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## CAREER PATHS OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN LATVIA AND PORTUGAL

This article examines the factors, which determine women's option for motherhood, whether or not in combination with a professional career, in respectively Latvia and Portugal. The central question ties in with major concerns among the policymakers in Europe, such as the low fertility rate in all of Europe (Latvia and Portugal both had in 2006 a fertility rate of 1.35 children per woman, according to EUROSTAT data) and the ambition to attain a higher educational qualification for all the citizens. Relating to these considerations and to the goal of providing equality of opportunities, the social and family policies have recently undergone changes to facilitate an articulation between family life and work. However, despite the higher instruction of women and the incentives for mothers to proceed a career, recently a reverse trend in various western countries, such as the USA, the UK, France and the Netherlands, has become manifest: highly-qualified women choose increasingly for a full-time motherhood rather than the combination of a career with the caring for children. In the present paper it will be seen how the tendencies are in this respect in Latvia and Portugal, taking into account the general attitude regarding the social role of mothers of young children. Comparison between these two countries adds to the results of the various studies which have already been carried out on labour participation of young mothers in both Portugal and in Latvia (although research comparing these two countries as yet is virtually non-existent), and the comparative studies between several countries within and beyond Europe.

Key words: motherhood, career, childcare, Latvia, Portugal.

### Introduction

In June 2009, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in an address to the assembled European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs, alerted to new data, which showed the continuously brisk decline of the European population. The economic consequences of the decrease in births and the ageing of the population are well-known. However, according to Ms De Boer, "[c]hildren are much more than statistics, future tax payers, employees and caregivers for their elderly dependants" (De Boer-Buquicchio 2009). Their presence is also a vital dimension of daily life, and therefore the speaker was alarmed by what she had found – by a growing "children not welcome" climate, especially in public spaces.

Within the families, the attitude to children is far more positive, according to many contemporary studies in the sociology of the family. Various authors emphasize how, in recent decades, material resources, time and emotions which parents invest into their children have increased considerably (Gershuny, Sally 1987). Ulrich Beck notices a prevailing feeling in the western world that a child provides joy and gives variation to life, in an era of disenchantment and individualization. In this sense, having children is a "private type of re-enchantment", which is a reason for the "excessive affection for children" (Beck 1992, pp. 118–119; see also Rousset 1989; Crompton, Lyonette 2007).

Curiously, these contrasting perspectives on children – the unfriendly attitude of society, as noted by De Boer, and the devotion of parents and other relatives – both account for the low birth rates. Prospective parents are discouraged by the unfriendliness in the public sphere towards children, including the social policies and the attitudes and practices on the workplace towards young parents, especially mothers. On the other hand, the wish to give a future child an optimal attention and plenty of material resources imbues young people with doubts and apprehension: are they ready for a child, will their financial situation and the life they lead allow them to give to a child what is considered necessary and its due right?

These dilemmas are particularly strong in the case of mothers. The combination of work and private life, notwithstanding the government policies to promote it, is for many families and especially women a daily recurring affliction. In some European societies most women try to combine a full-time job with motherhood, in many others they work fewer hours or withdraw temporarily from the labour market. On the other hand, there are women who implicitly or explicitly opt for a life without children, convinced that they will not be able to give a child its due share of resources and attention. For quite a few highly-instructed women, remaining childless seems the only way to pursue their careers.

Motherhood and its interference with career paths of young women has been the subject of numerous studies. This paper intends to add a comparative approach to this theme, discussing the situation in Latvia and in Portugal. These countries are rather distinct, due to their historical developments; and their respective cultural and economic features have a differentiated influence on the degree of the participation of mothers on the labour market.

The comparison to be made in the following is general and will be accompanied by the presentation of some similar studies carried out in both countries. This material is a part of the preparation for a further joint study, which intends to identify the main factors influencing the wish among highly-qualified women in these countries to start a family, and the strategies planned and applied to combine this with a professional career, if any.

### 1. Mothers and the Labour Market: Traditions and Changes

Regarding the opportunities of women in society in general and on the labour market in particular, an important factor to be counted with is essentially biological: it is women's capacity to bear and nurse children. Many discussions have been conducted on the question whether motherhood is a privilege, a source of empowerment, or a handicap. In as far as participation in the labour market is concerned, having children is usually considered an impediment and a delaying factor in career making and income generation. Fertility behaviour is influenced by social, political and cultural conditions and considerations, as well as by the individual biography.

