances part-time and other atypical forms of employment and

it seems to be eager to step up against discrimination of women in the labour market. Besides proposing regulations and monitoring there are no strategies made explicit, how they want to achieve it.

The Fidesz-KDNP coalition not proposing to prolong the 2 year long parental leave system introduced by the government being in power till 2010 and initiating part-time jobs and atypical forms of employment presents itself as supporting dual earner – part-time carer model as well as by referring to de-familiasation intensions tendencies toward dual earner – state carer model can be observed.

MSZP (left-wing party)

The electoral programme of the MSZP can be considered an expression of the main values the party adheres to and their main conception of the country's development and future. The programme highlights only the most pressing policy challenges.

Work-care reconciliation:

The party aims to ensure equal opportunities for women, acknowledges the need for new means in order to enhance employment of mothers. No mention of need to increase access to childcare services.

Educational motive:

The programme urges the implementation of the Programme against child poverty, which among others supports early childhood education and care in form of Sure Start Child Centres. The party firmly stands for fight against poverty and exclusion, however childcare services does not appear as one of the concrete means, how to contribute to it. In relation to the integration of Roma the programme mentions extension of kindergarten-attendance.

Based on the electoral programme the MSZP can be hardly situated in the theoretical design of the study...

Jobbik (far right-wing party):

In order to promote childbearing the Jobbik intends to introduce tax benefits, which would be set in a way that families with 3 children would enjoy almost total tax exemption. The party aims to increase both insurance-based and flat-rate parental benefits in its length to 3 years and in its financial compensation. The Jobbik comes up with the idea launching Full-time Mother Allowance, for which previously employed mother would be eligible until the 8th year of the child amounting to at least the 80% of previous wage, but with an upper limit of double minimum wage (already existing benefit with lower compensation).

In order promote mothers' return to labour market the party proposes 20% tax deductions for employers as well as extension of childcare services – meaning nurseries – obliging municipalities to ensure such services.

Policy motive for childcare:

The only policy motive relevant in this research design is the initiative to make access to nurseries universal by making it obligatory for municipalities.

Real policy motive is to increase fertility.

Division of care:

Clear standing for male-breadwinner female care-taker as the Jobbik supports extensive parental leaves defined literary as Full-time Mother Allowance. And by proposing the ensuring access to nurseries as the obligation of municipalities it also supports dual earner – state carer model. The first one is much stronger and more developed in the programme.

LMP (Green party):

The electoral programme of the LMP clearly reflects the educational model. In order to promote equal opportunities for all children the LMP emphasises early childhood education referring to the Sure Start Child Centres and the need to increase capacities of nurseries and to encourage the extension of the network of family day-care centres. For the same purposes the party proposes to make kindergarten attendance compulsory from the age of 4 and in case of multiply disadvantaged from the age of 3.

Although the programme concerns the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market including mothers, they do not offer any special recommendations how to improve it.

Policy motive for childcare:

The priority of the party is to facilitate the principle of equal opportunities and to reduce the social inequalities what qualifies them for the educational model. On the other hand, by promoting family-day care centres it takes stand for the work-reconciliation purposes as well.

Division of care:

No direct measures proposed in relation to division of care. Increase of capacities of childcare services implies dual earner – state carer, and to a lesser extent dual earner – marketized carer model.

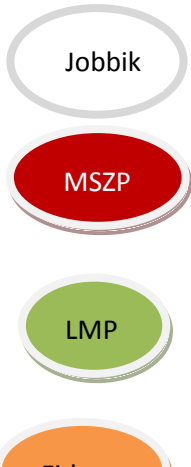



Table 11 Rating of electoral programmes regarding the policy motives in the childcare

Political Party	Educational Model	Work-care Reconciliation Model
Far-right wing Party	+	0
Right wing Party	0	0
Green Party	+	+
Leftist Party	+	0

Table 12 Rating of electoral programmes regarding the division of childcare

Political Party	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Far-right wing party	0	0	0	+	0
Right wing party	0	++	0	+	0
Green Party	0	0	+	+	0
Leftist Party	0	0	0	0	0

Table 13 **Location of political parties within the “policy motives - division of childcare” framework**

	Male breadwinner – female carer	Dual earner – female part-time carer	Dual earner – marketized carer	Dual earner – state carer	Dual earner – dual carer
Educational Model					
Work-care Reconciliation Model					

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