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## Who cares? Changing patterns of childcare in Central and Eastern Europe

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**Summary** This article compares childcare provisions in the new member countries of the EU. It takes into account two pillars of childcare policy: publicly provided childcare services and parental leave provisions. In the analysis, the fuzzy set ideal types approach is utilized. In contrast to the studies conducted so far, this article stops treating the region of Central and Eastern Europe as a monolith and demonstrates the existence of cross-country *variation* of childcare policies within the region. Furthermore, the difference is systematized by identifying four clusters of childcare policy. These are: *explicit familism*, *implicit familism*, *female mobilizing* and *comprehensive support* types. The countries are clustered as follows: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia in the explicit familism policy model; Estonia and Latvia in the female mobilizing type policy; Lithuania and Hungary pursuing the childcare policies typical of the comprehensive support model; and finally the childcare policy in Poland resembles characteristics of the implicit familism model.

**Key words** Central and Eastern Europe, childcare, fuzzy sets, gender regimes, transition

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### Introduction

Childcare policies have of late been perceived as one of the main instruments of the state to influence gender relations and women's economic autonomy (Daly, 1994; Jenson and Sineau, 2001). While family policy and gender regimes in the Western world have already received a lot of attention, the situation in the newly democratized post-communist countries has, to date, remained under-analysed. The development of childcare policies in the region is, therefore, often presented in a one-sided way. It is argued that under socialism women were encouraged to join the labour force by special incentives which included publicly provided, affordable childcare services. However, after the collapse of communism, the gov-

ernments in the newly democratized states assumed that these societies would opt for a male-breadwinner model. As a result, authorities started to close many childcare centres, especially nurseries, and withdrew financial support (Ferge, 1992; Sainsbury, 1994).

These processes were indeed put into practice, and no doubt these countries have had a lot in common. Thus, post-communist family policies have been treated as a monolith and the common trend of refamilialization has been emphasized (Hantrais, 2004; Pascall and Lewis, 2004). Studies which have started to deal with the possible diversity of policies in these states are still quite rare (for exceptions see: Fodor et al., 2002; Saxonberg and Sirovatka, 2006), and have typically focused on

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parental leave provision (omitting the question of childcare services) at the same time dealing with two or three case studies. Additionally, the comparisons are often not systematized enough and do not cover the differences between these countries.

This article aims to further develop the picture of childcare policy developments in this region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) by way of a precise and systematic comparative description of the *differences* between these countries. This task first required gathering the various data sets which were previously unknown, especially in relation to the early stage of the post-communist transformation. Second, we present a more nuanced picture of the post-communist world, providing a systematic description of differences between these countries with a more dynamic, historical perspective. Third, a new methodological approach (fuzzy set ideal types analysis) has been applied, allowing for a comparison of many cases without losing focus on their complexity. This method provided findings which reveal the existence of different versions of familialist, as well as non-familialist, childcare policies in the post-communist world. The article also contributes to the works relating to childcare policies in this part of Europe, as we take into account changes which occurred throughout the whole period of transformation. Finally, the analysis covers both the schemes providing cash benefits, as well as childcare services.

We decided to compare childcare policies in the eight new European Union member states: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia during the period 1989–2004. This is the first time such a large number of post-communist countries have been chosen for a dynamic comparative analysis of childcare policies. All these countries were facing similar challenges within similar time frames; each of them was regarded as successful in their ‘unification with the West’, and they gained EU membership at the same time. Thus, on the basis of these similarities one might expect them to have pursued, and to be pursuing, similar types of policies.

This article takes the fuzzy set ideal types approach to comparative studies as it facilitated delineation of differences in childcare policies, and it is especially useful for *medium-n* comparisons. The fuzzy set approach also allows for tracing the dynamics of change through the years and opens the

way for new combinations of policies. Instead of checking whether particular mixes of policies conform to the ideal type of an already existing typology which was developed in the West, the approach actually allows for discovering *new* policy mixes. In this sense the whole analysis has a strong *inductive* element while being both very precise and systematic at the same time. In using this method, it was possible to overcome the problem of applying the Western analytical framework. With its defined concepts and welfare policy models, these concept-driven analyses might take some important elements out of the Eastern European picture.

The work follows in several steps. First, some points on the theoretical discussion concerning the comparative approach to childcare policy are presented, followed by the choice of the policy dimensions used for comparison. The second section of the article describes the fuzzy set ideal types method. Third, some space is devoted to the justification of the sets’ calibration. Fourth, we present the empirical findings, highlight the regularities, and cluster the countries.

## Theoretical discussion

Comparative works on childcare have been involved in the debate between the mainstream research and the feminist work on welfare states and social policy in general (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993). For example, many studies which have already taken the feminist critique into account when considering mainstream research on welfare state and family policy have based their analyses on the notion of defamilialization (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Hantrais, 2004; Leitner and Lessenich, 2005). The central question of this line of research is how different mixes of family policy measures influence the strength and kind of intra-family dependencies. The most obvious example of defamilializing policies is publicly provided, accessible and cheap care services. Among others, they enable women (primary care providers) to join the labour force, and therefore facilitate access to commodification (Orloff, 1993).

As defamilializing policies shift the responsibility for care away from the family, familialist policy measures do just the opposite. Mahon (2002) describes the ‘new familialism’ with regard to the institutional evolution of family policies in France

and Finland as a response to defamilialization. Similarly, Hantrais (2004) talks about the neo-familialist policies in Western Europe and refamilialization in post-communist countries. Giving less priority to publicly provided childcare services is presented in such countries as offering 'more choice' or 'the rights to care'. Here, an example of familialist policies may be parental leave with a long duration of payment.

However, as some other studies have demonstrated, one might as well talk about different 'faces' or 'varieties' of familialism (Haney, 2003; Leitner, 2003), to a large part depending on the *degree* and *kind* of state activity (or the availability of services provided by the market). Leitner (2003) differentiates between four types of policy mixes based on the presence of familialistic and defamilializing elements within them: 'implicit', 'explicit' and optional 'familialism' and 'defamilialization'. Only in the case of the latter do care services relax the family responsibility for care as the primary family policy measure. Acknowledging the 'varieties of familialism' has important consequences for grasping the developments in childcare policies in Eastern Europe. As mentioned above, this part of Europe is very often perceived as a monolith, and the authors underline the common trend of refamilialization (Hantrais, 2004; Pascall and Lewis, 2004).

