

The Indirect Future Influence of the EU on Post-communist Family Policy*

Steven Saxonberg**

Introduction

The influence of the EU on national policy-making is a hotly debated issue. So far, most of the attention has focused on the direction of the influence of this organization on policy-making. Taking the cases of family policy in Poland and the Czech Republic, this article argues that the EU's main influence has been indirect – by legitimizing a discourse on feminism and gender – rather than direct, by demanding changes in policies.

The EU has mainly applied 'soft laws' rather than 'hard laws' concerning family policies. Such laws are not binding and, therefore, have little influence on the post-communist countries. Its main family policies have included the requirement of a 14-week maternity leave, the possibility for fathers to take at least three months of parental leave and the goal that one-third of all children aged under three will attend day care. The Central-East European (CEE) countries had already introduced paid maternity leaves in the early years of communist rule, so the EU has not had any influence on that issue. EU pressure did, indeed, induce the Czech Republic and Poland to give fathers the right to parental leave, but since the EU makes no demands on the types of benefits, the leaves were not formulated in a manner that would induce fathers to actually go on leave. Lastly, on the issue of childcare for children aged under three, the two countries basically rejected the EU demands.

Even though the EU has only had marginal direct influence so far on family policy in these countries, this article argues that it has had greater indirect influence. That is, by forcing both countries to set up governmental bodies that must monitor policies from a gender viewpoint as part of the gender- mainstreaming requirement, the EU has been able to influence the discourse. So far, these organizations have not had great influence on actual policy- making, but the mere existence of these organizations has forced the mass media to take gender issues more seriously. This in turn, has opened up the public discourse for feminist activists. This shift in the mass media's treatment of feminism and gender issues is making it increasingly easier for feminist groups to push for changes in such fields as family policy. Consequently, in the future, we can expect that it will be more likely that governments will introduce family-policy reforms that will support increased gender equality.

This article proceeds by first discussing its theoretical approach, then it discusses its methodology, after which it analyzes the actual changes in policies that took place during the accession period. Next, it analyzes the media discourse and takes into account interviews with activists from women's organizations to show how the mass media's manner of dealing with

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** Steven Saxonberg is Professor at Department of Sociology, Södertörn University, Sweden and Research Associate at the institute of Social Policy and Social Work, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

gender and women's organizations has changed. Lastly, it discusses how this change in the mass media might have influenced the very recent reforms in both countries.

Theorizing Europeanization

The Europeanization literature generally predicts that the EU has greater influence on countries when they try to become members than when they have already become members. As long as countries aspire to join the EU, the organization can make the introduction of reforms a prerequisite for gaining membership. Yet, once they have joined, the EU loses its ability to make such demands as it loses its most potent form of punishment: denial of membership. Moreover, since unanimity is required for passing rules for the kinds of soft law dealing with family policy, new EU members can veto suggestions that they do not like (i.e. Schimmelfennig 2005; Vachudova 2005; Sasse 2008).

Critics have pointed out that the EU's influence on family policy has been minimal among member states. First, almost all of the Directives concern 'soft laws' based on the Open Method of Coordination, which gives countries great leeway in forming the policies as they would like (Sirovátka and Tomešová Bartáková 2011; Walby 2004). Thus, great variety exists in how countries decide to implement these policies (Daly 2005). Consequently, Zirra (2010) concludes that domestic Europeanization processes depend largely on existing institutional structures. Second, a shift occurred in the goals. Originally, the term 'reconciliation of work and family life' emphasized the need for mothers and fathers to share the household work. Eventually, the term got reformulated to emphasize the need to increase employment and make working conditions more flexible and, therefore, focuses more on the labour market than family policy (Jacquot et al. 2011; Stratigaki 2004). Third, although the EU insists that all countries have parental leaves, in practice this has not influenced family policy much, since it does not set any minimum standards for remuneration (e.g. Guerrina 2002; Stratigaki 2004). Lastly, even when countries actually introduce laws because of EU pressure, the CEE countries often apply the technique of the 'world of dead letters' by doing little to actually apply these laws (Falkner and Treib 2008).

This article argues for a broader view of Europeanization, one which does not only focus on the immediate changes in policies. Using discursive institutionalism as its starting point, it notes that institutions and public discourses interact with each other. Ideational processes shape the manner in which policymakers perceive the world (Béland 2009: 564). The discourse influences the manner in which actors perceive their interests (Kulawik 2009; Schmidt 2002, 2010). Naumann (2005) maintains that the ability of actors to influence policy-making also depends on 'discursive opportunity structures'. Some structures make it easier for groups to frame their arguments in a way that garners support, while other structures make it more difficult.