A point of consideration for women in planning their future motherhood is the availability of support in the fields of care-providing and material resources. Support may be given by the members of the family or the household (including the husband),

or by the entities such as clubs and associations, religious institutions, and government. In Latvia, when the child grows older, also other members of the family take a part in the upbringing – usually they are the grandmothers. If the mother is reintegrating into the labour market when the child is still very small (up to one year), a paid nanny is more often employed (FACTUM, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2006). In Portugal, to take care of the children, formerly the mobilization of networks of female relatives was readily effectuated (Portugal 1995), a practice now on the decline. On the other hand, the husbands are increasingly participating in childcare, due to culture changes and new social policy. Also in Latvia recent social policy tries to stimulate both parents to take leave after childbirth, and facilitate re-entering the labour force after maternity leave, as will be discussed below.

That motherhood is far from just a biological process or a private issue, has been made clear during several moments in world history, when bearing children was regarded as a guarantee of the physical and cultural continuation of the own group and ideology (Blom 2000). In Portugal, during the forty-eight year period of right-wing dictatorship, the birth of many children was considered as “the best defence against communism”.

These days in Europe, policies that aim to reverse the actual demographic tendencies towards an ageing society have young women as their main target. At the level of the governments of the respective countries and of the European Union, the bearing of children has been encouraged by a number and variety of measures, especially in the form of legally established leaves, fiscal benefits, nurseries and day care centres.

These birth-promoting policies are also linked to the goal of implementing equality of opportunities, which in this case would signify that men and women almost in equal measure can dedicate their time to family as well as career. One of the means to stimulate men to make more of their parental role consists in leave schemes. Paternity leave and parental leave exist both in Portugal and in Latvia. In Portugal, paternity leave was introduced in 1999, and has rapidly gained popularity. In the new Labour Law of February, 12, 2009, the terms paternity and maternity are replaced by “parentality”. The “initial parentality leave” applies to parents of newborns during 120 up to 180 days. The leave can be enjoyed by either father or mother, under the condition that for the mother, six weeks is the compulsory minimum period, and for the father, ten days.

In Latvia, according to the 155<sup>th</sup> article of the Labour Law, since 2004 fathers can take ten days paid paternity leave during the first two months after the birth. The use of this paternity leave in Latvia also has enjoyed a stable increase: in 2004 only 2070 fathers used paid paternity leave, in 2005 their number was 2490 fathers (Rubinčika 2005), but in 2008 the monthly number was 660 fathers on average, or 34% of those entitled (No 2009. gada... 2008).

How do these leave policies tie in with other European policies? We might recall the major aim of improving the educational qualifications of European citizens, such as outlined in the *Lisbon strategy* agreed in 2000. In order to apply and develop this training in their professional lives, the integration of women and men into the labour market is of major concern. Especially for highly-qualified professionals, breaks are not advisable: a temporary withdrawal from market work, for instance to take care of young children, would mean the hibernation and thus lack of upgrading of high-

value production force. This is a major reason for the policy of promoting measures for the so-called reconciliation between work and family, which aim to facilitate for men and women a satisfactory participation in both professional and family life.

At the micro-economic level, children are a drain on the family resources, through the cost of upbringing, the loss of income which in many countries is inherent to leaves, or else a career interruption, usually in the case of women. In many countries there exists a so-called “child gap”, a difference in wage between childless women and mothers. This may be related to the assumption that mothers are less productive as they have to spend lots of energy on care and household chores. This postulation, translated into a theory by Gary Becker (Becker 1985) and others, is however unconvincing, and empirical reality belies it. Women work hard at home and at their job, and if they become stressed and exhausted it is the result of trying to combine these two worlds, since the real problem seems to be time pressure. Sadly, the argument of lack of energy among working mothers is often used by employers as a justification for the low wages they receive, as is the case all over the world and in many historical periods. And even where women manifestly have a high productivity, they are paid less; indeed, the dedication and high output of low-paid female factory workers is often recognized by their own employers (Ong 1987). A case in point is provided by the cherry-pickers in Portugal, where hourly wages of men are superior, although all admit that men’s productivity is lower, especially after lunch when the effects of the wine consumed are noticeable.

