

FLOWs – Newsletter No. 1, 2011

This is the first newsletter from the FP7 project entitled "Impact of local welfare systems on female labour force participation and social cohesion" (FLOWs). This newsletter will inform a little about the project, the activities started, FLOWs in the media, results of the project and publications.

The overall aim of the project is to analyse (1) how local welfare systems support women's labour market participation, as well as (2) the extent to which (and under which conditions) female labour market integration has contributed to strengthening social cohesion.

The project thus aims to analyse how local welfare provision affects the labour market participation of women, and how female employment in turn affects the life-course (of women and men), structures of inequality, social cohesion and hence the sustainability of the European social model. Two types of welfare provision have been singled out to be of major importance for female employment: care (both for children and elderly care) and human capital investments (vocational training and life-long learning). The coverage and quality of services, the welfare mix (public, private and in between), partnerships, and governance structures most favourable for the employment of women and social cohesion will be identified based on a comparison of eleven cities in eleven European countries.

The project will analyse the political autonomy of local political actors vis-à-vis national and EU policy making, including culture as an important explanatory variable. Culture is included in two dimensions: First, women's disposition to participate on the labour market is seen as culturally embedded, while cultural ideals and values play an important role in how policies are perceived and rendered practically useful by women (thus definitions of 'the good mother' vary socially and geographically, whereby some mothers, for instance, would prefer not to use day-care facilities but instead take care of their children themselves). Second, local cultural values and belief systems condition creativity among political actors and stakeholders, and thus impact on local policies, which may divert from national or international intentions.

The project will provide a basis for understanding how culture may constrain the transferability of promising practices from one country/locality to another. Overall this project will pave the way for evidence based urban policy recommendations for local welfare system improvement in order to enhance economic growth, female employment and social cohesion.

Twelve partners participate in the project: University of Aalborg (Per H. Jensen), University of Hamburg (Birgit Pfau-Effinger), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Lluís Flaquer), University of Jyväskylä (Teppo Kröger), Trinity College, Dublin (Evenlyn Mahon), University of Masaryk (Steven Saxonberg), Central European University (Eva Foder), Politecnico di Milano (Costanzo Ranci), University of Tartu (Dagmar Kutsar), University of Leeds (Sue Yeandle), Maison des Sciences de L'Homme Ange-Guépin (Pascal Caillaud), and Danish Reed Cross (Steffen Møller Fjordside). Aalborg University is the overall coordinator of the project.

The project commenced on 1st January 2011 and will last for 40 months.

The first meeting in FLOWS took place in Aalborg, 7-9 February, and the second meeting took place in Hamburg, 20-22 June. During the first two meetings work packages 1-4 have been discussed and work package 1-2 finalized. The four work packages are entitled as follows:

- WP 1: Degree and structures of women's labor market integration
- WP 2: Local production system
- WP 3: The local welfare system
- WP 4: Local policy formation/local political actors

Activities in the FLOWS project

A home site has been created. The aim of the web site is to disseminate information and results of the project. The address of the home site is: www.flows-eu.eu. Information about the project can be found on this home site.

Several FLOWS partners have been engaged in FLOWS related activities:

Birgit Pfau-Effinger has co-edited the book *Care Work and Welfare in Europe*, published by Palgrave in June 2011. From FLOWS Birgit Pfau-Effinger, Teppo Kröger, Rasmus Juul Møberg, Per H. Jensen and Steven Saxonberg has contributed with chapters to the book.

Birgit Pfau-Effinger has co-edited a special issue of *Nordic Journal of Social Research* published in June 2011. The special issue is entitled "Welfare-state change, the strengthening of economic principles, and new tensions in relation to care". From FLOWS Birgit Pfau-Effinger, Ralf Och, Per H. Jensen and Teppo Kröger has contributed with articles to the special issue.

Costanzo Ranci has co-organised and co-supervised an ESPAnet Italia summer school entitled Family and care policies in changing societies. The conference took place in Milan (Italy), 23-28 September 2011. For information: www.espanet-italia.net/summerschool2011

Anna Escobedo has been the coordinator of the "Gender, Work & Family Network" (with Diane Gabrielle Tremblay, Université du Québec, and Bernard Fusulier, Université de Louvain) and moderator in two sessions at the 23rd SASE (Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics) Annual Conference : Transformations of contemporary capitalism. Actors, Institutions, Processes. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 23-25 June 2011..