The common tendency towards reforming childcare policies in the familialist direction is by no means present in the post-communist countries. Legacies of state socialism included high rates of female economic activity, usually highly developed childcare services and quite generous systems of state support for maternity and family. At the beginning of transformation, with the withdrawal of the state from social policies, defamilializing policies started to be cut, especially the provision of public childcare services. Due to budget constraints, decisionmakers were faced with important trade-offs and dilemmas. Cuts in family policy were often the solution to these dilemmas, justified by slogans emphasizing that maternity and rearing children are a woman's role (Domanski, 1992).

The new stream of research on this region has begun to acknowledge the gender perspective in analysing economic transformation in Eastern Europe, and especially the dynamics of childcare policy reforms (Fodor et al., 2002; Haney, 2002;

Aidukaitė, 2004). Still, systematic research and especially clustering countries was difficult due to the lack of stability of the policy outcomes and their temporary character (Deacon, 1993; Ksiezopolski, 1999). This was also one of the reasons why in 1996 Esping-Andersen rejected the possibility of using his regime types for a comparative analysis of the Eastern European countries since they were 'a virtual laboratory of experimentation' (Esping-Andersen, 1996: 267).

Haney (2002), for example, defined the features of the Hungarian welfare state as liberal, but without taking into account the generous parental leave provision and well-developed childcare services. There were similar problems with classification of Polish childcare policies. The latter have usually been described as conservative (Heinen, 1997), mainly due to the role and position of the Catholic Church in this country. Still, the development of pronatalist policies reflecting the religious orientation of political elites could barely be observed in Poland, in contrast to the case of the secular Czech Republic (Saxonberg and Sirovatka, 2006). Finally, less attention has been paid to Baltic post-communist countries. One of the most recent studies concluded that the childcare policies in Lithuania have been less generous than in Estonia and Latvia (Aidukaitė, 2004).

Our study aims to tackle these analytical and empirical obstacles. First, this article includes consideration of childcare services as the family policy dimension that has been underexplored in previous research. Moreover, the possible diversity among such a number of countries has never been studied before. Using a broad range of empirical data makes the comparison even more reliable and shows that different mixes of childcare policies are present in these countries. Second, in order to overcome the problem of the temporal instability of these countries' policy output, the analysis attempts to present synchronic and diachronic perspectives simultaneously. In other words, this article presents a comparison between the countries, but also between different points in time. Thus, it is possible to present the dynamics of changes, policy trends and the diversity among the countries. The next section describes the dimensions which constitute childcare policies and provides a basis for distinguishing between different combinations of policies.

## Childcare policy – dimensions of comparison

Following feminist scholarship on welfare policies, but also other comparative studies of family policies (Kamerman and Kahn, 1981; Zimmermann, 1995; Gauthier, 1996; Harding, 1996), we include parental leave provisions and day-care arrangements in the analysis. These two elements have been recognized as the most important pillars of childcare policies. Accordingly, Daly and Rake argue that ‘the two measures most telling of how public policies treat care are parental leave, as distinct from maternity, and public childcare facilities’ (Daly and Rake, 2004: 51).

Further, we decided to express two kinds of childcare policies through four dimensions: (a) the extensiveness of childcare services; (b) the quality of childcare services; (c) the generosity of parental leave; and (d) its universality. Below we provide a more detailed description of these four dimensions.

*Extensiveness of childcare services.* The extensiveness of childcare services reflects the role of the state in the provision of services aimed at families with small children (at pre-primary school age). This aspect also provides information on the locus of the service: if the extensiveness of the publicly provided childcare is high, it means that the care is provided by the state; if it is low, then the importance of other forms of care (provided by the family or private agencies) increases. This is why the dimension of extensiveness is of great relevance to the discussion about the interplay between public (state-provided) and private (mostly home-provided) services (cf. Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993). The exclusion of for-profit care seems reasonable, since this type of service is marginal in the region (Rostgaard, 2004). The extensiveness of the childcare is operationalized here through the net enrolment rate in pre-primary education.

*Quality of childcare services.* The next dimension of childcare policy is the quality of the services provided by publicly run kindergartens. The higher the quality of the kindergartens, the more attention the state pays to the issue of institutional support for parents. The commitment of the welfare state to the provision of high-quality institutional childcare should be perceived as an indication of the incentivization of female employment, in addition to the promotion of gender equality (among partners), social cohesion and equalizing life chances of children.

As Kamerman points out, ‘there is no agreed definition of – or standards concerning – quality of ECEC programs cross-nationally and little systematic attention to this subject in the literature’ (2003: 10). This article focuses on the pupil–teacher ratio as it is the only available measure for the comparison conducted here. Moreover, it is argued that this measure of quality has a serious impact on the educational outcomes of pupils (Kvist, 1999). Finally, this transparent measure can be observed by the parents, and in this way may determine the childcare attendance of their children (especially those aged 3–6) (Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

*Generosity of parental leave provisions.* The function of parental leave may vary according to its duration and generosity. On the one hand, some leave is necessary to recover from the delivery and for the first period of breastfeeding. On the other hand, extensive periods of leave can contribute to the economic ‘deactivation’ of women.

The generosity of parental leave provisions is here expressed by the length of paid leave and the level of payment. The two elements are the basis for the index of generosity. It is measured by the number of paid weeks’ leave multiplied by the level of payment expressed as the replacement rate of the average monthly net wage. We also include the number of weeks available for using maternity leave plus the whole duration of paid parental leave.

Importantly, in the post-communist countries this leave is divided into two parts which we will call maternity leave and extended leave. Maternity leave varies up to a dozen weeks, is directly connected with the birth of a child, and usually cannot be shared with the father. Then parental leave follows, which can last for three years. For the purpose of comparison, families with one child are considered. Finally, wherever more than one system exists, the scores are added, presenting the overall effort of the state. See Table 1 for examples of the calculation.

*Universality of parental leave provisions.* Finally, the universality of parental leave benefits is taken into account. The benefits for persons taking care of a small child are important for the assessment of the state policies towards parenthood. The analysis of the universality of parental leave benefit reflects the approach of the state towards this problem: if benefits are easily available, then the state commitment to the issue is considered as high.