One institutional change – the EU's demand that accession countries set up commissions to monitor gender equality – created a discursive opening that feminists could use to press their demands. This, in turn, is making it easier to introduce reforms that would increase gender equality, including reforms in family policy. The demands to set up gender equality organizations to

monitor gender mainstreaming have induced the mass media to take gender issues more seriously than in the past, which has made the mass media more open towards people claiming to be 'feminists', which in turn is making it easier for feminist voices to be heard on many issues including family policy. This is not to claim that family policy is only about gender issues. For example, in Sweden there is a discourse about the child's right to both parents (Saxonberg 2013), and within the EU itself there is a discourse about human capital investment. However, since the EU did not require governments to set up commissions to do 'child-mainstreaming' or 'human-capital mainstreaming' it is not possible to see any connection between the EU's discourse on these issues and indirect influence on the development of Czech and Polish family policy. This is also not to claim that the increased legitimacy that gender mainstreaming gave to feminist groups only involves family policy issues, but the point is that this increased legitimacy has also made the discourse more open to family policy reform.

Method

In order to find out how policymakers and women's activists perceived the influence of the EU, I conducted interviews with 20 policymakers and women's organization activists in Poland and 34 in the Czech Republic from 1999 to 2009. To monitor the changes in the mass media's coverage of feminism, I chose the most popular newspaper in each country: *Mladá fronta Dnes* in the Czech Republic and *Gazeta Wyborcza* in Poland, and analyzed all the articles that mentioned the term 'feminism'. I monitored *Mladá fronta Dnes* from January 1998 to January 1999, all of 2007 and all of 2012; meanwhile, I monitored *Gazeta Wyborcza* for all of 1996, 2007 and 2012. To see if the discourse on family policy also followed the change in discourse on feminism, I monitored these two newspapers to see how they reported on the issue of father leaves. I did so for the years 1997, 2007 and 2013. The years for father leaves do not exactly match the years for the articles on feminism, because the data was gathered for separate projects, but the years are very similar and still compatible.

The Direct Influence of the EU

The main ways in which the EU has tried to influence family policy have been to make laws gender neutral, to propose minimum maternity leave periods (and demand the father's right to parental leave) and to give targets for access to childcare.

Gender-neutral laws

Throughout the accession process the EU evaluated the progress, which the four CEE countries made in changing their laws to meet EU standards. According to the Europeanization hypothesis, this is the period in which the EU should have had the greatest influence on family policy. During this period, the EU did have some direct influence in promoting neutral gender terminology in laws, such as forcing the CEE countries to give fathers the right to parental leave. In Poland, EU pressure enabled men to gain the right to take parental leave in 1996 (Wiktorow 1996: 28; Nowakowska and Swedrowska 2000: 49). In Czechoslovakia, men already received the right to parental leave benefits in 1991, but in the Czech republic they did not receive the right to get their jobs back until 2001, when the

government modified its labour code in accordance with EU standards (Maříková and Radimská 2003: 18; Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007).

Parental leave

The EU does, indeed, have a minimum 14-week requirement for maternity leaves, but the CEE countries had already met these requirements in the early years of communist rule (e.g. Hašková et al. 2012; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). Since the 1960s, maternity leave has been half a year in what is now the Czech Republic, and until recently it was 16 weeks in Poland, although it has recently increased to half a year. As already noted, the EU forced the accession countries to open parental leaves to fathers.

Until very recently, the act of opening the leaves for fathers has had little consequence, however, as the leave benefits have not been generous enough to induce more than around 1 per cent of fathers to go on leave (Maříková 2008 for the Czech Republic; for Poland based on talks with ministry officials as no official statistics exist). In Poland, the leave benefit was means-tested and restricted to those earning less than the social subsistence minimum (Balcerzak-Paradowska 1991: 48). It used to be set as a percentage of the average wage. Since 1996, however, the benefit has been indexed to changes in consumer prices. Consequently, the real level of this benefit has decreased over the years, since wages have grown faster than inflation (Balcerzak-Paradowska et al. 2003).

Parental leave benefits have been more generous in the Czech Republic, being universal, but pay a very low flat rate. Previously, one flat rate was paid for up to four years at about 15 per cent of the average monthly salary (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006), but since 2007 several reforms have been carried out. Today, families get 220,000 Czech crowns (approximately €7,860) in total for their parental leave period. The period can be two to four years, so the monthly benefit is divided by the number of months of leave they take (Hašková et al. 2012). Thus, if they go on leave for two years, they receive more money per month than if they go on leave for four years, but the total benefit remains 220,000 crowns. If one stays at home for less than two years, one receives the same monthly payment as if one stayed at home for two years, which means one will receive less than 220,000 Czech crowns totally. Since there is little access to day care for children aged under three and since parents do not have the right to have their job back if they stay at home for more than three years, three-year leaves have become the norm.

