

## Chapter 1

### Dare to share: Germany's experience with promoting equal partnership in families

*This chapter introduces the background to and issues at stake in promoting equal partnerships in families in Germany. It encourages German policy makers to build on the important reforms of 2007 and 2015 to enable both fathers and mothers to combine work and family commitments, and commends families to “dare to share”. To those ends it places Germany's experience in an international comparison, and draws from the experience of, for example, France and the Nordic countries, which have longstanding policies to support work-life balance and strengthen gender equality. The chapter begins with an explanation of why and how equal sharing pays: it is good for family well-being, child development, female employment opportunities, fathers' working hours (Sections 2 and 3) and sustaining fertility rates. Section 4 examines policies to promote partnership, looking both at persistent shortcomings and progress achieved through reform since the mid-2000s. The chapter closes with a set of policy recommendations designed to enable parents to share work and family responsibilities more equally.*

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

## 1. Introduction

The balance of work and family outcomes is changing in German families. Fathers continue to be the main breadwinners in couple families, but whereas they previously did not participate in the labour force, German mothers are typically in work nowadays, albeit on a part-time basis. German women aged 25 to 34 years old are now more likely to obtain a university degree than young men. This rise in educational attainment has contributed to the large increase (11 percentage points) over the past 15 years in the female employment rate to 70% in Germany: the highest proportion of women in the paid workforce outside of the Nordic countries and other OECD countries where women are frequently in part-time employment such as the Netherlands. This increase in labour force participation was associated with a decline in time spent on unpaid home and care work, but in Germany as elsewhere in the OECD, women still bear the brunt of unpaid work and fathers spend a lot less time with children than mothers. German parents are more likely than their fellow Europeans to report work/life conflict and, despite recent increases, the total fertility rate (TFR) in 2014 was 1.47, below the 2013 OECD average of 1.67 (Chapter 2).

In the past, labour market institutions, public policies, and social norms reinforced traditional gender roles, especially in West Germany. However, since the mid-2000s social policy reform has increased opportunities for parents to find a better work/family balance. Parental leave reform has effectively reduced the duration of the paid leave spell that mothers take and induced many fathers to use paid leave entitlements, often for two months at a time (Chapter 3). At the same time public investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC) increased markedly with public spending as a per cent of GDP and the proportion of children participating coming from behind to overtake the OECD average (Chapter 3).

Attitudes towards work and care opportunities have changed too. The share of the population in former West Germany that believes a mother should not work *at all* when they have a pre-school aged child has dropped from 46.6% in 2002 to 21.8% in 2012, and over the same period that proportion halved to below 10% in East Germany (Chapter 2). Furthermore in terms of who should take paid parental leave, fathers or mothers, in 2012 the German population was one of the most egalitarian after Sweden (Figure 1.1).

The new German family policy approach aims to provide parents and children more time with each other also by promoting a more equal sharing of responsibilities in reconciling work and family life – “Partnerschaftlichkeit” (BMFSFJ, 2015a). This is reflected in 2015 parental leave reform, which facilitates both parents to take leave on a part-time basis and provides a partnership bonus for at least four months when both parents work around 25-30 hours per week. This reform is part of a more general policy drive to make working conditions in companies more conducive to family life in co-operation with employers, unions and other stakeholders. In Germany currently many mothers work short part-time hours and many fathers work more than 40 hours per week. For that reason, the debate in Germany over working-time flexibility and a more equitable sharing of work and family responsibilities between parents with small children involves “vollzeitnah” or “reduced full-time working hours” – a term not in common international use.

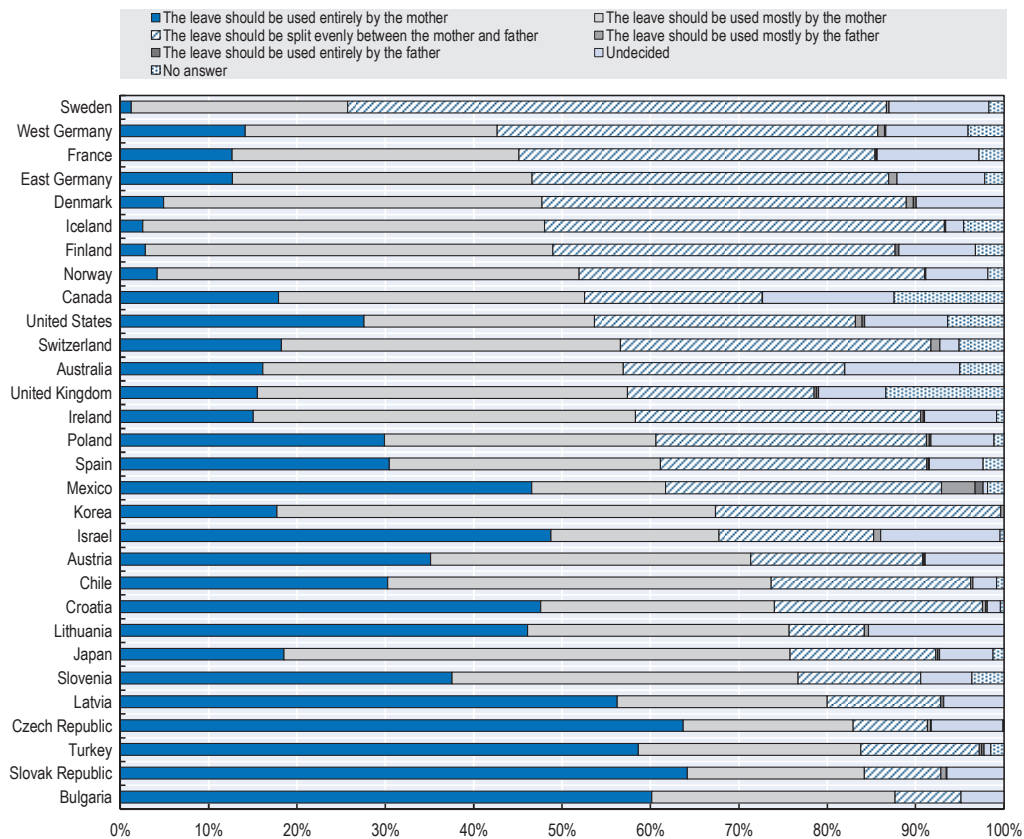
Public policy also increased ECEC capacity, but considerable policy challenges remain including for example, regarding out-of-school-hours (OSH) care support and providing both parents with equally strong financial incentives to work (or work more) through the tax-benefit system.