The analysis of the universality of benefits should reflect the conditions under which the benefit is granted to the eligible individuals. Usually this is based on the differentiation between whether the benefit is universal (on the basis of the citizenship or residence), selective (insurance-based) or residual (available only to those deemed in need after passing the means or income test) (Clasen and van Oorshot, 2002). In the case of maternity and extended parental leave benefits, the situation is complex as there might be different principles applied to each benefit. This can give different combinations; for instance, universal access to maternity benefit can be combined with an insurance-based access to extended parental leave.

Further, the dimensions are used as a basis for translating data into the fuzzy set scores. The following section explains this methodological approach.

### Fuzzy set ideal types analysis – an introduction

Fruitful research on the welfare state (including childcare policy) should be sensitive to the variation among cases and driven by clear conceptual and theoretical guidelines. The complexity of childcare policy, methodologically speaking, refers to the fact that one has to analyse many dimensions (in our case four) of this policy simultaneously. However, this task becomes harder when the number of cases grows. The conceptual solution to studying complexity has been proposed by Lazarsfeld (1937) who developed the idea of viewing different instances (types) of the same phenomenon as configurations of attributes constituting this phenomenon. In effect, each type has its own specific combination of attributes.

A more formal and systematic application of the configurational approach, the fuzzy set theory, has been proposed by Ragin (2000). This article utilizes the extension of this approach, namely fuzzy set ideal types analysis. Based on the fuzzy set theory, it allows for a careful comparison of a greater number of cases without losing the emphasis on the *complexity* of childcare policy. As shown by Kvist (1999; 2006), this type of comparative approach can be successfully used for studying complexity, diversity and change of social policy.

The approach introduces the notion of fuzzy sets. A fuzzy set is a representation of an empirical

phenomenon which is guided by rules stemming from theoretical and substantive knowledge. Fuzzy sets should not be seen as conventional variables as they comprise qualitative anchors (defining boundaries of a set) which affect the membership assessment. The qualitative anchors are established in the process of calibration. Fuzzy set ranges from 0 (fully out of the set) to 1 (fully in the set) and these values – with 0.5 as a cross-over point – constitute qualitative boundaries of a phenomenon. Calibrating the set means establishing points for translating empirical values into fuzzy set scores. For example, a theoretical concept of childcare quality is operationalized by the pupil–staff ratio. The set of childcare quality is then calibrated according to some theoretical premises (relevance for child development, relating to cognitive skills, etc.) and empirical knowledge (some systems of childcare identified previously as having high/low quality). The ‘real’, empirical values – like, for example, six children per teacher – is translated into a particular fuzzy set score (in our analysis it is 1, thus fully in the set of childcare quality).

Furthermore, the fundamental assumption of the fuzzy set approach is that empirical phenomena have a complex character. This configurational character stems from the presumption that theoretical constructs can rarely be described by one aspect (characteristic), and only multidimensional treatment of cases can provide their sufficient reflection in the process of research. To give an example, the analysis of a component of childcare policy, such as parental leave, should focus on at least two features: universality and generosity. These two dimensions represent the constituting aspects of a given phenomenon (here: parental leave). Together, the two dimensions give four combinations: low universality and high generosity, low universality and low generosity, high universality and high generosity, high universality and low generosity. The configurations of the extreme values of sets (0 and 1) are treated as Weberian ideal types. This example illustrates how different configurations of sets and their extreme values (0 and 1) yield different parental leave types.

All logically possible configurations (in the above example, four) create so-called ‘property space’. One can imagine the two-dimensional property space as a square, three-dimensional as a cube and so on. The property space is delineated by the lines connecting its corners (i.e. configurations). If one

treats corners of the property space (configuration) as a Weberian ideal type, empirical cases will be located within this space. Thus, empirical cases will somehow conform to ideal types. The great benefit of the fuzzy set ideal types approach is that it enables the researcher to define what ideal type a given case conforms most closely to. In this way, it is a great step forward in modelling or typologizing an empirical reality. We have derived the relevant dimensions of childcare policy from the theory, and then we view their configurations as ideal types. Finally, thanks to the operations on sets, we are able to determine to which ideal type of childcare policy a 'real policy' conforms most closely to.

There are some rules which govern fuzzy sets and their interpretation. The operations used in this study are: logical *negation* as well as *and*. As already said, since the phenomenon is present in a fuzzy set to a different extent, it can, logically, be also non-present to a different degree. The fuzzy membership value of a case in set not-A is equal to 1-set A (Ragin, 2000: 172). For example, if childcare policy membership in the set of generosity G (set of generosity described by letter G, where the capital letter stands for the set) is 0.6, then this case scores 0.4 in the set of non-generosity g (described by the letter g, where the lower-case letter stands for the negation of the set of generosity).

Logical *and* (here represented by the sign  $*$ ) is used when two or more sets are intersected; that is, when a phenomenon is defined by two or more dimensions and seen as a combination. As mentioned, the configurations of extreme values of sets are treated as Weberian ideal types. For example, the two dimensions of universality and generosity will give the following combinations:  $u*g$ ,  $u*G$ ,  $U*g$ ,  $U*G$  or in plain English low universality and low generosity, low universality and high generosity, etc. It is the *minimum rule* which governs this operation. It means that the membership value of such sets is equal to the lowest score achieved by any of them (the degree they occur in set U *and* in set G – their 'common terrain'). Thus, if one takes into account the combination of sets  $U*G$ , and the case scores 0.6 and 0.8 respectively, the membership of this case in the intersection of sets  $U*G$  is 0.6.

These operations on fuzzy sets allow for proper and fast assessment of the cases' membership in a complex combination of sets. This is done by the evaluation of a membership degree in the all logically

possible combinations of full membership and non-membership in the sets which create the property space. Logically, the number of combinations equals  $2^k$  where  $k$  stands for a number of dimensions. In our case it means there are 16 possible combinations. The idea of comparison is to contrast empirical evidence with each combination representing an ideal type and find the instance (the particular combination) with the highest membership. The membership in the combination also ranges from 0 to 1. If it reaches 1, the characteristics of a studied policy are very close to the ideal type. As this is a rather rare situation, this ideal typical combination of policies serves here more as an analytical tool. These properties of the approach offer a great advantage when studying the dynamics of childcare policy change: one studies the conformity of policies to a variety of ideal-types repeatedly in subsequent points of time. This way, one may trace changes both within one type of policy, and shifts from one policy type to another.