Meanwhile, although Poland has kept its three-year means-tested parental-leave benefit, it has made important changes to its leave benefits. Since 2007, it had been slowly increasing its maternity leave, which had been 16 weeks. In 2013, maternity leave increased to six months (at an income-replacement rate of 100 per cent) and an additional six-month parental leave was added (at an income-replacement rate of 60 per cent). The parental leave benefit is open to fathers as well (Barczewska and Madejek 2013). 60 per cent is likely to be too low a level to induce many fathers to share in the leave time. For example, in all the countries where fathers take over 15 per cent of the leave time, the benefit level is at least 80 per cent of one's previous income and at least two of the months of leave are reserved for fathers (i.e. Iceland, Norway and Sweden; see NOSOSCO 2013).

Nevertheless, this reform in Poland shows that change is on its way. Even in Germany, when a reform was introduced that pays 67 per cent of one's previous salary and provides two bonus months of leave if the father takes two months of leave, the percentage of leave time taken by men sharply increased. Still, three years after the reform, the percentage of leave time taken by men was under 7 per cent.¹ However, if the mother decides to receive only 80 per cent of her previous salary during the maternity leave, then parents can receive 80 per cent of their salary during the six-month parental leave period. This possibility might induce some fathers to share in the leave, although it requires the parents to agree on this model of sharing before the maternity leave starts, and fathers only have the right to the leave benefit if the mother is working. Nonetheless, these reforms have little to do with any direct demands made by the EU, even if the Polish reforms might have been influenced by the change in the discourse (more on this below).

Day care

The Barcelona Agreement requires all member countries to aim to have at least 33 per cent of children aged under three attending childcare facilities. However, in the Czech Republic and Poland the main change since 1989 has been in the opposite direction: a radical decrease in support for day care for children aged under three has caused nurseries to nearly disappear (e.g. Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007).

In fact, the EU has done little to induce the CEE countries to actually try to meet the Barcelona targets, although it should be noted that it has done little to induce any member states to meet these targets, as it has no means of enforcing its Directives on family policy since they are only recommendations. For example, the EU's own study on the accession of the Czech Republic does not even mention family policy in its discussion of gender, which shows how little priority the EU gave to this issue (Commission of the European Communities 2006). When it comes to nursery schools, the assessment study of the influence of the Czech accession on gender only briefly mentions nursery schools and makes no recommendations on this issue (Marksová-Tominová 2003). Until recently, Czech politicians have openly denounced the Barcelona Agreement (e.g. Sirovátka and Tomešová Bartáková 2011). During the Czech EU presidency in 2009, the Czech Minister of Labour and Social Affairs announced at one of the ministerial meetings that if the post-communist CEE states had been members of the EU in 2002, then the Barcelona targets would never have passed (Hašková et al. 2012).

Not surprisingly, none of the many dozens of policymakers or women activists whom I have interviewed, have claimed that the EU has influenced their country's family policy. Several officials at the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs were outright hostile to the Barcelona Agreement and the one person, who was supportive, was afraid of losing her job because of her views.

Policymakers claim that the EU has only had influence in the area of anti-discrimination laws, but this influences labour market policy more than family policy. Thus, Poland's former

¹ Calculations based on <http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Content/Publikationen/Fachveroeffentlichungen/Sozialleistungen/Elterngeld/ElterngeldGeburtenVj,templateId=renderPrint.psml> (accessed 31 March 2015).

Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka (interviewed in 2008), notes that the EU helped push the government to change the labour code so that sexual discrimination and sexual harassment would be forbidden. However, when it comes to day care, the cabinet claimed it did not have the resources to meet the Barcelona targets, which goes to show how non-binding these targets actually are. An employee at the ministry in Poland, who coordinates the ministry's international cooperation with the EU went as far as saying, 'I know that [the] European Union does not care about social issues at all'.

In summary, the EU's direct influence has been mainly to make legislation more gender neutral in such areas as parental leaves. However, it has not led to any important changes in family policy in either Poland or the Czech Republic.