An important biographical aspect for women is the timing of the childbearing, particularly of the first child. When using an economic approach, for well-qualified women the most favourable period to have children would be after some years of work experience (Wetzels 2001). High-achieving women, in our days, tend to postpone the step, which may result in definitive childlessness. Studies of the USA, the Netherlands and Germany point out the correlation between level of instruction and childlessness (Hewlett 2002; Keizer 2007; Suffer... 2009). Keizer and colleagues found for the Netherlands that for women every added year of study increases the possibility of definitive childlessness with 14%, while there is no such correlation for men (Keizer et al. 2007).

For many women, the arrival of children means an interruption of market work. In graphics, this tendency is reflected in the so-called M-shaped curve which correlates labour-market participation with women’s age groups. Sometimes it is referred to as the *ten-year nap*, occurring roughly between 28 and 40 years, exactly the life stage in which men consolidate their career. However, this is not the case in all countries, Portugal being one of the exceptions, in which women even intensify their labour market participation once they have become mothers (Coelho 2006; Wall 2007). In Latvia women’s employment is less than that of men, and the difference is much larger for women aged 15 to 34 years old (Central... 2009). So, “a Latvian household is characterised by the dual-earner model, where both male and female are likely to be working, but it is probably not a dual-career model since women seem to be more likely to be involved in raising children” (Dombrovsky 2004).

Despite the loss in financial and time resources, most women want to be a mother. In Portugal, recent research among adolescent girls has shown that for most of them,

maternity is an essential element of their project for the future and that "maternalization of identity seems ... to appear before its *conjugalization*" (Almeida, 2004). It appears that this option is, in the words of Nancy Chodorow, "part of the desire to be feminine, which children pick up at an early age" (Chodorow 1972).

Despite the incentives by governments and other authorities pushing mothers to pursue a career, the tradeoffs which have to be made by prospective mothers have sometimes been too heavy. And thus, recently a reverse trend has been observed in countries such as the USA, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. Highly-qualified women choose increasingly for an existence as full-time mother rather than for the combination of a career with the caring for children (Faludi 1992; Story 2005). This so-called *opt-out revolution* may well be a signal of the persistence of gender roles, i.e., the allotment of the lion's share of care tasks to women.

## 2. The State and Career Paths of Mothers in European Societies

Countless studies have been carried out comparing two or more European or non-European countries regarding fertility behaviour, the labour market situation of young mothers, and the roles of fathers and mothers in the family (for instance, Woerds et al. 2007). In the interpretation and contextualization of the data, the role of the state is an important factor, more specifically the so-called Welfare State, which as a principle envisages a more equal redistribution of resources and thus the possibility of an active participation of everyone in the society.

The Welfare State has been analyzed according to diverse perspectives. Among the comparative studies, the approach of Gosta Esping-Andersen in *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, first published in 1990, has become a classic (Esping-Andersen 1990). Considering that it is essential to take into account the historical and cultural specificities of each country when analyzing the type of measures taken for the implementation of the resources-spreading measures, Esping-Andersen constructed a typology, in which three types of welfare states are distinguished: the liberal, socio-democratic and conservative. This typology, developed in the 1980s, leaves out the countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the time pertaining to the Soviet bloc, but also countries such as Spain, Portugal and Greece. The two countries focused in this article (Latvia and Portugal) are precisely among those which, for different reasons, have not been contemplated in the original classification of Esping-Andersen.

Subsequent discussions have tried to characterize these rest-categories and/or to develop alternative typologies. A criticism has also been the negligence of the culturally-specific opinions about gender, especially the roles of men and women in caring. Indeed, providing of care and protection is a fundamental principle of the welfare state, and these states may also be classified according to their choice of the main responsible for this care (state, family, private organizations) converging with or complemented by the performance of the fathers and mothers.

Regarding the states of southern Europe, denominations have emerged such as the "Mediterranean model" or the "Latin Rim regime", marked by distinctive features of a high importance of a family including the providing of care, the prevalence of

informal networks of solidarity, clientelism and the omnipresence of a parallel economy. In these South European countries, where the principles of democracy and solidarity beyond the family circles have developed only recently, the fundamentals for a welfare state were introduced late and have never had the chance to blossom. Since the end of the twentieth century, due to political and macro-economic setbacks, the welfare state in South Europe and in other countries has been shrinking again.