To sum up, the fuzzy set ideal types approach offers great advantages when studying childcare policy. It allows for transparent and systematic measurement of policy, driven by clear conceptual and theoretical guidelines. When applied to many points of time (in this study, eight), it gives a strong basis for describing trends. Finally, used in a cross-country comparison, it allows for clustering countries. All three features of this approach are used in this study.

The analysis of childcare policy will proceed as follows. The four constituting dimensions of childcare policy have already been identified. Next, the calibration of sets according to theoretical and substantive knowledge takes place, which serves as a basis for translating data into fuzzy sets scores.

## Calibration of the sets – defining boundaries

This section defines and argues concretely what it means for a policy to be extensive, of good quality, generous, and accessible. Table 1 presents the calibration for all the four dimensions.

*Extensiveness of childcare services.* The upper cut-off point (fully in the set) is established at the level of 80 percent. This level is found to be typical of the Scandinavian, universalist type of childcare policy, characterized by almost full coverage of children in the pre-primary education age (3–6) (Kvist, 1999).

Further, as Hantrais (2004) argues, such a high level is justified when a significant percentage of women are active in the labour market. As far as the cross-over point is concerned, it has been established at 50 percent of the net enrolment rate. Comparative studies indicate that levels similar to this reflect modest coverage (Daly and Rake, 2004). Finally, the lower qualitative breakpoint for the extensiveness set equals 20 percent of children enrolled in public pre-primary education. This level refers to very marginal engagement of public authorities in the childcare policies (Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

*Quality of childcare services.* The higher qualitative point is set for the ratio 6 (six pupils per one teacher). This number reflects the European standards for very high-quality childcare, typical for the Scandinavian countries (OECD, 2001; Gornick and Meyers, 2003). The lower anchor is established at the pupil-teacher ratio of 12. This level refers to the target set up by EU experts, below which the quality should not drop (EC, 1996). Following OECD suggestions, the cross-over point will be established at the ratio of nine pupils for one teacher (OECD, 2001).

*Generosity of parental leave provisions.* Some guidance can be taken from the comparative research on parental leave (Gornick and Meyers, 2003; Daly and Rake, 2004). In sum, 12–16 weeks' leave with some payment was usually considered a minimum, with 14 weeks being an internationally recognized standard.<sup>1</sup> Second, the authors agree that parental leave of one year means a relatively moderate to high level of support. Third, the possibility to extend the leave up to two or three years (with *some* payment) has been considered as very generous.

Accordingly, we decided to establish the lower cut-off point at the level of 14 weeks and 0.3 of the average net wage. The cross-over point corresponds to the moderate state support as discussed by Gornick and Meyers (2003); that is, one year with the lower support (0.3 of the average net wage) accompanied by the system of generous maternity leave provision (26 weeks and full wage replacement).

The communist countries were the pioneers in introducing paid parental leave (the *extended* leave), already available in the late 1960s and 1970s. For these reasons the upper cut-off point for the analysis, expressing possibly the most generous combination of the parental leave provision, comprises the high standard of maternity leave (52 weeks paid in full) plus the three-year-long

extended leave with the flat-rate payment at the level of 0.3 of the average net wage. All these provisions are also available to a different degree. This is tackled by the dimension of universality.

*Universality of parental leave provisions.* The following approach is proposed here: one takes into account the coverage and the conditions which are to be met by the person eligible for the benefit as the basis of the universality assessment. In other words, which social groups are eligible for the parental leave benefit is analysed as well as which situations are taken into account as the basis for the entitlement. The upper qualitative point is set for the situation where every citizen (resident) is entitled to some basic benefit and where access to it is not conditional.

The lower cut-off point is characterized by the benefit which is provided by the state, but it is means-tested (income-tested). Finally, the cross-over point should reflect the situation where there is a clear link between receiving the benefit and contribution. Thus, in effect one has a triad of welfare provision: it can be universal (fully in), contributory (cross-over) and finally selective (fully out) (cf. Kvist, 1999). These three broad clusters were divided into smaller parts in order to allow for more finely grained analysis, encompassing the combinations of principles and taking into account different scopes of application within each cluster. Table 1 gathers the calibration for these four dimensions.

## Analysis of the empirical material, dimension by dimension

This part of the article analyses the data alongside the analytical anchors which were established through calibration. We study the dynamics of changes in each of the four dimensions. This manner of presenting our findings allows for an insight into the empirical results and serves as a convenient starting point for the configurational analysis, where the article clusters the countries around some ideal types. Afterwards each country is considered separately in order to observe the most important changes in each of these dimensions.

As Table 2 shows, the overall balance of changes in the *extensiveness* of childcare services for children at the age of 3 to 6 has been positive for all the countries, apart from Slovakia. Naturally, the countries started from different initial points and can generally be divided into two groups. The first group, with

**Table 1** Specification of empirical indicators and translation of data to fuzzy score ranges and verbal qualifiers: childcare policy

<i>Empirical indicator</i>	<i>Fully out</i> 0	<i>Mostly but not fully out</i> 0.01–0.24	<i>More or less fully out</i> 0.25–0.49	<i>Neither in nor out</i> 0.50	<i>More or less in</i> 0.51–0.75	<i>Mostly but not fully in</i> 0.76–0.99	<i>Fully in</i> 1.00
<i>Extensiveness of the family policy measured as the enrolment rate of children in kindergartens</i>	<20%	20.10–35.00	35.10–49.90	50%	50.10–65.00	65.10–79.90	>80%
<i>Quality of the family policy measured as a child-to-staff ratio in the kindergartens</i>	>12.00	10.51–11.99	9.10–10.50	9.00	7.51–8.99	6.10–7.50	<6.00
<i>Generosity of maternity-related benefits measured by the index based on weighted replacement rate and duration of benefits<sup>a</sup></i>	<4.20	4.30–21.50	21.60–41.50	41.60	41.70–69.50	69.60–98.70	>98.80
<i>Universality of parenthood-related benefits (maternity and parental benefits) measured as the combination of principles guiding the access (residual, selective and universal)</i>	Means-test, Means-test <sup>b</sup>	Insurance, Means-test	Insurance, Insurance	Insurance, Insurance (no conditions)	Universal, Means-test	Universal, Insurance	Universal, Universal

*Notes:*

<sup>a</sup> Calculated according to the formula given in the text: the number of weeks paid maternity leave times the replacement rate plus the same but in relation to the extended leave (childcare leave, etc.). For the lower cut-off point the index is  $14 \times 0.3 = 4.2$ , for the upper cut-off point it is  $(52 \times 1) + (156 \times 0.3) = 98.8$ .