## 2. Sharing pays for families

A more equal sharing of work/life balance opportunities and responsibilities between partners is good for the well-being of families and its individual members. This is perhaps most obvious for couple families – the focus of this report – but all families benefit from an equal sharing of responsibilities in reconciling work and family life, also when parents are separated and do not live together on a permanent basis. It gives more time to fathers to spend with their children which also supports child development; while it gives mothers more scope to pursue their labour market aspirations and career opportunities, strengthen their long-term labour force attachment and pension entitlements, enhancing both their financial independence and their families' resources. It could also have benefits for the economy and society as a whole as a better allocation of labour market resources can spur on economic growth.

**Figure 1.1. Supporters of paid parental leave in favour of parents sharing parental leave period (equally)**

Distribution of responses to the question “Consider a couple who both work full-time and now have a new born child. Both are in a similar work situation and are eligible for paid leave. How should this paid leave period be divided between the mother and the father?”



Note: Question only asked to those who think paid leave should be available to parents.

Response options “Father 100%, mother 0%” and “Leave should mostly be taken by father and some by the mother” lumped into one category due to low response rate.

Source: International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2012.

Parenthood proves to be a crucial moment in couple's lives. Parents' behaviour around the birth of a new child is important for determining later roles and responsibilities within a family (Baxter, 2008; Schober, 2013; Barnes, 2015). Up to parenthood many couples share paid and unpaid work relatively equally. But upon birth of the first child couples often revert to traditional roles and even as children grow older mothers do not always return (fully) to the labour market. Too often, partners' behaviours feed into an unfortunate circle: men engage more in paid work, women engage more in unpaid work and individual aspirations are not fulfilled.

Children benefit from spending time with their fathers: Greater paternal involvement is associated with positive cognitive and emotional outcomes (Lamb, 2010; Huerta et al., 2013; Schober, 2015) as well as physical health benefits for the child (WHO, 2007). Children can also benefit from their mothers' employment, as mothers' participation in the labour market increases household income. It may also change the allocation of resources within households as it gives mothers more control to increase child-related expenditures (Lundberg and Pollak, 1996; Woolley, 2004).

Fathers benefit from spending more time with their children: fathers who contribute more to unpaid work (including child care) face a lower risk of divorce than less-involved fathers (Sigle-Rushton, 2010), while fathers who engage more with their children report greater life satisfaction and better physical and mental health than their less-engaged peers (Eggebeen and Knoester, 2001; WHO, 2007; Craig and Swrikar, 2009). Evidence also suggests that fathers' work environment have a role to play: fathers report higher work-life satisfaction and involvement with their children, the more father-friendly their workplace (Goodman et al., 2008; Craig and Swrikar, 2009; Ishii-Kuntz, 2013).

Mothers' employment participation is often crucial to ensure family's economic well-being and reduce poverty risks. During the Great Recession, women's earnings were an important factor in helping families compensate for income losses in more vulnerable, male-dominated sectors (OECD, 2012 and 2014). Engaging in paid employment offers women (and their children) economic security in the case of divorce or partnership dissolution – which in Germany is just above the OECD average. Continued employment participation may also open up career opportunities and will, in all events, strengthen pension entitlements so reducing the risk of poverty in old age (OECD, 2015a).

Employed mothers also help to change gender norms and equal sharing in the longer term perspective. There are intergenerational effects on future gender inequality when mothers are in paid work, as egalitarian attitudes are shaped both at home and in the public sphere. Equal sharing of unpaid work between mothers and fathers is also associated with more gender-equal attitudes and behaviours of children once they grow up (McGinn, 2015; Davis and Greenstein, 2009). When mothers participate in the labour market, children's social expectations are that women should enjoy equality of opportunity in the labour market – with all that implies for the division of labour in the household. Sons raised by employed mothers spend more time on care activities at home as grown-ups than sons of stay-at-home mothers. As for daughters raised by employed mothers, they too, are more successful on the labour market. Their jobs are better, their pay higher and their paid hours longer than among the daughters of stay-at-home mothers (McGinn et al., 2015; Olivetti et al., 2015; Cunningham, 2001).

### *But most German families share paid and unpaid work unequally*

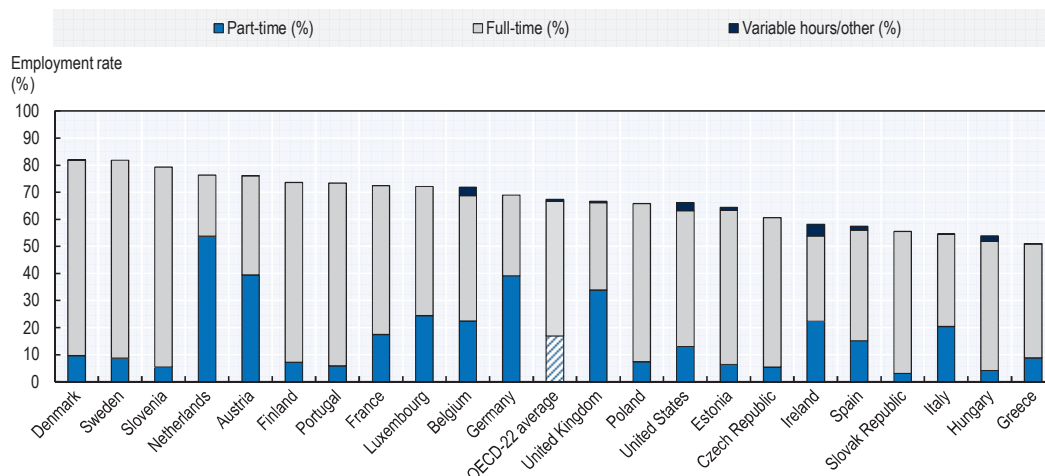
The “main-earner model” continues to dominate in Germany, albeit in a modified form. Most children in Germany grow up with a full-time working father and a mother who often works part-time and does the bulk of the unpaid work around the house, including child care. In 2013, 47% of couples with a child under 18 followed the main-earner model (BMFSFJ, 2015b).