The Change in the Discourse

This section begins by describing the institutions that each country created to meet EU demands for gender mainstreaming. Then it shows how this change correlated with a clear change in the manner in which the newspapers treated feminism as gender issues gained in legitimacy. The mass media's growing acceptance of feminism creates a discursive opening for women's organization to press for policies that support gender equality. Next, this section also looks at the actual change in discourse on an important family policy issue: father leaves, to show that the discursive opening that led to greater tolerance for feminism also coincided with a change in the discourse on these more concrete family policy issues.

Institutional changes to monitor gender equality

Because of EU pressure for gender mainstreaming, all the CEE countries were forced to set up some kind of council for gender equality. In 2001, the Czech government established an independent Government Council for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women. The Council included representatives of the ministries and women's organizations, along with employers' delegations and the Czech Statistical Bureau (Linková 2003). This council had only minor influence on relatively minor reforms and basically has been a consultative organ only (Sedelmeier 2009: 9). For example, it proposed legislation, that later became law, which enables both parents to share the nine days of leave benefits for taking care of sick children (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). Despite such small reforms, the council avoided discussions over issues such as the need for men to share in parental leave responsibilities, the need for greater access to childcare, etc. The Parliament also created a Permanent Commission for Family and Equal Opportunity, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs established the Department for Equal Opportunities. Again, none of these organizations seems to have had much influence on policy-making.

In Poland, after negotiations began for accession to the EU and further pressure arose from the Beijing conference in 1995, the government created the Forum of Co-Operation between the Office of the Governmental Plenipotentiary for Family and Women's Affairs and women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). 'The Forum created a platform through which women's NGOs had input into the reviews of proposed changes in the Labour Code, thereby having the opportunity to provide legal opinions during this process' (Regulska and Grabowska 2008: 142). Although it was founded under a Social Democratic government, the

government made it clear that it did not take gender issues seriously and only did the minimum required by the EU. The Conservative government that came to power in 1997 was even more critical and changed the name of the Plenipotentiary for Family and Women's Affairs to the Plenipotentiary for Family Affairs, to emphasize that it should no longer deal mainly with gender equality issues. Thus, it refused to create a Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men, which was the title that the EU preferred (Regulska and Grabowska 2008: 142–3), although the next Social Democratic government that came to power in 2001 renamed it again and reinstated the organization's gender equality orientation.

As the negotiations for accession progressed, the EU placed greater pressure on the Polish government to define such terms as 'sex discrimination', 'indirect discrimination' and 'work of equal value', and to pass laws on these issues. This encouraged women's organizations to use the EU to pressure their government, and they began publishing EU documents to make them publicly accessible, including The EU Manual for Women and a Polish edition of 100 Words about Equality Between Women and Men (Regulska and Grabowska 2008: 145). In 2001, the Social Democrats came back to power and the new plenipotentiary was more willing to co-operate with NGOs, including co-operation on producing a National Plan of Action for Woman (Regulska and Grabowska 2008: 147). Even this Social Democratic government did not really take the Plenipotentiary very seriously, but it remained under EU pressure to produce some documents, which gave gender issues greater legitimacy in the mass media. For example, during a visit to Poland in 2004, Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka, who was then head of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Men and Women, confided to me that although the head of the party had campaigned on re-establishing the Plenipotentiary as an organization for supporting gender quality, after winning the elections, in his role as Prime Minister, he asked her 'Do we really need this organization?' When a Conservative government came to power in 2006, it abolished the Plenipotentiary, although the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs still had a section dealing with gender equality (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007).

Newspaper articles on feminism

Even though the EU has not had much direct influence on family policy, its pressure on accession countries to establish organizations for monitoring gender issues created a discursive opening. The reason being the mere existence of these organizations gave greater legitimacy to gender issues, which in turn induced the mass media to take feminism and gender issues more seriously. The fact that it eventually became legitimate in the eyes of the mass media for politicians and civil society organizations to talk about gender equality made it easier for policymakers to introduce family policy reforms that can increase gender equality.

This article's review of the most popular Czech newspaper shows that in the 1990s Czech women could only make semi-feminist statements with the qualifier, 'I am not a feminist, but . . .', while ten years later they could already say, 'I am a feminist, but not a radical feminist'. Although the need to qualify oneself still exists, a shift still has taken place, in which feminism is no longer automatically associated with radical male-haters, as long as one makes the qualification that one really does not belong to this 'radical' group. In 1998, the most popular daily newspaper, *Mladá fronta Dnes*, used the term 'feminism' seven times and none of them

was positive. For example, in one movie review, the author criticized an Oscar-winning Dutch film for displaying a 'chauvinistic feminism', because the women are presented in a positive tone as being strong, wise and self-confident, while the men are mean, selfish, nerds (1 December 1999). In a review of a book by a Chinese-American author, the Czech reviewer notes that the author belongs to the feminist genre, but it is better not to use this term for 'non-enlightened' Czechs, who associate feminism 'with harassment and cutting the patriarchal appendix or "chauvinistic" penis off'. In this extreme case, though, it is clear that the reviewer is being ironic, because he is rather positive towards the book, and distances himself from 'typical Czechs' (2 December 1998).