<sup>b</sup> First: maternity leave; second: parental leave (extended, child care, etc.).

quite strong membership, comprised such countries as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Estonia, with a modest membership in the set, lay somewhere in the middle, while the other Baltic counties, Slovenia and Poland (with the weakest membership score: mostly but not fully out), were at the other end. Not all the differences held for the next 15 years. While Hungary kept full membership for the whole period, the Czech Republic experi-

enced some decline at the beginning of the 1990s. Simultaneously, Slovakia fell even below the cross-over point in the mid-1990s and never returned to the 1989 level. The first half of the 1990s can be characterized by an overall decline which was strongest in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. After that period, several countries noted a considerable improvement, the greatest being observed in cases like that of Latvia, where at the beginning of the

**Table 2** Extensiveness of childcare services: fuzzy set membership

Country/year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004
Czech Rep.	1.00	0.76	0.87	0.93	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.00
Estonia	0.56	0.52	0.41	0.62	0.81	0.90	1.00	1.00
Hungary	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Latvia	0.34	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.32	0.56	0.94	0.98
Lithuania	0.34	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.25	0.32	0.58
Poland	0.21	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.19	0.24	0.28	0.33
Slovakia	0.93	0.81	0.58	0.43	0.63	0.74	0.77	0.71
Slovenia	0.40	0.39	0.52	0.63	0.66	0.75	0.61	0.54

Source: Data sources available from the authors.

**Table 3** Quality of childcare services: fuzzy set membership

Country/year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004
Czech Rep.	0.00	0.28	0.00	0.08	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Estonia	0.71	0.94	0.84	0.89	0.94	0.71	0.71	0.71
Hungary	0.08	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.49	0.49
Latvia	0.71	0.72	0.82	0.73	0.73	0.74	0.61	0.23
Lithuania	0.71	0.99	1.00	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.71	0.71
Poland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Slovakia	0.00	0.25	0.80	0.30	0.30	0.48	0.48	0.00
Slovenia	0.55	0.46	1.00	0.25	0.52	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: Data sources available from the authors.

1990s enrolment rates fell below the level of 20 percent (fully out of the set), but then rose up to almost 80 percent in 2002 and 2004 (and reached full set membership). Similarly, the enrolment rates rose in Estonia, though the situation there in 1989 was already better than in other Baltic countries.

The dynamics of changes within the dimension of the *quality* (see Table 3) of childcare services is hardly regular or linear. The clearest case of low quality is Poland, with its quality of services always below the threshold level, but the Czech Republic can also be characterized by relatively stable, low standards. The group of Baltic countries, however,

are the leaders in this respect and this has also been almost constant. Slovakia and Slovenia had more irregularities and shifts. While in 1993 in Slovenia there were fewer than five pupils per teacher in kindergartens, from 1999 on, this country scores 0. Hungary, though typically the leading case in the remaining three dimensions, here stays below the cut-off point of 12 pupils per teacher, and only almost achieves the cross-over point in 2004 (10 pupils per teacher). In general, the quality of childcare is not high for this group of countries.

Expressing the *generosity* (see Table 4) of the parental leave provisions was a more complex

**Table 4** Generosity of parental leave provision: fuzzy set membership

Country/year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004
Czech Rep.	0.62	0.67	0.57	0.60	0.79	0.70	0.78	0.87
Estonia	0.29	0.59	0.47	0.35	0.35	0.42	0.43	0.41
Hungary	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.94	1.00	1.00	1.00
Latvia	0.29	0.44	0.56	0.41	0.37	0.34	0.32	0.30
Lithuania	0.29	0.54	0.89	0.67	0.72	0.70	0.69	0.71
Poland	0.26	0.49	0.48	0.43	0.46	0.49	0.49	0.52
Slovakia	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.55	0.66	0.65	0.59	0.60
Slovenia	0.15	0.15	0.73	0.74	0.72	0.74	0.69	0.68

Source: Data sources available from the authors.

**Table 5** Universality of parental leave provision: fuzzy set membership

Country/year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004
Czech Rep.	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Estonia	0.30	0.55	0.80	0.80	0.75	0.85	0.85	1.00
Hungary	0.85	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.30	1.00	1.00	1.00
Latvia	0.30	0.40	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lithuania	0.35	0.35	0.40	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Poland	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
Slovakia	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Slovenia	0.40	0.40	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

Source: Data sources available from the authors.

task, since a composite index needed to be developed on the level of 'raw' data. There was also a greater variety in the scores. Only one country, Hungary, reached full membership. About four decades ago, Hungary already had the most generous family support systems in the world (Szikra, 2005). The earnings-related payment (childcare fee) lasts for two years, which is accompanied by the scheme for non-insured people who take care of a child under three years of age. These provisions were seriously cut in 1996 for a couple of years: the insurance-based extended leave was abolished, and the access to the flat-rate scheme was restricted by the introduction of the principle of income-testing. Another country which has scored relatively highly was the Czech Republic, which already had quite a generous system in the 1990s. Importantly, this country introduced a universal parental leave scheme in the middle of the 1990s, which was also extended up to four years, making it the longest extended leave in the world. Slovakia, however, with the similar level of payments, kept the duration of parental leave at the level of three years.

A considerable group of countries has improved its situation since 1989. For example, the Baltic states, after achieving independence, introduced extended (parental) leave for up to three years, as well as the possibility of extending the insurance-based leave by up to one year in the case of Lithuania and Estonia (Aidukaitė, 2004). The differences in overall scores for the three countries are also driven by the levels of payments for parental leave – the replacement rate has never been more than about 5–10 percent in Latvia, while in Lithuania it ranged from 10–15 percent. The latter country also has two more weeks of maternity leave.

Slovenia improved its scheme in 1993. Though it included only two years of paid parental leave, the payments for the non-insured accounted for around 30 percent of the net average wage. Only recently, when the level of payment was established as a flat-rate benefit (previously it was related to the minimum wage), the replacement rate became less generous (around 20%). However, the overall score is relatively high thanks to 260–365 days of maternity leave with a full wage replacement. Finally, in Poland the rise in the value of parental leave benefit has been quite constant.