Nonetheless, over the past 15 years, employment rates among working-age women in Germany have increased by over 11 percentage points, from 58.1% to 69.5% (Chapter 2). The average change in this period across the OECD was only 4.7 percentage points. Germany’s increase represents the second-largest increase in female employment in the OECD in this period, after Chile, and in 2014 Germany had the highest proportion of women in the paid workforce outside of the Nordic countries and Switzerland.

The gains in female employment in Germany have largely been driven by mothers entering part-time work, often working relatively short hours. More than half of the German mothers in employment work part-time: only the Netherlands – at 70% – has a higher proportion of employed mothers in part-time employment (Figure 1.2). Because of the prevalence of part-time work among employed women, the gender gap in full-time equivalent employment (which accounts for the working hours of those in employment) remains large at 24.6 percentage points, compared to a gender gap of 8.5 percentage points in employment rates in Germany (OECD, 2016a).

**Figure 1.2. Working mothers in Germany mainly work part-time**

Maternal employment rates by part-time/full-time status, mothers aged 15-64 with at least one child aged 0-14,<sup>1</sup> 2013 or latest available year<sup>2</sup>



*Note:* The distinction between part-time and full-time employment is based on a common definition (usual weekly working hours of less than 30 in the main job). “Variable hours/other” refers to women whose usual hours cannot be given because hours worked vary considerably from week to week or from month to month. The definition of “employed” and “employment” follows ILO guidelines (<http://laborsta.ilo.org/applv8/data/c2e.html>) and covers those in both paid (dependent) employment and in self-employment (including unpaid family workers).

1. For the United States, children aged between 0-17.
2. Data for Denmark, Finland and Sweden refer to 2012.

*Source:* OECD calculations based on EU LFS for European countries and Current Population Survey for the United States.

At 42 hours per week on average German fathers often work long hours compared with many other OECD countries (Chapter 4). The time fathers spend at work takes away from the time they could spend with their family and caring for their children – an important factor in father-child relationships. Every third German father wishes to have more time for his children (Destatis, 2015a) and most fathers would prefer shorter paid work hours (BMFSFJ, 2015b).

Within-couple gender gaps in working hours and earnings in Germany are wider than in other European countries and the United States (Figure 1.3, Panels A and B). In couple families with a female partner aged 25 to 45 years old and at least one child, mothers are in paid work for an average of 17 hours, and in Austria, Italy and Switzerland this is also less than 20 hours per week on average. By contrast, the figure among partnered mothers aged 25 to 45 years old in Denmark, Norway and Sweden is 30 hours per week or more (Chapter 4).

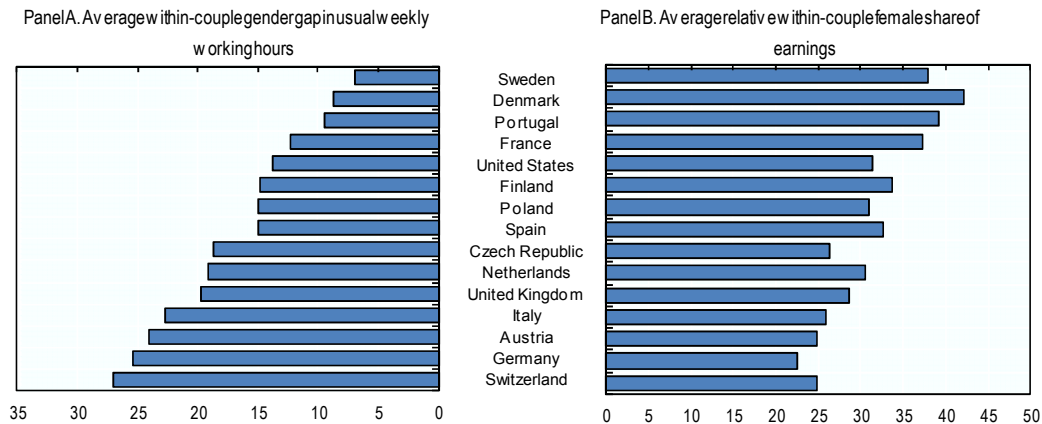
German fathers, for their part, tend to put in relatively long hours. Most men in Germany work over 40 hours per week, and the share of partnered fathers working over 44 hours is higher in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland than in Finland, Norway and Sweden. “Dual reduced full-time work” households – for which the working definition used in Chapter 4 is those in which both parents work between 30 and 39 hours per week – are still uncommon in Germany. They account for below 2% of couples with children, far less than Denmark and Norway where they make up over 25% (Chapter 4). With 18%, the Netherlands is the country that has the highest proportion of couple households with children in which men work 30 to 39 hours per week and women work part-time: twice as many as in any other European country and three times more than in Germany (Chapter 4).

Given the patterns in working hours among partnered parents, the average within-couple gender gap in paid working hours in Germany and other German speaking countries is at 25 hours per week wider than in many other OECD countries (Figure 1.3, Panel A and Chapter 4). By contrast, within-couple gender gaps in working hours are less than ten hours per week in Denmark, Portugal and Sweden.

This difference in couples' work hours contributes to the persistent gender pay gap within households and at the national level. Germany's full-time gender wage gap of 13.4% is slightly below the OECD average (15.5%), although Germany's wage gap has narrowed over the past decade (OECD, 2016a). Within households, the average contribution of mothers to household income is lower in Germany than it is in most of the OECD. In couples with a female partner aged 25 to 45 years old and at least one child, women's earnings in Germany account for just below one-quarter of household incomes on averages. Similar patterns can be found in Austria and Switzerland (EU SILC, 2012 and Figure 1.3, Panel B). By contrast, in France, Sweden, and Denmark, female partners contribute over 35% to household income, on average (Chapter 4).