Portugal fits into the parameters of the Southern European regime, but it is a country *sui generis*. The female labour participation is extraordinarily high. Most of the women work full-time, they do not interrupt their activity (beyond the legally stipulated) when they have their children (Table 2A 2003; Plantenga 2005), and on top of this, they perform most of the household chores while men limit themselves to incidental «helping». The gap between male and female weekly hours of housework has been calculated at 12.63 hours (International Social Survey Programme 2003; Wall, Amancio 2007).

Portugal was the country where women worked most, especially the mothers of young children. Will that still be the case when surveying the present European Union with its 27 members? Statistics of 2003 show, for example, that in Slovenia the rate of full-time double-earning couples is even higher than in Portugal (1).

Over the last decades, in all countries of the European Union women have entered the labour market in large numbers. This trend seems to be irrevocable and definitely has been putting pressure on the European countries to develop policies for the reconciliation of family life and working life. The trend towards a growing number of working women also questions the standard division of tasks within the households. In many European countries a debate has started whether the current division is fair enough for women, regarding the fact that women spend more hours extra in paid work than men in household tasks.

It should be noticed that in Europe quite a few researches have been carried out about the participation of fathers including in child care and domestic chores – for example, there is a very interesting research about fathers, "Caring is Sharing", which was carried out in 2007 by the Amsterdam Social Science School in five European countries (Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Poland and Latvia). This research shows Latvia as more traditional in comparison with other countries regarding the perception of the woman's role in child care and home tasks, in the point of view of fathers. Men and women cannot enact all the necessary changes on their own. They need good facilities by the state and by employers, giving more room to all people – both men and women – to participate at home. The research shows that in many countries, this is not the case yet. For example, a Latvian man states that "state institutions are not ripe for the fact that a father can stay at home and take care of the children" or "we are forced to work so hard in this state, it deprives us of the right to be with the family".

The Italian case distinguished several categories of fathers. The "fathers in transition" want to spend time with their children and they are willing to negotiate with their partner. "Post transformation fathers" have passed the phase of negotiation and see domestic tasks as something natural.

In the Netherlands the keyword is "flexibilisation". The fathers that were interviewed plea for a flexibilisation from the side of employers as to time and leave

arrangements. In general these fathers already take part in a considerable part of the caring tasks, but they would like to take up more. In order to combine working life and family life fathers mention the need for flexibility in their working hours. Fathers are willing to realise a more equal task division but they need back-up support from employers and the government.

### 3. Recent Studies about Mothers in Latvia and Portugal

In Latvia and Portugal, researches of various kinds have been carried out regarding the question of mothers and their employment. Some outcomes of these projects will be presented.

For Latvia these are:

- a – a research about the factors which determine women's opportunities to be integrated into the labour market, carried out among 800 women in Riga aged 18–45 years, in 2005, in the framework of European Committee's EQUAL initiative "Open labour market for women" (Research... 2005). The research was carried out by the Baltic Institute of Social Science;
- b – a media-based survey of the influence of pregnancy and maternity leave on women's future prospects on the labour market and also on their professional development, carried out in October 2005 by the Latvian TV programme "Mothers' Club". Two hundred viewers of this programme, from all over Latvia, participated (Salaka 2005);
- c – a study of the models of activity and employment existing among the mothers of children of preschool age (carried out among 170 women of the city of Daugavpils, in 2009, by the Institute of Social Research of the University of Daugavpils);

Further on, the following projects concerning Portugal will be mentioned briefly:

- d – *Conciliação* ("Reconciliation"), a study about the functioning of the measures of social policy intended to improve the articulation between work and family, carried out among the inhabitants of Portugal of both genders in the age category between 20 and 55, in 2005, on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs (2);
- e – an inquiry into the ideas and feelings about parenthood among employers and male workers in small companies in the rural areas of the Beira Interior region (Portugal), carried out in 2006 by the Centre of Social Studies of the University of Beira Interior (UBI\_CES), in the framework of the transnational project RoMann (The Role of Men in the Family) (3).