By the year 2007, the number of articles in the newspaper dealing with feminism had increased from seven to 19 and the tone had greatly changed. Now it had become acceptable to call oneself a feminist, as long as one qualified it by adding that one was not a 'radical' feminist. One columnist wrote an article entitled 'Why not be a radical (feminist)' and begins by stating, 'I never was a staunch feminist, agitating against everyone . . . I always understood it in a moderate sense . . . I never was radical' (13 August 2007). One article even used the term 'radical' and 'feminist' in a positive sense: the civic organization *Žába na prameni* received a prize for their support of gender equality (18 December 2007). By 2012, none of the articles in *Dnes* was negative towards feminism. Most simply described events in other countries, but the one article about the Czech Republic was an argument in favour of feminism, including the need for fathers to share in the child caring tasks (3 October 2012).

A similar process has taken place in Poland as journalists there have become much more accepting of feminism. Just as women's organizations were more openly feminist in the 1990s, however, so were the newspapers less critical of feminism than in the Czech Republic, which is not the same as being openly pro-feminist. The most influential daily newspaper in Poland, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, had four articles that mentioned feminism in 1996. Two displayed negative views, while two displayed positive views. For example, an article about a meeting of the Polish female writer's meeting cites the poet Urszula Koziol as stating that, 'Feminism is ridiculous, especially in the Polish context, and I come from a family with relations based on partnership' (18 November 1996). On the other hand, another article cites a professor who reflects, 'life is oppressive in general. But women face even more oppression. And the feminist point of view is to make people conscious of this' (22 October 1996).

By 2007, the atmosphere had clearly improved. That year none of the six articles in *Gazeta Wyborcza* was negative toward feminism and most were sympathetic. Moreover, while all of the articles on feminism in 1996 were in the regional supplements, in 2007 most were either in the main newspaper or in the opinions section. One article interviews organizers of the annual women's day celebration, known as 'Manifa' (24–25 December 2007). All of the participants interviewed consider themselves to be feminists. The newspaper also reported favourably on a festival organized by a quarterly that openly calls itself feminist (9–10 December 2007). Thus, the newspaper began to show a more favourable view of feminism.

In 2012, *Gazeta Wyborcza* had seven articles dealing with feminism, of which six were positive. Even the one that was negative, was still mild in its criticisms. It called for humanism rather than feminism, but it did not make wild accusations about feminists being man-haters,

nor did it shun the ideals of gender equality. Rather, the point was that women are already making great strides and now it is important for women to co-operate with men in order to make the world a better place (15 September 2012). In addition, the newspaper published a critical reply by a feminist, who claimed that the author had been wrong to consider feminist passé (18 September 2012). In summary, the trend towards greater openness towards feminism has continued.

Experiences of women's organizations with the mass media

Thus, although the various organizations that the CEE governments set up, under pressure from the EU, have not had much actual influence on policy-making, they have created a discursive opening by granting greater legitimacy to the issue of gender equality and, therefore, forced the mass media to take these issues more seriously. As the mass media has begun to consider feminism and gender issues to be 'serious' topics, this discursive opening has given women's groups greater access to the mass media. Of course, legitimacy through the EU is not the only reason for this change; experience has also taught women activists how to deal better with the mass media.

As one representative from a Polish woman's organization observed (interviewed 22 May 2007):

'I think now we have much more contacts with the media also and they recognize us and they call us for different comments when there's something happening concerning women. So we have much bigger media attention now than 13 years ago [when the organization was founded], obviously. And there are many more journalists now who are more sensitive on the issue [of women's rights], who write better and know more in a more essential way, for example, violence against women and who are more aware of gender issues.'

A Czech women's activist observes that the mass media has become more open to gender issues since the country joined the EU, 'I think that [the fact that] the word "gender" started to be used more is a big change . . . and that you can read about it in like mainstream magazines is a big change' (interviewed on 8 August 2009).

Gender is becoming such an acceptable issue that now even business magazines are giving some space to women's organizations which promote professional women. The president of one such organization notes that sometimes the business newspaper *Hospodářské noviny* has written short notices about its activities and that it has also co-operated with the economic weekly, *Profit*, as well as the business magazine, *Prosperita*, which allows it to publish a special supplement called *Madame Business* (interviewed 5 August 2009).