**Figure 1.3. German-speaking countries have large within-couple gender gaps in work hours and earnings**

Average within-couple gender gap in usual weekly working hours and average relative within-couple female share of earnings, for couples with a female partner aged 25 to 45 and at least one child, selected countries, 2012<sup>1</sup>



*Note for Panel A:* Data refer to the average absolute gap in usual weekly working hours between the male member and the female member of a couple (male partner's usual weekly working hours – female partner's usual weekly working hours). Couples with both partners not working are excluded. In Sweden, for example, male partners work on average nearly seven hours more per week than female partners.

*Note for Panel B:* Data refer to the average female share of a couple's total earnings [female partner's earnings / (male partner's earnings + female partner's earnings)]. Couples with both partners not working are excluded. In Denmark, for example, female partners earn on average 42.13% out of the couple's total earnings.

1. For the within-couple gap in usual weekly working hours, data refer to 2012 (2014 for the United States). For the female share of earnings, the income reference year is 2011 (2013 for the United States).

*Source:* OECD calculations of EU SILC 2012, and Current Population Survey (2014) for the United States.

Despite the tendency among partnered fathers in Austria, Germany and Switzerland to work long hours, the pay-off to excessively long hours is not better productivity (Chapter 2). While productivity does increase with hours worked, it only does so to a point: a large body of research finds that productivity reaches a maximum at around forty hours per week (Penceval, 2014; Business Roundtable; 1980; Thomas and Raynar, 1997). After five eight-hour days, productivity plateaus and then declines as workers' anticipate adding extra hours and produce less in each hour. Furthermore, the risk of accidents and errors increases and miscommunication and poor decisions are more likely (Dembe et al., 2005; Rogers et al., 2004; Flinn and Armstrong, 2011). Workers' health suffers (Virtanen et al., 2012) as well, which contributes to diminished productivity. Confronting excessively long hours requires cultural shifts within organisations, as well as sufficient policies protecting workers.

One way to bypass the constraints of full-time employment is to become an entrepreneur, which may provide more flexibility in the setting of working hours but does not necessarily imply shorter hours. German women, however, are also less likely to be entrepreneurs than German men. In 2013, only 2.5% of working women in Germany were their own employer, compared to 6.7% of men. Furthermore, German female entrepreneurs earn much less, on average, than their male counterparts: female earnings from self-employment in Germany were nearly 43% lower than male earnings from self-employment, which is larger than the OECD average gender gap in entrepreneur earnings (36.1%). The earnings gap can be explained by the lower

capitalisation of female-run companies, the choice of sector, a lack of managerial experience, and the lower number of hours female entrepreneurs on average devote to their businesses, as they are more likely than men to combine paid work with family commitments (OECD, 2012). Lower earnings for female entrepreneurs may also be an additional consequence of insufficient public child care supports (Chapter 2).

Young men often have higher earnings than young women, so for many families the loss of income is smallest when mothers rather than fathers reduce working hours upon child birth. This contributes to many couples taking on traditional roles upon parenthood, with mothers taking on more unpaid care work than fathers, who frequently put in longer full-time hours than men without children (WSI, 2015). This pattern contributes to gender differences in career opportunities and earnings profiles, and upon retirement, to large gender pension gaps (Chapter 4). To break this circle of inequality, a more balanced sharing of work and family responsibilities amongst fathers and mothers is needed. If fathers were to take more leave, or would be as likely as mothers to temporarily reduce working hours upon becoming a parent, then employers would have stronger incentives to equally invest in training and career opportunities of mothers. If mothers could engage in employment on a similar basis as fathers, this would underpin their economic security in case of divorce or partnership dissolution and reduce their risk of pension-related old-age poverty. If fathers and mothers were both to work reduced full-time hours on a temporary basis, and pursue their labour market career on a full-time basis as children grow up this would contribute to a marked reduction of gender pay and pension gaps in future.

### ***Women's unpaid work at home affects their engagement in paid, full-time employment***

No OECD country has achieved equality in paid and unpaid work, and in all OECD countries women do more unpaid work at home than men (Figure 1.4). Female partners spend, on average, twice as much time on housework and child care as their male partners. Indeed, in nearly all OECD countries, men actually work *less* than women when adding up *total* hours spent in paid and unpaid work (Chapter 5).

Across countries, male-breadwinner couples tend to adhere to a more traditional division of paid and unpaid labour: when a male partner works full-time, the female partner predominantly manages housework and child care (Chapter 5). In dual-earner couples, in contrast, male partners take on a larger share of housework than male breadwinners. Yet even when both partners work full-time, the division of household labour is rarely a 50-50 split: the female share of unpaid household labour varies across countries, from 62%, on average, in Germany to 88%, on average, in Korea. Women tend to do less unpaid housework and child care as their share of household earnings goes up, but the relationship is not linear; there is some evidence that high-earning women often do more housework in order to conform to gender norms at home, if not in the workplace, an example of so-called “doing gender” behaviour (Bittman, 2003; Bertrand et al., 2015).

Although there has been an increase in the number of German women entering the labour market, and despite small improvements in the amount of work German men do around the house, the within-household distribution of unpaid labour is still unequal. Women (in the 30-to-44 year-old age bracket) spend an average of 4.73 hours per day on child care and other unpaid work, whereas men of the same age spend an average of only 2.52 hours per day on these tasks (Destatis, 2015b). Women's time spent on