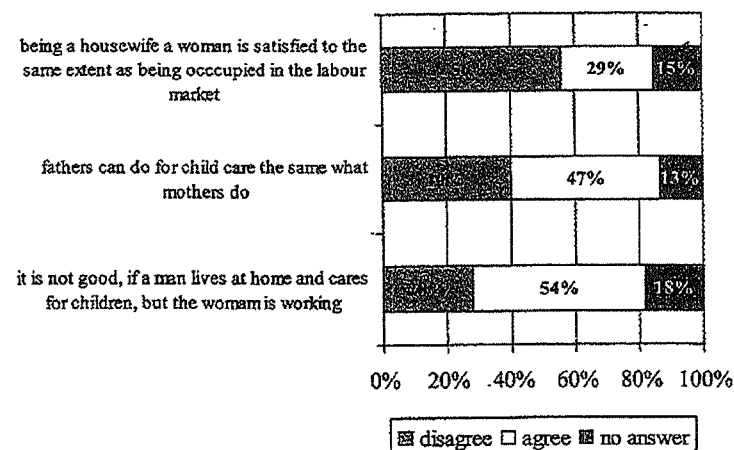
#### 3a. Latvian mothers' opportunities of integration into the labour market: (Baltic Institute of Social Science).

Although the theme of the abovementioned research was wider than that one of this paper, one part concerned the return of young mothers to the labour market after childbirth and also the influence of maternity leave on perspectives of being integrated into the labour market. The respondents were asked to express their opinions on the following statements:

- 1) "a woman is satisfied with her role of a housewife to the same extent as when working on the labour market";
- 2) "fathers can do for child care the same what mothers do";
- 3) "it is not good, if a man stays at home and cares for the children and his wife is working".

The following figure shows Riga women's attitudes towards these statements:

Figure 1  
Evaluation of the roles of men and women in the labour market and in the family, answers on the question: "Do you agree or disagree with each following statement?", Riga women, 2005, n=800



Source: Research... 2005.

The perceptions of women's role in the labour market and in the household are correlated with age, income, type of work, and educational level. On the whole, the activity in the labour market was emphasized as a significant element of human life not depending on the sex of the respondents. As the survey data show, 52% of the employed women who live with a partner do the largest part of the home duties.

The responsibility for domestic and care tasks influences working life of a woman greatly – even before she has entered the labour market an employer, selecting the employees, often takes into consideration a possible maternity leave or woman's absence in the case of a child's illness. The survey data show, that during the job interview employers usually ask questions about planned pregnancy and children, which are highly discriminating for women.

25% of the respondent mothers returned to work after eighteen months (the legal period for maternity leave) and 28% – after more than two years. Approximately one in five women takes up work again when the child is between six and twelve months

old. A negative finding in the survey was that one in five women on maternity leave was afraid to be fired (in spite of the legal protection for mothers against dismissal).

The determining factors for early (before 18 months) return at work are the need for money, the wish to work and also the existence of a relative who can take care of the child. The fear of losing skills and the possibility that the substitute will occupy the place are also mentioned among the factors. Only very rarely the paternity leave of a woman's partner is a reason for her to start working before the end of the maternity leave.

### *3b. Maternity leave and prospects on the Latvian labour market: media research (Latvian TV programme "Mothers' Club").*

This survey, which was carried out asking the viewers to submit an online questionnaire, concerning the discrimination on the labour market that is often experienced by women who plan to have a child, pregnant women and young mothers on maternity leave. These situations have an impact on the financial conditions of a woman and the family, the development of the career and the position on the labour market in general. When pondering a future pregnancy, a woman has to take into consideration a possible regression in her career (thanks to long isolation from the labour market), a decline of her financial well-being and poor guarantees for returning to the preceding job and post.

The survey which was carried out by the "Mothers' Club" shows that at least 65% of women during the period of the last 5 years had some difficulties in informing their employer about their pregnancy, especially those employed in small and medium enterprises. The reaction of the employers was diverse – in state and municipality enterprises, a woman has a safe guarantee for returning to the working place after her maternity leave, but in the private sector the situation is more difficult, because an employer is not always ready to give social guarantees defined by law.

Out of fear, women often kept their pregnancy concealed for a long time: 25% of the women interviewed informed their employer only being in the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy. 65% of all the respondents returned or planned to return to the labour market when the child was seven – twelve months old, despite the eighteen months of legally maternity leave granted.

35% of the women, who had returned to their job, were not satisfied with their new working conditions and rules because of several reasons. Their complaints were:

- 1) the salary had decreased or had not increased at the same rate as had for the other employees;
- 2) they were offered only part-time work, justified by the care of a small child who would not allow to devote enough time and energy to the fruitful work;
- 3) they were given less duties and responsibilities, on account of their long-term absence and unfamiliarity with the new working conditions.