In the case of *universality* (see Table 5) of parental leave, the overall tendency has been to open access to the benefit to all families with small children. As described above, in many countries there is more than one system; for instance, for the insured and the non-insured. As mentioned above, Hungary had a period of means-testing in the case of extended leave in the second half of the 1990s. The countries that introduced parental leave at the beginning of the 1990s (such as Latvia and Slovenia) made it a universal right. In contrast, Estonia made the insurance-based benefit available for more and more groups over the years until the universal childcare allowance was introduced in 2002. In Poland the situation did not change from 1983, when the parental benefit was introduced – it remained income-tested. Poland also has no universal system of financial support for childcare; maternity benefit is paid only under the condition of previous employment. The next section takes the analysis a step further to make some more general conclusions about the changes in the *combinations* reflecting policy types.

**Table 6** Fuzzy membership scores of childcare policy in ideal types

Year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004
Czech Rep.	E*q*G*u (0.60)	E*q*G*u (0.06)	E*q*G*u (0.57)	E*q*G*u (0.60)	E*q*G*U (0.79)	E*q*G*U (0.70)	E*q*G*U (0.78)	E*q*G*U (0.87)
Estonia	E*Q*g*u (0.56)	E*Q*G*U (0.52)	e*Q*g*U (0.53)	E*Q*g*U (0.62)	E*Q*g*U (0.65)	E*Q*g*U (0.58)	E*Q*g*U (0.57)	E*Q*g*U (0.59)
Hungary	E*q*G*U (0.85)	E*q*G*U (0.88)	E*q*G*U (0.87)	E*q*G*U (0.87)	E*q*G*u (0.70)	E*q*G*U (1.00)	E*q*G*U (0.51)	E*q*G*U (0.51)
Latvia	e*Q*g*u (0.66)	E*Q*g*u (0.56)	e*Q*G*U (0.82)	e*Q*g*U (0.59)	e*Q*g*U (0.63)	E*Q*g*U (0.56)	E*Q*g*U (0.61)	E*q*g*U (0.70)
Lithuania	e*Q*g*u (0.71)	E*Q*G*u (0.54)	e*Q*G*u (0.60)	e*Q*G*U (0.67)	e*Q*G*U (0.72)	e*Q*G*U (0.70)	e*Q*G*U (0.68)	E*Q*G*U (0.58)
Poland	e*q*g*u (0.74)	E*q*g*u (0.51)	e*q*g*u (0.52)	e*q*g*u (0.57)	e*q*g*u (0.54)	e*q*g*u (0.51)	e*q*g*u (0.51)	e*q*G*u (0.58)
Slovakia	E*q*G*u (0.60)	E*q*G*u (0.60)	E*Q*G*u (0.60)	e*q*G*u (0.55)	E*q*G*U (0.63)	E*q*G*U (0.52)	E*q*G*U (0.52)	E*q*G*U (0.60)
Slovenia	e*Q*g*u (0.55)	E*q*g*u (0.54)	E*q*G*U (0.52)	E*q*G*U (0.63)	E*Q*G*U (0.52)	E*q*G*U (0.74)	E*q*G*U (0.61)	E*q*G*U (0.54)

### Childcare policy – configurational analysis

It should be recalled that it is not enough to take into account one dimension of policy to define its location in a given cluster because members of the cluster may be very similar in all but one respect. Therefore the policies should be analysed as *configurations* of aspects.

In this article the four dimensions of childcare policy are taken into account. This gives 16 possible combinations. Membership of each combination of sets is assessed and the highest value is chosen. Table 6 presents the highest scores of the childcare policy dimensions for each country in selected years. It should be noted that when the article refers to Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia during the period 1989–91, these countries were republics of the Soviet Union, just as the Czech Republic and Slovakia were Czechoslovakia until 1993, and Slovenia belonged to Yugoslavia (1989–91).

As far as the highest scores are concerned, the policies conformed to 13 ideal types. The highest scores for each country and year are depicted in Table 6.

The results in Table 6 should be read as follows. Combinations of letters illustrate the policy type, while the number in parentheses describes conformity to the ideal type (the higher the number, the closer the combination is to the ideal type). For example, Hungarian policy in 1989 belonged to the type E\*q\*G\*U, which

means that the policy was characterized by high extensiveness (E) and low quality (q) of childcare services and the generous (G) and universal (U) nature of parental leave benefits. The high number reflects the close conformity of the policy to this ideal type. As mentioned above, the fuzzy sets approach is sensible to two modes of change: from one type to another (difference in kind), and change in the conformity to the ideal type (difference in degree). The latter can be illustrated by the change of score for the same combination (e.g. Hungary scored 0.85 in 1989 and 0.88 in 1991 for the combination E\*q\*G\*U, which shows more conformity to the ideal type in 1991). The qualitative change takes place when policy shifts to a different type (as represented by another combination).

Some combinations occurred more often than others, some of them occurred only once. The advantage of the methodological approach used here is that instead of trying to fit the policies to pre-existing policy types, we can actually read them out of the table presented, which means that the new policy types may emerge. In this way the article provides answers to the theoretical problems of applying the concepts invented in the West to the cases of post-communist countries. In order to make the conclusions from the comparison even more systematic, four clusters are distinguished and labelled.

The main argument of this article centres on the issue of care arrangement by answering two main

questions: first, where the locus of responsibility for care is; and second, how this facilitates women's access to commodification. The first dimension, therefore, asks about the degree of defamilialization: how much the 'caring function of family' (Leitner, 2003) is encouraged by the policy measures. By adding the second point of reference we intend to move on from a simple defamilialization approach and underline how different state policies facilitate access to paid work. In this way, while the content of the policies we took into consideration would allow for describing the combinations in the language of defamilialization, we decided to put more emphasis on the more ultimate aim and the potential result of childcare policies, which is how the state treats the problem of female access to commodification in situations where women are still perceived as the primary carers.

This article demonstrates that instead of a unified tendency towards familialization of policies, many of the post-communist countries followed different paths of familialization while some of them strengthened the defamilializing components of their policies. Our classification partially overlaps with some of the most recent theoretical accounts of childcare policy analyses (Leitner, 2003) including the works on CEE (Saxonberg and Sirovatka, 2006). What is innovative in our case is that we tend to think about defamilialization versus familialism (and furthermore, its different versions) also as different types of state policy towards the labour force. This is especially important in the context of Eastern Europe, where after 1989 unemployment was a new phenomenon. As many authors argue, refamilializing policies served as an important instrument of dealing with the unemployment problem; burdened with care, women were less able to join (or re-enter) the labour force. For all the reasons stated above, we decided to distinguish between four policy-types: *implicit* and *explicit familialism*, *comprehensive support* and *female mobilizing* respectively.