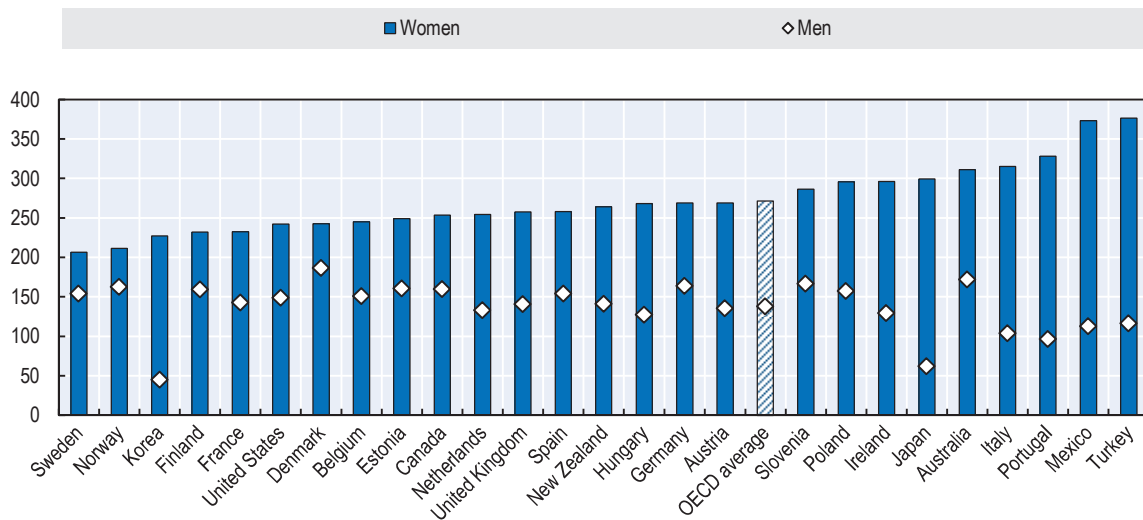


unpaid labour has decreased over the past decade, but this was driven largely by improvements in technology and automation, rather than a large increase in time spent by men on housework.

Time spent on housework affects time spent in the labour market, and vice versa. A disproportionate burden on women to care for children can deter mothers from (re-entering full-time work and can make employers less likely to hire mothers or women of childbearing age. In Germany, women who work part-time are most likely to cite housework or caregiving responsibilities as the reason they work fewer than 30 hours per week (Chapter 4). In contrast, countries with high female employment rates, more gender-egalitarian attitudes, and widely accessible ECEC and OSH-care services (like Denmark and Sweden) also tend to have more equal sharing of household labour (Figure 1.5).

**Figure 1.4. Women do more unpaid labour than men across the OECD**

Average minutes per day spent on child care and other unpaid work (15-64 year-olds<sup>1</sup>), by sex, latest available year<sup>2</sup>

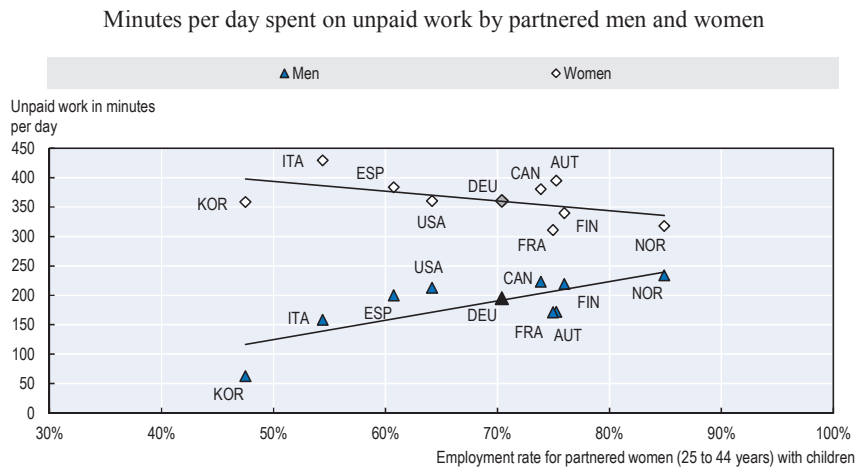


1. Data are for 15-64 year-olds, except for Australia (15+ year-olds), Hungary (15-74 year-olds) and Sweden (25-64 year-olds).

2. Reference years are: Australia: 2006; Austria: 2008-09; Belgium: 2005; Canada: 2010; Denmark: 2001; Estonia: 2009-10; Finland: 2009-10; France: 2009; Germany: 2001-02; Hungary: 1999-2000; Italy: 2008-09; Ireland: 2005; Japan: 2011; Korea: 2009; Mexico: 2009; the Netherlands: 2005-06; New Zealand: 2009-10; Norway: 2010; Poland: 2003-04; Portugal: 1999; Slovenia: 2000-01; Spain: 2009-10; Sweden: 2010; Turkey: 2006; the United Kingdom: 2005; the United States: 2014.

Source: OECD Gender Data Portal 2016.

**Figure 1.5. Fewer hours on chores and child care are associated with higher female employment rates**



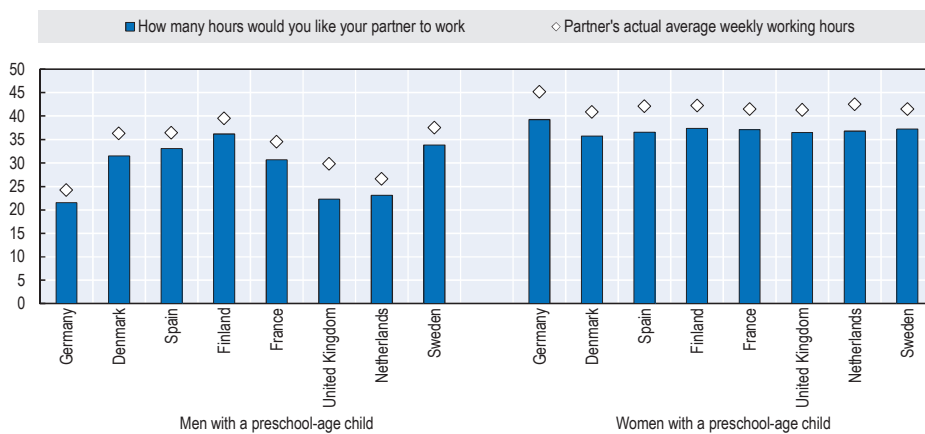
*Note:* Time use data for partnered men and women aged 20 years or above who live in the same household as a spouse or cohabitating partner. Employment rates for partnered women aged 20 years and above who live in the same household as a spouse or cohabitating partner. Employment rates for Norway for partnered women between 15 to 75 years.

*Source:* OECD Time Use Database and German Statistical Office, OECD Secretariat estimates of female employment rates. Employment rates for Norway supplied by Statistics Norway.

The “preferred” number of paid hours that Germans would like their partner to work differs markedly by gender. The average number of hours that mothers with young children would like their partner to work is much higher than the number of hours fathers with young children would prefer their partner to work (Figure 1.6). On average, German mothers would rather their partners worked approximately five hours less per week, while fathers would like to see their partners work three hours fewer per week (Chapter 4 offers a more detailed discussion of German fathers’ relatively long – and German mothers’ relatively short – working hours). These different gender preferences hold true for all countries but are more pronounced in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom than, for instance, in Denmark, France or Sweden, where support systems facilitate fathers and mothers to realise working hours in a less constrained manner.