These facts confirm the existence in Latvia of a "child gap", a difference in wage and career opportunities between childless women and mothers that has been discussed above.

### *3c. Mothers' social activity according to the employment: models and factors (Institute of Social Research, University of Daugavpils).*

For effective time management of the mothers of children at preschool age, on the one hand, the needs of the mother to be socially and economically active should be kept in mind, and, on the other hand, the limited family and society resources for the permanent care concern for small children. The objective of the research of Daugavpils University, in South-East Latvia, was to formulate sociologically-based recommendations for mothers on the most effective way of achieving both family social and economical welfare and permanent child care.

A sociologist can construct a typologized separation of three main models of mother's activity: two margin models – a traditional housewife and a worker-professional, and also one compromise model when a mother tries to combine both mother's duties and a paid work.

On the base of the systemic description of the research object the following hypothesis was formulated: the most socially effective model of mothers' social activity is a compromise which harmonizes family and society interests. But, opting for the model of a traditional housewife, mothers often compensate their low competitiveness in the labour market. On the other hand, opting for the model of a worker-professional, women often compensate their problems in their family life.

This hypothesis has been verified with empirical data from a quantitative survey of 170 Daugavpils mothers of preschool children. In particular, it has been proved with the help of an empirical fact, that the total effectiveness of objective (by real behaviour) and subjective (by wishes and values) compromise model is the highest among all three models being analyzed. After processment of the data about the satisfaction with the domestic life, on the evaluation of the position in the labour market, and also on self-evaluations as a professional, it has been noticed, that traditional housewives have the lowest self-evaluations as professionals, and are also less satisfied with their position in the labour market. In their turn, workers-professionals are less satisfied with their domestic lives. However, it can be supposed that the degree of satisfaction is not the reason of the chosen social activity, but its result. For example, traditional housewives can be unsatisfied with their position in the labour market and they may give low evaluations to themselves as professionals, because they are stay at home and do not integrate into the labour market. In its turn, low satisfaction with the domestic life shown by workers-professionals can be the result of their active professional life.

### *3d. The effects of social policy on improving the articulation between work and family (Ministry of Social Affairs of Portugal).*

This research focused on the measures of social policy that exist in Portugal to promote the reconciliation between work and care. The purpose was to find out the positive and negative effects of the existing arrangements, to discover lacunas in them, and to register the wishes and suggestions among the population with regards to this subject matter. Special attention was paid to young families, and questions were

included about the providing of care for them and the possibly gendered character of this care, and the existence of a wish to have (more) children. Various techniques were employed, including a survey among a representative sample of the Portuguese population. Thus, questionnaires were applied among 1,100 domestic units with persons of the "active age" (20–55 years) and dependents, such as children, elderly or chronically ill people. The included questions related to knowledge, use, and opinion about social policy measures. In this way, the ideas and practices about gender roles and equality of opportunities were revealed.

Applying a Likert scale (from 0 to 4) regarding various types of statements, the following turned out to be the highest-rated desires of the women: "to stay home to care for the children in their first years of life, if financial circumstances permit so" (3.0); "to have a flexible work schedule in order to have a better balance between time for family time and for the job" (3.0); "to stay home to take care of other "dependents" if financially feasible" (2.9), and "to stay full-time with my children in their first years, even if nurseries were free of charge" (2.8). On the whole, we saw among women a stronger need of facilities to take care of dependents, and also to withdraw for some time from the labour market, in particular for the education of a child.

We add that in this same study the statement "Generally, the women should not dedicate themselves to their work as much as the men, in order to be more available to the family", was endorsed by 43,7% of the respondents, being the degree of agreement smallest among the age group of 20–29 years. It is a fact that, although young people increasingly favour equality, especially regarding study, leisure and work, the division of domestic chores lags behind. On the other hand, only very rarely young Portuguese women choose to be a housewife (Guerreiro, Abrantes 2004), such contrasting with the situation some decades ago when an existence as a housewife was an ideal for many women.

