

The International Corner

Work and Family in Slovenia

By Nevenka Černigoj Sadar



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Bio: Nevenka Černigoj Sadar, PhD in Psychology, is a senior researcher at the Organisations and HR Research Centre and professor of social psychology at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. Her main areas of research are: changing life patterns, gender divisions in paid and unpaid work in relation to social policy measures, quality of life in various life spheres and women at the labour market. She lectures organisational behaviour on undergraduate level and career management on post-graduate programme and is a mentor to graduate and post-graduate students. She participated in several of Slovene and international comparative projects: Changes in the Life Patterns of Families in Europe (1979- 86); Childhood as a Social Phenomenon (1990-92); COST A13: Changing Labour Markets, Welfare Policies and Citizenship- WG on Gender issues (1999-2003); Gender, Work and Employment in Ten Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (2003-2004); Gender, Parenthood and the Changing European Workplace (2003-2005) and Young Mothers/Families Friendly Employment (2004-2007). She participates in the network of excellence: reconciling work and welfare in Europe -RECOWE, 2005-2011. She is the president of Slovenian auditors's council responsible for granting Family Friendly Enterprise Certificate. She is the author of the chapters and articles in several international publications and the co-editor and author of the book 'Delo in družina: s partnerstvom do družini prijaznega delovnega okolja' (Work and family: with partnership towards family friendly working conditions, Ljubljana, Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2007.

In Slovenia, there exists a long tradition of national regulation on paid parental leave and provision of publicly subsidized childcare services. These offerings have been seen as the government helping parents combine their work and family obligations. Maternity leave with full wage replacement was introduced immediately after World War II. And since 1975, it has been possible for a mother to transfer her 141 days of parental leave to the father. In 1986, this paid parental leave was extended to 260 days.

In 2001, Slovenia's Parental Protection and Family Benefit Act was put into place, requiring both parents to sign a written agreement setting out how they plan to use childcare leave. Also in 2001, 90 days of paternity leave were gradually introduced, with 100% of a father's earnings paid for 15 days and his social security

contributions paid for the remaining period. There is no pay ceiling for maternity leave up to 105 days, with mothers receiving 100% of their former earnings. However, for fully reimbursed childcare leave and paternity leave, there is a ceiling up to 2.5 times the national average of earnings.

Childcare leave is extended from 30 to 90 days if parents have two or more children under 8 years of age. One of the parents can work part-time until a child is 3 years old. If a parent cares for two preschool children, she or he has the right to work part time until her or his youngest child reaches age 6. In addition to the above-described parental leave arrangements and benefits, parents have the right to take up to 15 working days and receive 80% wage replacement for the illness of a child or family member. Although all leave related to parenthood is available to both parents, the majority of leave is taken by mothers.

Childcare is available and affordable through a network of mainly public providers and a smaller number of publicly subsidized private providers. Depending on the income of the family and family property, parents contribute from 10% to 80% of the program costs for their first child. As of September 2008, parents do not have to pay for preschool for their second child (when they attend school at the same time as the first child). During the 2008–2009 school year, 40% of children younger than age 3 were enrolled in preschools, while 84% of children from ages 3 to 6 (the obligatory school age) were enrolled in preschool.

The employment rate for men was 72.7% in 2008, while the employment rate of women was 64.2%. Almost all working women in Slovenia are employed full-time, and they generally do not interrupt their employment while parenting preschool children. This dual-breadwinner model has been dominant in Slovenia for decades, with the percentage of women working part time in 2008 only at 11.4%.

Although these public policy measures have been improving work-family balance during the last decade, employers have been instituting tenuous employment contracts and working arrangements that increase job precariousness and insecurity. For example, the share of workers with temporary contracts increased from 5.8% in 1992 to 10.3% in 2009.

The increasing intensification of work and these insecure employment arrangements seriously endanger the quality of life of young parents. The negative consequences of insecure employment arrangements are experienced more often by younger workers and women (especially mothers), who also carry a higher burden of responsibility for unpaid household-related work and care work. Overall, women more often than men have negative experiences related to the intersection of work and parenthood.

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