There are two groups of countries where the mix of childcare policies locates the responsibility for care within the *family*. The first of them can be clustered under the label of *explicit familialism* (E\*Q\*G\*U), and comprises the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. In this model the state pursues some more active policies to support the traditional family model. Thus, the periods of paid parental leave are longer (usually two to four years), and the same is true for the length

of parental leave payments. Due to the promotion of private care, the state does not subsidize any form of childcare centres. Women are perceived through their role as carers; there are incentives for exercising the task of care at home (long periods of paid leave), and even if maternity leave is over, the support lasts for a long time (extended leave). The ideal combination for this type of policies would be: low scores on the extensiveness and quality of childcare services, and high on both generosity and universality (e\*q\*G\*U). The combination closest to this, which repeated several times, is the same albeit for a high score on extensiveness of childcare services. Low quality of childcare accompanied by extensive support for domestic care during the first years of a child's life suggests shifting the locus of care to family with less concern about the commodification of potential earners (that is to say, women).

The second familialistic combination is *implicit familialism*. This model only truly happened to be the case in Poland, and is represented by a low score in all the four dimensions (e\*q\*g\*u). The policies are residual and formally neutral, with the assumption that family should not be interrupted in its task of educating children. They neither suggest the locus of responsibility for care, nor do they explicitly mobilize women to join the workforce. However, due to gender inequalities in the labour market, the lack of affordable and available childcare (provided by the market, for instance) leaves the sphere of care almost solely to families.

The third group of cases comprises the countries with low generosity of parental leave provisions with the rest of the dimensions scoring highly (E\*Q\*g\*U). In this cluster, not only is the rate of children in the childcare services high, but so is the quality of services. Parents might even have the universal right for using the parental leave, but since the provision is not on a very generous level, the incentive to do so might not be encouraging enough for parents (i.e. women) to resign from paid employment. This is the case of some of the scores of two Baltic countries – Estonia and Latvia – but at the end of the period under review. The label for this type is *female-mobilizing*, due to the small effect of parental leave support on locating the responsibility for care within the family and for more concern with supporting the access to commodification.

Finally, when policy scores high on all the dimensions (E\*Q\*G\*U), the family is receiving support on

a couple of fronts. The patterns of combining paid employment and childcare can be chosen by the families individually. However, due to the availability of high-quality childcare services, and when there is a need for two incomes within the family, this combination of the policies generally supports families with dual earners. This is very rare in the case of this group of countries and only Lithuania and Hungary approach this model. Here the families confronted with the 'childcare problem' have more alternatives at hand, since the policies are more diversified and rather multipurpose. As a result, we decided to label this combination of policies as *comprehensive support*. In other words, families and women are both paid and relieved in their care responsibilities, and this also leaves some space for mobilizing two earners within the family. Though the previous cluster (female mobilizing) also supports the dual-earner family, the mobilizing function there is underlined by the lack of generous incentives for providing the childcare at home.

Below, each of the countries is briefly described with reference to the dynamics of policy transformation and its consolidation into a particular model.

### Childcare policies – analysis of the countries' trajectories

In the period 1989–95, the Czech Republic remained in the cluster characterized by generous parental leave benefits (but of narrow scope) as well as the high extensiveness and low quality of the childcare (*female mobilizing*). The membership scores in this period were moderate. The childcare policy in 1997–2004 shifted to the cluster sharing the characteristics of the previous one, except for high universality (*explicit familialism*). As for the membership strength, it grew from 1999 and at the end of the period the Czech family policy conformed closely to this ideal type.

The policy pursued by the Slovak Republic after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was to some extent similar to the Czech one. Thus, at the beginning of the analysed period the countries conformed exactly to the same ideal type (*female mobilizing*). In 1993 and 1995 their paths diverged to come together in the period 1997–2004 when the childcare policy of Slovakia shifted to the *explicit familialism* model. Even though the conformity to the ideal types was weak (which may lead to ambiguities

in interpretation), the policy pursued in this country resembled the broad characteristics of the specified model.

The childcare policy of Slovenia was also changing: from 1989–91 it was typical for the *implicit familialism* ideal type. From 1995 on, the policy was more typical for the *explicit familialism* model. From 1999, however, the policy conformity to this ideal type decreased.

As far as the Polish childcare policy is concerned, one may observe the following trends. For most of the time Poland belonged to one cluster, characterized by low extensiveness and quality of services combined with not generous and hardly accessible benefits ( $e^*q^*g^*u$ ). However, Poland's membership in this was generally low from 1993. Though in 2004 the policy shifted to the cluster with high generosity ( $e^*q^*g^*u$ ), the developments observed through the whole period allow for placing this type of policy in the *implicit familialism* cluster.

In Estonia the changes in childcare policy were more frequent and profound. In 1991 Estonia's policy belonged to the cluster of high extensiveness and quality of the childcare combined with low generosity and universality of benefits ( $E^*Q^*g^*u$ ), and then moved to the type of high extensiveness, quality, generosity and universality ( $E^*Q^*G^*U$ ). From 1995 on, Estonia clustered in the type characterized by high extensiveness and quality, universal but not generous benefits ( $E^*Q^*g^*U$ ). In the case of Estonia, the membership values were small, so it is hard to classify the early trends. Since 1995, the policy resembled a *female mobilizing* type of policy.