FLOWS in the media:

Extensive descriptions of FLOWS have appeared in:

- (1) RECOWE magazine, June, 2011, page 75
- (2) UGlen, Aalborg University, No. 2, 2011, page 21

First results from FLOWS:

As indicated, two WPs have been finalised, i.e. WP 1 and WP 2. Preliminary results from these WPs are described below:

WP 1 – brief summary by Birgit Pfau-Effinger

Workpackage 1 contains the initial findings obtained from a comparative analysis drawing on reports on the “Degree and structures of women’s labour market integration”, written by eleven European country teams for eleven cities in different parts of Europe. Also, it introduces a proposal for two models for a classification of women’s labour markets. The first classification model is based on the including capacity of labour markets for women. The second classification model is based on the sustainability of labour markets in relation to women’s integration and gender equality.

It turned out that particularly the labour markets of Aalborg and Hamburg have a relatively strong capacity to integrate women into the labour market, on the basis of a high labour force participation rate of women and a low unemployment rate. Also in Leeds, Jyväskylä, Tartu and Terrassa, women’s labour force participation is relatively high. However, the integrating capacity of these labour markets is lower, since they have relatively high unemployment rates on the female labour market. The capacity to integrate women is relatively low on the labour markets of Brno, Dublin, Nantes and Szekesfehervar, where women’s labour force participation is relatively low and, besides Szekesfehervar, also the unemployment rates of women are relatively high.

There is a different set of cities that ranks on top of the cities of the study if we analyse their sustainability in relation to gender equality. Aalborg, Tartu and Jyväskylä combine relatively high employment rates of women with a relatively high gender balance in the employment rates. In Hamburg, Leeds, Bologna and Brno, in contrast, which have an equally high employment rate of women, the gender difference in employment rates is considerably higher. The sustainability of women’s labour market in relation to gender is lowest in Terrassa, Dublin, Szekesfehervar and Nantes. These labour markets combine a relatively low employment rate of women with a relatively high gender difference in employment rates

In most cities of the study, the employment rate of women with pre-school children is relatively high and above the average employment rate of women. This seems to be a success factor of cities in which women are relatively well integrated in comparison with the average of the cities in the respective country. The employment rate of women with pre-school children in many cities of the study is even higher than the average employment rate of women, or at least not substantially below this.

This is different in relation to the employment of women 55-64 years. There are clear deficits concerning the labour market integration of this group of women. In all cities of the study the employment rate in this group of women is far lower than the average employment rate of women. This is a substantial problem which needs to receive high attention in the future research of the FLOWS project and in policies towards women’s labour market integration in the EU and in the national welfare states.

These findings need to be explained in the further research of the FLOWS project.

WP 2 – brief summary by Lluís Flaquer & Costanzo Ranci

The WP2 national reports have focused on the main features of the local production systems framing the employment opportunities for women in the cities considered in the present research. In general, all these cities have gone through important transformations as far the economic specialization is concerned, in particular experiencing a strong shift towards a service-based economy, although with some important differences. The first one is the persistence of an important manufacturing sector in some urban contexts, such as Brno, Szekesfehevar and Tartu. The second important difference is related to the typology of service sector characterizing the urban economies: some cities have gone through a strong development of an advanced service sector (for example Aalborg, Hamburg and Leeds), while in cities such as Terrassa, Tartu, Dublin the construction sector has experienced a sort of "boom".

Although with different intensities, the male- and female-dominated specific subsectors are practically the same in FLOWS cities: construction, manufacturing and transportation for men and education, health care and social work, food services and domestic service for women. The same trend is true for occupational segregation: males are more represented in occupations such as armed forces, legislators, senior officials and managers, while women are over-represented in operative roles, questioning the quality of their integration into the labour market. Accordingly, the gender pay gap is pervasive in all cities under research, albeit with various degrees.

In general, the economic growth has offered good opportunities for the development of female employment, especially because it has been concentrated in the service sector. The current financial crisis has more severely hit men than women, due to more severe consequences of the crisis on sectors where men, mainly, are concentrated (especially construction and manufacture). In fact, women's unemployment rates have increased also between 2007-2009, but much less than men's unemployment rate.

Publications:

Escobedo, A. L. Flaquer and L. Navarro (2012). 'The social politics of fatherhood in Spain and France: A comparative analysis of parental leave and shared residence.' *Ethnologie Française* 42 (1).

Fersch, Barbara & Per H Jensen (2011) "Experiences with the privatization of home care: evidence from Denmark". *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, Vol. 2

Jensen, Per H. & Rasmus Juul Møberg (2011) "Tensions Related to the Transition of Elderly Care from an Unpaid to a Paid Activity", in Birgit Pfau-Effinger & Tine Rostgaard (eds.) *Care Between Work and Welfare in European Societies*. Palgrave Mcmillan

Pfau-Effinger, Birgit, Ralf Och & Per H. Jensen (2011) "Tensions between 'consumerism' in elderly care and the social rights of family carers: a German-Danish comparison". *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, Vol. 2