Again, even if the media is becoming more professional and women's organizations have learned better how to utilize the media, and even if the EU has given greater legitimacy to gender issues, which has made it easier for NGOs to get access to the mass media, this does not mean that the media in general is pro-feminist. A huge difference still exists between the manner in which the CEE media covers gender issues and the Scandinavian media; however,

the point is that the media's coverage has improved greatly since the 1990s, which gives feminists much greater access to the public discourse on issues such as family policy.

Newspaper articles on father leave

Given the fact that feminism became much more acceptable, women's groups could take advantage of the discursive opening and begin raising issues such as the need for fathers to share in father leaves. So not surprisingly, we also see a remarkable shift in newspaper reporting on such issues. However, it is impossible to know how much of this shift is due to the change in discourse caused by EU membership and the setting-up of gender mainstreaming organizations, as other factors play a role as well. For example, although Czechs and Poles are more conservative than West Europeans on many issues, the gap has been continuously closing (e.g. Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006). In the Polish case, demographic issues clearly play a role in the rethinking of family policy, as politicians have begun to see the radical drop in fertility rates after 1989 as a major problem. Nevertheless, even if it is not possible to determine exactly how much of the change in discourse is due to indirect EU influence, it does seem clear that its influence on the discourse so far has been much greater than its direct influence on policy-making, which so far has been negligible.

When it comes to fathers going on parental leave, the shift in the public discourse is quite remarkable. In 1997–78, neither the Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza* nor the Czech *Dnes* had a single article on fathers going on parental leave. However, by 2007 this had radically changed. In 2007, *Dnes* published seven articles on the topic, of which two dealt with the Prime Minister's proposal to have a one-week paternity leave when the child is born, so the father can help the mother; one article dealt with the parental leave system in France; and four others dealt with cases in which fathers go on parental leave or in which somebody suggests that it is good for fathers to go on leave. For example, a female film director noted that it would be good if her daughter's husband would go on father leave because 'Men, who experience father leave have a completely different relationship to their children than distant, patriarchal fathers' (22 March 2007). In another article, the former Social Democratic Prime Minister, Vladimír Špidla (who was then the EU Commissioner for Equality), criticizes the Conservative government's proposal for having a one-week paternity leave on the grounds that it is too short and that it would be at the same time as the maternity leave. He points out that within the EU the debate is rather about 12 weeks of leave for fathers, in which the father is the only one at home with the child, rather than spending one week together with the mother (10 May 2007).

In 2013, again there were seven articles on father leaves. Two dealt with Prince William in the UK who went on father leave and one compared leave policies in other countries. The other five were all positive to parental leave and either discussed cases in which the father went on leave or discussed why leave is good for the fathers (such as that they live longer; 19 July 2013).

In Poland, there has been a clear rise in the number of articles dealing with father leaves. Whereas in 1998 there were no articles at all in *Gazeta Wyborcza* dealing with the issue, by 2007 the number had risen to six and then in 2013 to 22. Of the six articles in 2007, five were

positive towards fathers going on parental leave (of which, three supported father quotas that reserve some months of leave time for fathers), while one wrote sarcastically about how men cannot breastfeed, etc. Two of the five articles supporting parental leaves took up the case of Sweden, while one mentioned France as well as Sweden and one mentioned the UK (where a two-week paternity leave at the birth of a child had been introduced). The then Vice-Minister in charge of family policy, Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, openly mentioned Sweden as a model for parental leaves, including the two months that are reserved for fathers (10 March 2007).

By 2013 there was a sharp increase in the number of articles on paternity leaves from six to 22, which in part was due to the discussions of the new law proposal that increased maternity leave from 16 weeks to 26 weeks and then added a 26-week parental leave based on the income replacement principle, which was to be open for fathers as well as mothers. None of the articles dealing with fathers going on parental leave was negative towards the idea. The largest number, nine, openly supported a father quota that would reserve several months of parental leave for fathers. Here one can see a connection between the mass media's greater openness women's organizations (caused in part by gender mainstreaming) and changes in news reporting, as three of the articles supporting father quotas mentioned the Polish Congress of Women. The influence of Sweden is clear as six of these nine articles mentioned

Sweden, where two months are reserved for men. Norway and Belgium were also mentioned in one article each, but they were both mentioned together with Sweden. Eight articles supported the idea of fathers going on leave, without supporting the idea of quotas. Sweden once again is clearly influential for their views as half of the articles mentioned this country. Another five articles discuss the new law proposals that include a six-month parental leave. Of these, four are rather factual, but a fifth indicates that it would be good to have father quotas, as it claims that 'experts' argue that it would be better to have a two-month father quota (which, incidentally, is the same period as in Sweden) (12 March 2013).

