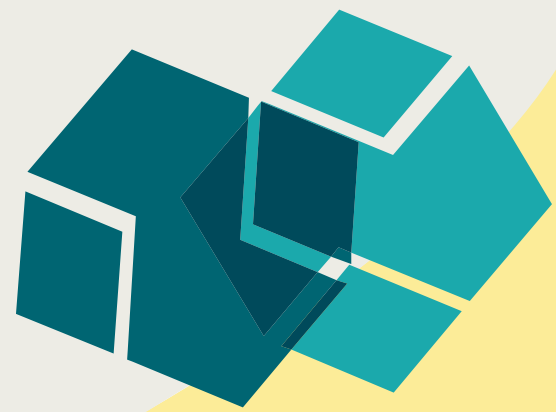




# Working Paper Series GRINCOH

Growth-Innovation-Competitiveness  
Fostering Cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe



Serie 5

Social cohesion and welfare

Paper No. 5.09

## Attitudes to gender roles in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland

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**2015**

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Please cite as:

Scharle A., (2015), 'Attitudes to gender roles in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland', GRINCOH Working Paper Series, Paper No. 5.09

## ***Attitudes to gender roles in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland***

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the perception of female and male roles in three Central and Eastern European countries, using mainly qualitative analysis. The aim is to map the attitudinal barriers to establishing a more equal share of paid and unpaid work between men and women in three Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland). We focus on three fora of public discourse: electoral programmes, parliamentary debates and printed (or online) media and contrast their portrayal of gender roles with public attitudes as measured in household surveys. The main finding is that traditional attitudes to gender roles prevail in all three countries, and especially in Hungary, however, politicians tend to hold somewhat less traditional views than the public. In the Czech Republic and Poland, family policies that promote father's involvement in child care have appeared on the political agenda.

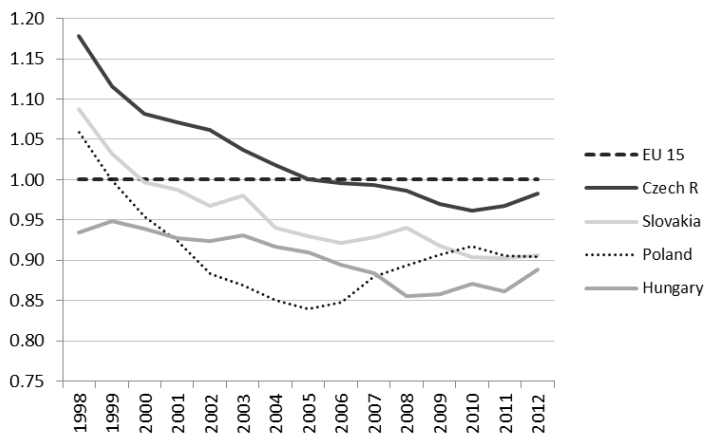
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## 1. Introduction

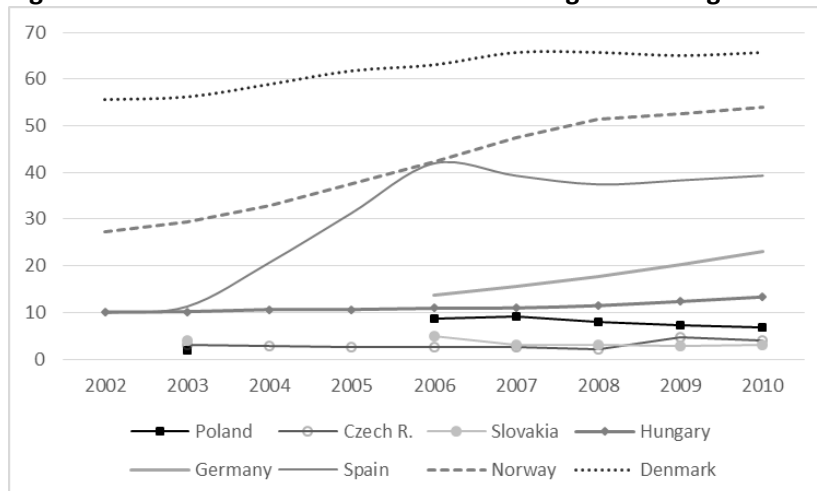
Female employment tended to be above the EU average in the Visegrad countries, due partly to the relatively high education level of women and partly to the Socialist inheritance of dual earner households (Fodor and Balogh 2007). This relative advantage however diminished during the past two decades. Csillag et al (2014) show that, between 2002 and 2007, female employment rose much faster in the EU15 than in the post Socialist New Member States (NMS). Most of this trend is explained by the relatively faster rise in the employment rate of older women in the EU-15, and by the decline in the employment of mothers with small children in the NMS compared to the modest rise observed in the EU-15. The same study shows that the overall trend improved considerably in Poland (see Figure 1 below) in recent years, which was partly due to generally more favourable economic conditions, and partly due to a marked rise in the employment of older women. The “child penalty” on female employment however remained significant in Poland as well.