### *3e. Parenthood in Portugal: ideas and feelings (Centre of Social Studies, University of Beira Interior).*

Another study about the ideas and feelings about parenthood and caregiving in the family was carried out on a more restricted level, in the rural areas of the Beira Interior region, in 2006. It was one of the case studies in the context of the international project RoMann – the role of Men in the Family, coordinated by Virgil/Tamen (Berlin) and funded by the European Social Fund (Guerreiro, Abrantes 2004). Employers and male workers in small companies were interviewed about the roles of men and women in families with young children. The employers in general were more favourable toward a balance in tasks, but the employees, all with a low level of instruction, were much less positive about it:

- "There are certain traditions we cannot break off. For example, this parental leave, if a father has need for it or if it is a matter of illness [of the wife], I agree. But, in other respects I disagree, for example, that a father is absent for two weeks because of the birth of a child. This is just for having holidays. The mother needs to be there, because it is the mother who does everything for the child, but

the father, if there is no question of illness, does not need to. He can be there when he comes home from work and in the weekends";

- "As far as I am concerned, women have the right to work but the major part of their life is life at home and it is for the men to work. If they need to work, let them work, because life is not very stable. Women have a destiny of their own".

## Discussion

### Some patterns for future comparative studies in Latvia and Portugal

Following on these accounts from Beira Interior, it should be remarked that various studies have shown that many Portuguese would opt for an arrangement in which children stay at home with their mother in the first years of their lives, if economic conditions were better. This was found, among others, by Guerreiro and Abrantes (Guerreiro, Abrantes 2004), but also by the international Survey ISSP, dedicated to the family and gender roles. 78.5% of the Portuguese respondents in this survey even believed that small children would suffer if the mother was working. In that same survey the, what has been called, high child-centeredness of the Portuguese was revealed: the Portuguese agreed with "to see the children grow up is the greatest happiness of life" (96.4%) and 62.1% were of the opinion that people without children have an empty life (Wall 2005). Curiously, the same research revealed that the phenomenon of working women and dual-earner families meets with almost general approval among the Portuguese, and that there is an increase in active participation of fathers in domestic chores and caring for the children. There are, thus, "traditional" as well as "modern" elements in the division of gender roles. Various factors may contribute to an explanation, such as economic conditions which force families to adopt the model of double breadwinner/full time. This practice contrasts with the official discourse in favour of the stay-at-home housewife which has prevailed during of a large part of the twentieth century, especially during the rightwing and women-unfriendly dictatorship of Salazar.

The situation in Latvia seems to be opposed to that in Portugal in various aspects. At the very beginning of the capitalist reforms period, in the 1990s, Latvia showed a "retraditionalization" trend, which means a new popularity of the specific gender roles in which men are breadwinners and women care-providers. In the consciousness of the inhabitants of European post-soviet countries, typically women "were returned" into the household, into the family. To a greater extent women's behaviour was successfully modelled by this social order as a new self-realization after the previous total employment, as opposed to Portugal during the authoritarian regime (for example, the rise of the birth rate in the Baltic States in 1990s) (TITMA 1997). However, not long afterwards, the women, mainly on account of economic reasons, appeared to be interested in employment again. But, in the new economy, the most attractive working positions had been occupied by men, who had no desire to lose them. In the conditions of a market economy with traditional perceptions of the roles of men and women in childcare, men's competitiveness is higher because a man, to a lesser degree than a

woman is restrained by family and parental responsibilities; as a result male behaviour is more diverse and less predictive, i.e. men better satisfy the requirements of the new economy in initiative and adaptive actors. It has been pointed out, and especially for the Baltic countries, that they have no long historical experience of democracy, citizenship and market economy and they are different from the modern capitalist societies which form the core of the European Union. These countries have experienced, or are still experiencing, a profound transformation including of social structures and values. The very nature of the components of social structure, groups and communities is undergoing some changes, new economy classes and strata bearing their own value system are emerging. New forms of social stratification of society are arising, radical changes in the tendencies of social mobility are taking place, new seeds of social tension are spreading, group and corporative egoism is being displayed more often, old ideological myths are being ruined and new ones are emerging, value references of people, of their identities and behavioural patterns are changing (Tūtma 1997). All these factors just mentioned concern the career paths of mothers, who end up somewhere at the scale marked by two poles – “full-time paid work” and “full-time childcare”, taking into account both their own wishes and possibilities, and the traditions and objectives that are accepted in their social group. An analysis of studies in both countries, of which in this paper some results have been presented, show the presence of contradictory tendencies regarding the dedication to a job and/or child care among the mothers and fathers interviewed. Religious values, education and other social and cultural values may to a great part account for these differences in strategies. These differences exist not only between the countries but also within them. Bearing in mind the importance of this theme for reasons of demography, quality of the labor force and equality of opportunities, it should be further explored. We suggest, therefore, a more profound comparative research, to take on the construction of typologies or profiles of families and mothers in Latvia and Portugal, according to their positions and strategies as to employment and childcare.