The second Baltic country, Latvia, pursued a childcare policy characterized by the lack of continuity. The period 1989–91 featured high extensiveness and high quality of services, but not generous and not universal benefits ( $E^*Q^*g^*u$ ). In 1993, it belonged to the cluster which differed from the previous one in high generosity ( $E^*Q^*G^*u$ ). In two subsequent periods, Latvian childcare policy moved to the type characterized by low extensiveness and high quality of services and neither generous nor universal benefits ( $e^*Q^*g^*u$ ). In the period from 1999–2002, the country changed its position again. As far as the Latvian membership values are concerned, childcare policy conformed to the ideal types to different degrees: in 1989, 1993 and 2004 the policy was *mostly but not fully in*, while in the remaining years it was *more or less in*. All these

Table 7 Classification of childcare policies in Central and Eastern Europe

Year	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2004
Czech	Female mobilizing E*Q*g*u	Female mobilizing E*Q*G*U	Female mobilizing e*Q*g*U	Female mobilizing e*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism E*q*G*u	Explicit familialism Female mobilizing	Explicit familialism Female mobilizing	Explicit familialism Female mobilizing
Estonia	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*u	Explicit familialism E*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*G*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*U	Female mobilizing e*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism Female mobilizing	Comprehensive support Female mobilizing	Comprehensive support Female mobilizing
Hungary	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*u	Explicit familialism E*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*G*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism Female mobilizing	Comprehensive support Female mobilizing	Comprehensive support Female mobilizing
Latvia	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*u	Explicit familialism E*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*G*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism e*Q*g*U	Explicit familialism Female mobilizing	Comprehensive support Female mobilizing	Comprehensive support Female mobilizing
Lithuania	Implicit familialism e*Q*g*u	Implicit familialism E*Q*G*U	Implicit familialism e*Q*G*U	Implicit familialism Comprehensive support	Comprehensive support Implicit familialism	Comprehensive support Implicit familialism	Comprehensive support Implicit familialism	Comprehensive support Implicit familialism
Poland	Implicit familialism Female mobilizing	Implicit familialism Female mobilizing	Implicit familialism E*Q*G*U	Implicit familialism e*q*G*u	Implicit familialism Explicit familialism	Implicit familialism Explicit familialism	Implicit familialism Explicit familialism	Implicit familialism Explicit familialism
Slovakia	Implicit familialism Female mobilizing	Implicit familialism Female mobilizing	Implicit familialism E*q*G*U	Implicit familialism Explicit familialism	Explicit familialism Explicit familialism	Explicit familialism Explicit familialism	Explicit familialism Explicit familialism	Explicit familialism Explicit familialism
Slovenia	Implicit familialism	Implicit familialism	Implicit familialism E*q*G*U	Explicit familialism				

complexities seem to allow for placing the Latvian childcare policy in the *female mobilizing* type, but only in the period 1999–2004.

The last Baltic country, Lithuania, also resembles the pattern typical for this group. Thus, the childcare policy was changing clusters frequently. The conformity of the childcare policy to the ideal types varied, but generally it was modest. Here again it is possible to define a type of policy only for the second half of the 1990s. Lithuania pursued the variant of a *comprehensive support* model of childcare policy.

Meanwhile, Hungary remained in the policy type featuring encompassing childcare of low quality combined with the generous and accessible parental leave benefits for the whole of the analysed period (except for 1997 due to cuts in family policies). The membership scores remained high and stable until 1995 and in 1999 (*fully in*, the only such case). In 1997 and in 2002–04 the scores were lower, especially in the latter cases, where the values were close to the cross-over point. This raises ambiguity, and it seems more relevant to talk about the *explicit familialism* model in 1989–97; and then from 2002, the *comprehensive support* type of childcare policy. This choice stems from the significant increase in the quality of childcare, moving Hungary towards this cluster. Importantly, both Hungary and Lithuania conform very weakly to the *comprehensive support* type.

Table 7 shows the occurrence of cases as attached to particular childcare policy types. As mentioned, to some of the combinations which occurred only accidentally, none of the labels is attached.

## Conclusions

This analysis began with the theoretical discussion concerning the possibility and necessity of comparing childcare policies in the new EU member states. After identifying the main issues with the research which had been conducted so far, we argued that the fuzzy set approach to comparative studies is useful for solving the problems with systematic comparisons of post-communist social policies. After describing and justifying the calibration of the sets, we presented our empirical findings and then followed this by an analysis of dynamics of change. This has served as a basis for clustering the countries under suitable analytical terms.

As was mentioned in the theoretical part of this article, previous studies dealing with welfare policies in CEE either treated this group of countries as monolithic, or applied Western frameworks for comparison, which often led to contradictory results. The great advantage of the fuzzy set ideal type approach is that it allows for an analysis which is non-biased by existing frameworks as it opens the way for discovering *new* types of policies. As a result, it was possible to present the scope of diversity among this group of countries. One of the most general observations is, for instance, the difference between Poland and Hungary. In Poland the provision of public childcare services is very poor, and the state also does not offer much financial help for parents caring for the small child. This can be contrasted to the case of Hungary which has good availability to childcare centres of relatively high quality accompanied by the generous schemes of parental leave.

In order to encompass the differences in the broad picture, this article identified four models of childcare policy. These were: *explicit familialism*, *implicit familialism*, *female-mobilizing* and *comprehensive support*. The countries were clustered as follows: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia comprised the group of countries under the label of the *explicit familialism* model. Estonia and Latvia represented the *female mobilizing* policy type. Lithuania and Hungary pursued the childcare policy typical for the *comprehensive support* model. The childcare policy in Poland resembled the *implicit familialism* model.

Furthermore, the policies are marked by many qualitative and quantitative changes. This is especially visible in the case of the states that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet block (especially in the case of the Baltic states). Accordingly, in the initial period of transition the policies can be characterized by many shifts, resulting from various adjustments and ‘trial and error’ strategies (Offe and Preuss, 1998). The crucial observation here is that for the later stage of transition, one may talk about the consolidation of policies – somewhere in the middle of the period in which changes started to be less rapid or the policies stabilized. It refers not only to the classification of the policy to one policy type, but to some extent also to the degree of conformity to this one ideal type. Three out of the eight countries not only remained in one policy type for the last three to

four points in time, but also improved their conformity to that particular ideal type.

The countries differed also in their tendencies towards hybridization. While in the case of the Czech Republic, for example, the degree of conformity to the *explicit familialism* type rose from 0.79 in 1997 to 0.87 in 2004, for Slovenia it was 0.74 in 1999 and only 0.54 in 2004. While the Slovenian childcare policy – as well as in some other cases – may still be prone to change, the overall tendency towards stability is promising. This observed stability, in turn, opens up the possibility of analysing welfare policies of the region and deriving more time-enduring generalizations. This article takes a first step in this process and contributes to the debate by demonstrating a variety of policy models in CEE, contrary to conventional expectations.

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#### Note

- 1 Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992, accessed on 5 June 2007 at: [<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31992L0085:EN:HTML>].

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