**Figure 1.6. Fathers and mothers of young children prefer that their partner work fewer hours**

Average responses to the inquiry of partners’ average working hours, and partners’ preferred working hours, 2010



*Source:* European Social Survey (2010).

### 3. Sharing pays for society as a whole

Germany faces mounting demographic pressures. Promoting a better reconciliation of work and family life can deliver a double dividend to the German labour market: it will help the German labour market both in the short term – as more mothers work and/or work longer paid hours – and potentially limit the decline of the overall population, by promoting higher birth rates.

#### ***Realising women's professional potential in the labour market benefits the German economy***

OECD projections suggest that GDP would increase by 12% over the next 20 years if labour force participation rates among women in OECD countries reached male levels (OECD, 2012). One of the areas of greatest untapped potential in the German labour force is inactive and/or part-time working mothers. Better sharing of unpaid work at home accompanied by coherent public policies helps mothers to maintain labour market attachment and continue their careers.

Given that women's levels of educational attainment now matches or outpaces men's in most OECD countries, there are potentially large losses to the economy when women stay at home or work short part-time hours. Young German women are well-educated in comparison to young German men: 32.1% of 25 to 34 years-old women have completed tertiary education, compared to 27.9% of their male peers (Chapter 2). OECD (2012) found that, across OECD countries, increases in educational attainment accounted for around 50% of all economic growth between 1960 and 2008, over half of which was due to increased female educational attainment.

More equal sharing of paid work between men and women can counteract the projected decline of the German labour force. In Sweden (one of the most gender-equal countries with a strong family support system) men's (fathers and non-fathers) paid work hours are about an hour less than in Germany on average and women's (mothers and non-mothers) paid work hours more than three hours more per week compared to Germany. If, by 2040, German men and women aged 25 to 54 emulated the labour market behaviour of Swedish men and women in the same age bracket, the projected decrease in the German labour force would be slowed and GDP per capita could increase, if it is assumed that changes in labour force participation rates or weekly working hours do not affect the labour demand (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of different scenarios).

#### ***When employment and childbearing conflict, fertility rates suffer***

Women's educational attainment and participation in paid employment increase the cost of interrupting their career for childrearing. In countries with limited support for reconciling work and family life, child birth often implies a significant reduction in family income, as at least one partner has to stop (or reduce) their employment participation in order to care for the new child.

There is significant tension between paid work and family commitments in Germany. The number of children in a family has a greater adverse effect on female employment in Germany than in many other OECD countries, and German women are much more likely to remain childless than women elsewhere (Chapter 6). In 2012, 36% of 25-to-49 year-old women were childless, compared to only 28% in France where

definitive childlessness is also much less frequent than in most European countries (Miettinen et al., 2015). There is also a sizeable gap between women's preferences for childlessness and actual childlessness in Germany. Seven percent of women in Germany state that having no children is their “ideal” – this is 4% on average across the OECD (Eurobarometer 2014), which suggests that many households experience “unwanted” childlessness in Germany. Large families – those with three or more children – are also relatively uncommon in Germany.

The challenges in reconciling work and family life have contributed to persistently low total fertility rates (TFRs) in Germany (OECD, 2011). Since 1990, its TFR has hovered around 1.3 to 1.4 children per woman, although it edged up to 1.47 in 2014. Nevertheless, this is lower than the OECD average of 1.67 and well below the population replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. Stagnating fertility rates are a particularly important issue for Germany: aside from the personal satisfaction derived from raising children, fewer babies means fewer workers in the future, with pernicious consequences for the economy.

Birth rates in Germany vary with women's educational attainment, occupation, and earnings (Dorbritz, 2008; Kreyenfeld and Konietzka, 2013; Bujard, 2015). German women with higher educational attainment are less likely to have children, as are women engaged in paid work and (especially) women engaged in full-time paid work. Women with higher earnings are also much less likely to have a child than women with lower earnings, as lower-income women often live with a male breadwinner. Differences in gender roles are less dramatic in France, where the likelihood of giving birth actually increases with a woman's earnings (Chapter 6). Fertility behaviour is also less dependent on women's working hours in France where the supply of child care, preschool and out-of-school care services is typically high.

International literature suggests that fathers' involvement in caring for a first born child is positively associated with the likelihood of families deciding to have a second child (Duvander et al., 2010; Aassve et al., 2015; Miettinen et al., 2015; Cooke, 2004). However, there is little scholarly consensus regarding the relationship between the general household division of labour and fertility, as studies vary in how gender equality is measured and typically do not measure “sharing” behaviours. This is an important avenue for future research.

#### **4. Preparing for sharing: Social policies can promote partnership in families**

Socioeconomic and demographic factors affect the degree to which household labour is shared. More equitable within-household divisions of labour are generally observed in couples who are unmarried, dual-earners, well-educated, younger egalitarian in their attitudes, and childless. Households in post-communist countries also share housework more equally.

##### ***A bird's eye view of recent policy change in German***

German families face considerable challenges to spending more time together and achieving a more gender-balanced reconciliation of work and family life. Family policy can play an important role and Germany has already made substantial progress in supporting families ahead of and after the birth of a child (Chapter 3). In 2007, parental leave transfers were changed from a flat-rate, means-tested child-raising allowance to an earnings-related parental leave benefit with floors and ceilings.