### Notes

- (1) According to Eurostat, European Labour Survey (2003), in Slovenia 77% of the couples were full-time dual earners, while Portugal came in second with 67%. (in Aboim table 2).
- (2) DGEEP (Direcção-Geral de Estudos, Estatística e Planeamento) (2006) *Estudo Conciliação da Vida Familiar e Actividade Profissional: O papel da política social*. Lisboa: Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade Social. Study coordinated by Sandra Dionizio (IESE), and Maria J.C. Schouten (UBI\_CES).
- (3) Coordinated by Virgil/Tamen (Berlin) and funded by the European Social Fund.

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## Kopsavilkums

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Jauno māmiņu karjeras izredzes Latvijā un Portugālē

Šajā rakstā tiek analizēti faktori, kas determinē sievietes izvēli maternitātes labā, ar vai bez tās apvienošanu ar profesionālo karjeru, Latvijā un Portugālē. Centrālā pētījuma problēma ir kopā ar daudz Eiropas politikas aktualitātēm, tādiem, kā zems fertilitātes līmenis Eiropā (kā Latvijā, tā arī Portugālē fertilitātes līmenis 2006. gadā, pēc EUROSTAT datiem, bija 1,35 bērnu uz vienu sievieti) un tieksme nodrošināt augstāku profesionālo kvalifikāciju visiem Eiropas iedzīvotājiem. Saskaņā ar šiem atzinumiem, kā arī vadoties no mērķa sasniegt iespēju vienlīdzību, sociālā un ģimenes politika ievieš dažas izmaiņas, lai sabalansētu darba un ģimenes dzīvi. Taču neskatoties uz sievietes augstu kvalifikāciju un stimuliem attīstīt savu karjeru arī māmiņām, dažās Rietumvalstīs, tādās kā ASV, Lielbritānijā, Francijā un Nīderlandē tiek novērota tendence, kad augsti kvalificētās sievietes arvien biežāk izvēlās pilna laika maternitāti, nevis karjeras un bērna aprūpes kombinēšanu. Šajā rakstā tiek analizēts, kādas ir šīs jomas tendences Latvijā un Portugālē, ņemot vērā kopējo attieksmi pret mazo bērnu māmiņu sociālo lomu. Šo divu valstu salīdzināšana papildina dažu pētījumu rezultātus, kuri jau tika veikti par jauno māmiņu iesaistīšanos darba tirgū gan Latvijā, gan Portugālē (kaut gan Latvijas-Portugāles salīdzinošie pētījumi līdz šim nerīka īstenoti), kā arī salīdzinošo pētījumu rezultātus, kuri tika veikti dažādās valstīs Eiropā un ārpus tās.

## Резюме

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Карьерные пути молодых мам в Латвии и Португалии

В представленной статье анализируются факторы, влияющие на выбор женщин в пользу материнства, с или без комбинирования с профессиональной деятельностью в Латвии и Португалии. Центральная проблема исследования актуальна в свете низких показателей уровня фертильности в Европе (по данным ЕВРОСТАТА, 1,35 ребёнка на одну женщину как в Латвии, так и в Португалии), а также стремления достичь высокого образовательного и профессионального уровня для всех жителей. Согласно с этими тенденциями, а также с курсом на предоставление равных возможностей, социальная и семейная политика вводит изменения, направленные на оптимизацию баланса между профессиональной и семейной жизнью. Но, несмотря на относительно высокую профессиональную квалификацию женщин и стимулы для матерей развивать свою карьеру, в некоторых западных странах, таких как США, Великобритания, Франция и Нидерланды, наблюдается обратная тенденция, когда высококвалифицированные женщины всё чаще выбирают материнство без комбинирования профессиональной деятельности с заботой о ребёнке. В данной статье рассматриваются существующие в этой сфере тенденции в Латвии и Португалии, принимая во внимание общее восприятие социальной роли матери маленького ребёнка. Сравнение между этими двумя странами вносит вклад в изучение участия матерей в рынке труда в Латвии и в Португалии (пока не существует исследований, сравнивающих Латвию и Португалию в этом аспекте), а также в сравнительные исследования этого вопроса между странами Европы и за её пределами.