Recent Changes in Policies

As already noted, in the Czech Republic a woman, who openly declares herself to be a feminist, Michaela Marksová-Tominová, became Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, giving her the main responsibility for family policy. In January 2014, she set up a working group for family policy reform, of which this author is also a member. At the first meeting, she announced her intention of introducing an obligatory paternity leave and increasing access to day care. Interestingly, although she never mentioned the EU in her presentation to the working group, she did mention the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. She has already proposed a new tax credit to enable parents to send their children to private day care. The credit is equal to the cost incurred for the relocated child in kindergarten or other care facilities for preschool children, up to 8,500 crowns per child (around €300; ČT24 2014). A year before becoming minister, she publicly demanded reserving some of the parental leave time for fathers only, so we can expect her to come up with some proposal in this direction.

Despite Marksová-Tominová's openness about being a feminist, the mainstream mass media was quite accepting of this, and the reports on her becoming a minister were notable for their lack of criticism. Such an outcome would have been unthinkable in the 1990s, when the Czech newspapers had a strong anti-feminist bias. For example, *Dnes* did not criticize her, but just reported matter-of-factly about her nomination to become minister (Kopecký 2014). In the newspaper's interview with her, the journalist did comment that a person from a right-wing think tank had accused her in his blog of being 'radical', to which she replied that she has only taken up topics that are being discussed and often implemented throughout most of Europe, so that the blogger was, in fact, the radical one. Her defence went unchallenged and the interview had a positive tone to it, although the editors still chose to make 'I am not an extremist' the title caption of the interview (Jiříčka 2014).

The fact that the discourse in the mass media has changed has made it easier for people such as Marksová-Tominová to become the minister in charge of family policy and the change will also make it easier for her to gain support in Parliament for her future proposals. Of course, it is not easy to measure how much of an influence the mass media has on these issues. Nor is it possible to measure how much of this change comes from the EU's demand that the Czech Republic establish organizations to deal with gender mainstreaming. But it is clear that these developments have had much greater influence on Czech family policy than direct pressure from the EU for the country to change its policies. The previous governments were not at all interested in either changing the types of parental leaves or following the Barcelona directives on childcare.

In the Polish case, as already noted, the reforms did not go as far as they could have in promoting gender equality. Even though the 80 per cent that parents can receive is similar to the Nordic countries, mothers can decide to get 100 per cent during the first six months of maternity leave, which lowers the parental leave benefit to 60 per cent during the next six months. In addition, in contrast to Sweden, Norway and Iceland, no father quotas were introduced, and in contrast to Germany no bonus months were introduced when the father goes on leave for several months. Rather than emphasize gender equality and balancing work and family life, the government and most opposition parties emphasized the demographic issue instead. For example, the keynote speaker for the government when it introduced the proposal to Parliament stated:

In Poland we have a really fatal demographic trend, which we would like to reverse. Everyone in this room knows the number which is our nightmare and fatal memory for all. This number is 1.39; this is the indicator of the Polish fertility rates.²

Similarly, the speaker for the opposition conservative party, Law and Justice, agreed:

² http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenoInter7.nsf/0/82D63CEA9EF0B5CAC1257B7F002882A5/%24File/42_ksiazka.pdf (accessed 31 March 2015).

It has been said, but I have to remind you, that we are placed on 212th position (out of 220 countries worldwide) accordingly to the indicator of fertility rates, thus it is a huge problem. The demographic problem is a key issue to solve in our country.³

Nevertheless, it would be overly simplistic to conclude that the national and international discourse on gender equality had no impact on this reform. As Graff and Korolczuk (2012) point out, the proposal not only has a pronatalist background, because during the time when the proposal was developed, policymakers looked to Sweden as the gender equality model, which is why they introduced an 80 per cent leave benefit that was similar to Sweden's. (But they go on to argue that the proposal would be better if there were some part reserved for fathers.) They also note that, similar to the Nordic countries, the proposal entails increasing support for day care.