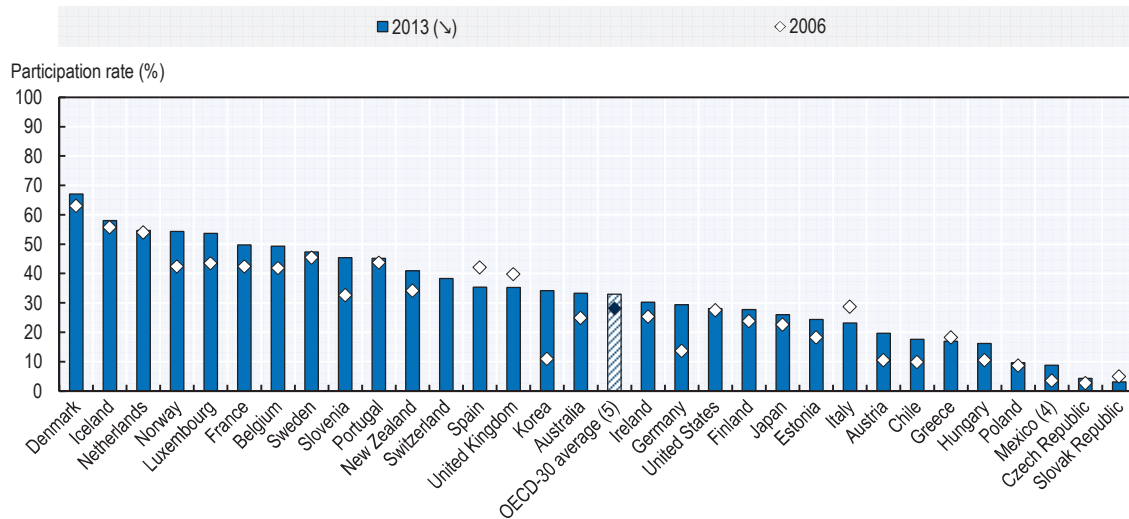
Payments were set for 12 months, with another two months possible for the partner (typically the father) if s/he used at least two months of parental leave.

The 2007 reform significantly increased the probability of mothers to return to work after the expiry of the benefit, and particularly supported highly educated mothers' return to full-time work (Kluve and Schmitz, 2014; Kluve and Tamm, 2013). As parents (mostly women) return quicker and in greater numbers to the labour market, much of any additional cost of the scheme is likely to be offset by increases in tax receipts and decreases in other public expenditures associated with inactivity: Estimates by the research institute RWI suggest that even in its first few years as much as 25% of the additional cost was cancelled out by increases in government revenues and decreases in other expenditure (Bechara et al., 2015).

The 2007 reform to the parental leave system in Germany was a good step forward in ensuring that fathers engage more in parenting, and this policy reform was in line with international best practice, as it is similar to examples in Iceland, France, Portugal and Sweden (Adema et al., 2015). Following the German reform, the share of fathers claiming the parental leave allowance doubled to one-third over the 2009-13 period (Destatis, 2015b).

The parental leave reform of 2015 further encourages fathers' leave taking and provides financial incentives to couples to develop (and ideally sustain) a more balanced division of paid and unpaid work. The 2015 reform facilitates combining part-time work and leave taking ("ElterngeldPlus"), and better leave sharing among partners in couple families), as couples in which both partners work 25 to 30 hours per week for at least four months are now rewarded with a partnership bonus equal to four additional months of parental leave benefit (the "Partnerschaftsbonus"). Greater acceptance of fathers' reducing working hours and taking leave when children are young is another corner stone of equal sharing between mothers and fathers. When men present a greater "risk" of temporarily leaving a job around child birth, child-bearing age women may encounter less hiring discrimination and/or earnings and career penalties associated with taking leave. By further increasing father's take-up and generating better sharing among fathers and mothers, this reform as well as information campaigns targeted at employers would also help to "destigmatise" fathers' leave among employers and help improve gender diversity in workplaces.

Public policy models in countries such as Denmark, France and Sweden aim to provide families with a continuum of support throughout childhood. Apart from paid leave arrangements, this involves the provision of affordable quality ECEC and OSH services that allow parents to combine children with full-time paid employment, including during school holidays. Since the mid-2000s Germany has also increased considerably investment in ECEC services, to the benefit of children and their parents (OECD, 2011). Nevertheless, capacity rather than affordability appears to be an issue. Out-of-pocket centre-based child care costs for German parents are similar to those for Danish and Swedish parents (Chapter 3), but – despite a marked increase in recent years – ECEC participation rates are still below the OECD average (Figure 1.7).

**Figure 1.7. Enrolment in child care is catching up in Germany**Participation rates for 0-2 year-olds in formal early childhood education and care services,<sup>1</sup> 2006<sup>2</sup> and 2013<sup>3</sup>

1. Data generally include children in centre-based services, organised day care and pre-school (both public and private) and those who are cared for by a professional child-minder, and exclude informal services provided by relatives, friends or neighbours. Exact definitions may however differ slightly across countries.

2. Data for Australia refer to 2005.

3. Data for Japan refer to 2010, and for Australia, Chile, Mexico and the United States to 2011.

4. Data for Mexico do not include services provided by the private sector.

5. Unweighted average for the 30 OECD countries with data available at both time points.

Source: OECD Family Database, <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.

In addition, there are initiatives to extend all-day schooling and out-of-school-hours (OSH) care, although there is still room for improvement: some 15% of German 6-10 year-olds use OSH services, compared to around 80% in Denmark and Sweden. Before (and after) the school day starts and ends, children can do their homework or take part in leisure activities organised by the local authorities. Parents thus benefit from longer, more flexible, publicly provided child-care hours.

Flexible working arrangements are crucial as they can give employees greater autonomy in managing their working hours to better reconcile work and family life, while they can contribute to maintaining the knowledge base in the workforce and limit hiring costs for employers. Since the mid-2000s, policy in Germany has moved to promote a more gender-equal sharing of time for child care and work, and in this sense it is ahead of most OECD countries, except perhaps the Nordic countries. There are a range of publicly-supported initiatives involving different stakeholders in the private sector, which include initiatives towards greater sharing of best practices amongst stakeholders and audits of family-friendly companies. Most recently, in 2015 various stakeholders (including employer associations and unions) signed a memorandum on the “New Reconciliation” of work and family life (“Die Neue Vereinbarkeit”). The memorandum identifies areas of progress (e.g. greater awareness of flexible working hours in companies) but also challenges (e.g. encouraging longer paid work hours of mothers), and it develops guidelines for successfully balancing work and life across the

life cycle for employees and companies. This includes promoting reduced full-time working hours, i.e. less than 40 hours per week, particularly with regard to employees with care responsibilities for small children.