The Swedish influence goes back in time. Already in the mid-2000s, when Jaruga-Nowacka was the head of the Plenipotentiary for Women, she introduced the 'Swedish Gender Equality Eye Glasses' award for the person in Poland who did the most to support gender equality⁴. Meanwhile, a few years later while in the opposition in 2008, Jaruga-Nowacka criticized the conservative-nationalist government's proposal for reforming the parental leave system, because it did not include father quotas. Basing her argument on the experiences of the Nordic countries, in the parliamentary debate she comments, 'You all know well that those countries that have been successful as far as the birth rate increase is concerned, headed in a different direction – that of obligatory parental leave for fathers'.⁵ Even the Vice-Minister, who was in charge of family policy for the conservative-nationalist government in the years 2005–07, Kluzik-Rostkowska, admitted to being inspired by the Swedish model and wanting to introduce father quotas once the parental leave time was increased. She went so far as to say, 'I like the Swedish system very much, especially the special part of maternity leave for fathers. It is a very good idea, very good' (interviewed on 25 May 2007). As noted in the analysis of news- paper articles, Sweden was mentioned quite often in the discussions on fathers going on parental leave. Thus, the Swedish model of promoting gender equality was well-known to the political establishment even if policymakers emphasized demographic issues more than gender equality in their public statements. In addition, the Palikot's Movement Party actually proposed an amendment to the proposal that would follow the Swedish model and give fathers two months of paternity leave that could not be taken the same time as the mother's maternity leave.⁶

Furthermore, although the other parties did not support such a paternity leave, all of them were careful to use gender-neutral language when talking about the parental leaves. They consistently referred to 'parents' or 'mothers and fathers' rather than mothers. This still entails a break from the past, when politicians assumed that only mothers would go on leave. Consequently, it seems clear that the discourse in Poland has changed since the 1990s. The

³ Ibid.

⁴ I was there once for the award presentation. This is discussed briefly also in <http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/721> (accessed 31 March 2015).

⁵ <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata6.nsf> (accessed 31 March 2015).

⁶ http://praca.wp.pl/title,Komisja-przeciwna-wydłużeniu-urlopow-ojcowskich,wid,15844833,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=11163f&_tictsn=3 (accessed 31 March 2015).

fact that the mass media became much more open to feminism helped create a climate in which the reform was able to gain the unanimous support of parliament and in which proposals to increase support for day care also were able to pass. Once again, it is reasonable to assume that EU pressure to create an organization for monitoring gender equality induced the mass media to take gender issues more seriously and therefore, to become more open for feminist ideas, which in turn influenced the views of policymakers. This seems to especially be the case in Poland, when the mass media often referred to the Women's Congress in its discussions of the reform proposals for parental leave. It should be added that the centrist party, Civic Platform, which introduced the reform of parental leave, also introduced measures in 2011 that aimed to increase access to day care.⁷

To be sure, these effects of the EU on family policy reforms were indirect and therefore difficult to measure. But even if we cannot measure exactly how strong the influence of this indirect effect was, it was clearly much greater than the direct effect as the EU did not apply any pressure on the Polish government to carry out these reforms.

Conclusion

This article shows the need to have a broad perspective when discussing Europeanization – one that includes the longer-term indirect effects. The direct, short-term effects of Europeanization on family policy were rather small and basically limited to making some laws more gender neutral. However, by demanding the institutionalization of organizations that can monitor gender mainstreaming, the EU created a discursive opening, as the existence of such official governmental organizations forced the mass media to take gender issues more seriously. Thus, we see a marked difference in how the main newspapers relate to feminism. By becoming more open to feminism, women's organizations have gained greater access to the public discourse.

This change in the public discourse has made it easier for politicians to propose reforms that at least partially aim to increase gender equality in the area of family policy, although, of course, family policy is only one of many issues that feminists are interested in. This includes the radical revamping of the parental leave benefits in Poland, and measures to increase access to day care in both countries. In addition, the new Minister for Labour and Social Affairs in the Czech Republic – who is an openly declared feminist – already made it clear before the elections that she wants to introduce a paternity leave to induce fathers to spend some time taking care of their children.

Of course, it is difficult to measure just how much of the change in the public discourse was caused by the establishment of organizations to monitor gender mainstreaming; and it is also difficult to measure exactly how much the discursive opening which these organizations caused in the mass media was able to influence the attitudes of policymakers. Factors such as changing attitudes among the population also matter, but even this was likely influenced by the discursive opening that the gender-mainstreaming organizations induced. At the very least, this indirect influence of the EU was clearly much greater than its direct influence, as

⁷ Ustawa z 4 lutego 2011 r. o opiece nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3 (Dz.U. Nr 45, poz. 235).

the EU has hardly pressured the post- communist countries to make changes in their family policies. Thus, this article shows the need for further research on the EU from a discursive-institutionalist perspective, which analyzes how the EU creates discursive openings, which make policy reforms easier.

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