The 2015 parental leave reform (“ElterngeldPlus”) can be seen as a stepping stone towards a “family working time model”, which aims to support parents with young children who want to equally share work and family responsibilities. One proposal for such a model (Müller et al., 2013) involves offering an income supplement to coupled parents when both partners change their work hours to reduced full-time working-hours employment (“vollzeitnah”) for a period of three years. On average this would involve shorter paid work hours of fathers and longer paid work hours of mothers with positive implications for family incomes and wellbeing, fathers’ time with children, women's career progression and wages. A lower paid workload could allow fathers to invest more time in their children at a young age and set the basis for greater paternal involvement as children grow up.

Any type of dual-reduced full-time schedule would also give most mothers more paid hours, as most mothers in Germany currently work part-time, and it may provide a stepping stone for part-time mothers to transition to longer hours as children age. OECD estimates show that under these assumptions the “family working-time model”, increases in female working hours would almost entirely cancel out any decreases in male hours, and should thus have a limited overall effect on German labour supply (Chapter 2). Furthermore, a period of reduced full-time work when children are very young could facilitate an increase to full-time work for both parents (which is very difficult when starting from a short-hours base), and further stimulate German labour supply in the long-term, which will be essential to cope with population ageing.

The German public is ready for change. Surveys suggest that many Germans are unhappy with their work-life balance: working parents in Germany are more likely than most other parents in Europe to report that their job interferes with time they would like to spend with their family. And although parents of young children express a preference for their partner (both mothers and fathers) to work fewer hours outside the home, Germans have become more prone to the idea of mothers of young children entering the paid workforce (Chapter 2): 61% of the German population believe that it is important to support parents with children under 3 years in a way that facilitates the employment of both partners (Allensbach Institut für Demoskopie, 2015), and many parents feel that enterprises could do more to promote a better reconciliation of work and family life (BMFSFJ, 2013).

### ***Policy recommendations for Germany***

To further facilitate an equal sharing of work and family responsibilities and achieve a better reconciliation of work and family life, this review recommends German policy makers to:

- *Continue to encourage more fathers to take up parental leave.* The 2007 reform of the parental leave system in Germany was in line with international best practice and a great step towards a more gender-balanced division of paid and unpaid work. Evaluations have shown that it significantly increased the probability of mothers to return to work earlier than before upon expiry of the benefit, and markedly increased father’s use of parental leave.

“ElterngeldPlus” reform in 2015 facilitates combining part-time work and leave taking and provides financial incentives to encourage both partners in couple families to engage in paid work for 25 to 30 hours per week for at least four months. The impact of this reform should be closely monitored in order to see whether it contributes to a further increase in fathers’ uptake of leave, fathers reducing their full-time working hours for a limited period of time and mothers increasing their hours in paid work.

- Building on the experience with “Elterngeld” and “ElterngeldPlus”, *continue to develop family-policy supports* including options for parents with young children to work reduced full-time hours for a specific period of time during which they may receive associated financial support as currently debated in Germany under the notion of the “family working-time model”. Reduced full-time hours could help many fathers to invest more time in their children at a young age, while compared to long-term short part-time hours, working reduced full-time hours on a temporary basis is likely to have positive effects on women’s earnings and career opportunities.
- Having established the right to reduce working hours for family reasons, introduce a *right to increase working hours to full-time work* – or another level of working hours that fits their changing family circumstances – within a specified time frame. Parents could use working-time flexibility to match their work and family commitments – also as children grow up.
- *Continue to increase investment in, and ensure broader access to, child care for young children.* Parenthood is a crucial time for couples to set patterns in paid and unpaid work, and the adequate and affordable provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is key to enabling both parents to work while having a family. Germany has improved public investment in ECEC over the past 15 years. Yet more investment is needed to ensure that supply meets demand, especially in regions where ECEC is underprovided, and to meet parents’ needs more flexibly.
- Compared to investment in ECEC, progress in OSH-care supports in Germany has to catch up: *greater investment and broader access to, out-of-school-hours supports* for primary-school age children is needed. Child care issues do not stop when children enter primary school, and full-time workers in Germany need to arrange care before and/or after school hours. Public policy in Germany should invest more in OSH-care supports that help parents with school age children to combine full-time work with family life, also during school holidays.
- *Adjust the German tax-benefit system in order to encourage couples to share paid work equally.* Tax-benefit policies in about one-third of OECD countries encourage equal sharing of paid work within couples, mainly due to individual progressive taxation. By contrast, the joint income tax system, free co-insurance of spouses, and the cap on social security contributions in Germany, ensure that the tax burden on household labour increases strongly when a second person takes up employment unless s/he engages in a tax free minijob with income of up to EUR 450 per month. Financial incentives to work for second earners in couple families could be improved in different ways, as for example through a separate tax-free allowance for second earners, or assessing health contribution on basis of the number of adults who are insured, with compensation for low-income families (see OECD, 2016c and Chapter 3 for more detail).



- *Further extend the co-operation with social partners and other stakeholders to make workplace practices more conducive to family life.* Continue to promote a range of family-friendly workplace measures as in the scope of the “Neue Vereinbarkeit Memorandum”, including reducing the number of hours in a typical full-time workday, encouraging fathers’ leave taking, facilitating remote work, and allowing flexible work schedules.
- The German authorities are encouraged to *continue* with their work *raising awareness of the benefits of equal partnerships in families*, through public information campaigns, promotion of role models, high-visibility events, and other means of communication. Maintain support to initiatives aimed at fostering and sharing best practices at the local level such as the local alliances for families (“Lokale Bündnisse für Familie”) taking into account the peculiarities of Länder and the role of municipalities.

Promoting partnerships in which fathers and mother share the responsibility for children equally is good for families and their well-being, and also produces a range of less tangible social goods, like better father-child bonding and promoting egalitarian gender norms across generations and enabling better work-life balance. In turn, a more balanced sharing of work and family responsibilities amongst fathers and mothers, as for example debated in the context of a “family working-time model”, could provide families with more time for each other and enable men and women to reach their full potential in the labour market. If fathers and mothers were both to work reduced full-time hours on a temporary basis, and pursue their labour market career on a full-time basis as children grow up this would contribute to a marked reduction of gender pay and pension gaps and sustain labour supply of men and women thereby ensuring inclusive growth in future.

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