**Figure 1. Female employment in the Visegrad countries compared to the EU15**



Source: Eurostat online (lfsq\_ergaed). Population aged 20-64.

**Figure 2. Enrollment in formal childcare among children aged below 3, %**



Source: OECD family database and (for Hungary) National Statistical Office.

On the spectacular Spanish developments see for example Aguilar et al 2010.

One of the factors explaining these trends is the development of daycare services for small children, which continued at a fast pace in several EU15 countries until 2007 (e.g. in Denmark or Spain), or even afterwards (e.g. in Germany, see Figure 2.). By contrast, daycare capacities for small children were very scarce in the Visegrad countries during the early 2000s and remained so during the past decade. Szikra and Győry (2014) identifies some attempts to increase the flexibility of parental leaves systems and daycare services, but concludes that legal provisions have so far had little effect on the actual implementation.

Existing research on the evolution of family policies in the region is relatively scarce. Most of the work is descriptive and comparative studies tend to focus on path dependence or economic factors to explain policy divergence within the region (e.g., Glass and Fodor 2007, Inglot et al 2011, Szikra 2011, Szelewa 2012). So far, few studies have made a link with the related literature on gender role attitudes (a notable exception is Saxonberg 2014). This paper aims to contribute to filling this gap by exploring attitudes to gender roles both among the public and in the political elite and contrast that with the recent (lack of) development of employment friendly childcare policies.

The starting point of the study is the assumption that conservative attitudes about gender roles may hinder the development of policies that support the reconciliation of work and family and thus contribute to the labour market exclusion of women. While there is some evidence that attitudes have a direct influence on employment rates (e.g. Antecol 2003, Algan and Cahuc 2005), there is little research in the CEE on this more indirect link, via policy formation. Attitudes may influence policies directly, via the views of the political elite and particularly of the governing political entities. However, the indirect channels of influence may be equally important: the perceived or actual attitudes of the electorate may influence both the design and implementation of policies. In particular, if public attitudes are more conservative than the attitudes of the political elite, we expect that movement towards more equal gender roles in policies will be slower.

Since empirical research in this area is scarce for the CEE, this paper aims only to make a first attempt at measuring attitudes as reflected in public discourse and opinion surveys. This is a step towards understanding if politicians and the media reinforce already rather conservative public attitudes or contribute to an opinion shift towards more emancipated gender roles. A gap between the attitudes of the public as opposed to politicians may also impact on the chance of modernisation in family policies.

It is important to stress that we do not aim to establish causal links, but rather, describe and compare attitudes by examining different outlets of opinion. Throughout the analysis we focus mainly on gender roles related to employment and secondly to childbearing and care as potentially conflicting roles, as these are considered most relevant for female employment.<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next two sections briefly outline our theoretical and analytical approach to describing gender role attitudes. Next, we turn to the analysis of attitudes held by political elites: section 4 looks at electoral programmes, while section 5 considers

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, by not covering reproductive rights and fertility in our analysis, we may miss some important aspects of the public discourse on gender roles, especially in the case of Poland, where abortion rights have been a central issue in the past two decades (see e.g. Fuszara 2005 or Jelen and Wilcox 2005).

parliamentary debates, applying qualitative methods. Section 6 summarises our quantitative analysis of the portrayal of gender roles concerning household chores, childcare and paid work in selected media. The following section reviews existing research on public attitudes regarding gender roles, and the last section offers some tentative conclusions.

## **2. Theoretical background**

The underlying framework that we use throughout the analysis is institutional theory. In the terminology of North (1990), we assume that gender role attitudes function as informal constraints<sup>2</sup> on the development of policies, and that variation in the attitudes held by groups of varying influence may also shape policy developments. Attitudes may also affect the decisions people make. Thus, we assume that attitudes influence women's labour market participation directly and also indirectly, via the options created by family policy and employment policy.

To complicate matters, we also assume that policies may shape attitudes. Various welfare regimes comprise specific sets of social policy arrangements, assign different levels of responsibility to the state and the family, and create collective patterns of institutionalized solidarity and social justice beliefs (Mischke, 2014). In the mainstream Western welfare state literature welfare state institutions are seen to have an impact on public discourse and individual orientation (Mische, 2014, P. Hall 1986; Rothstein 1998; Mau 2004, Esping-Andersen, 1990).

In particular, the existing literature on family policies and public attitudes in the Visegrad countries suggests that there is interplay between public attitudes and policies. One possible direction of influence is the way public attitudes find their way into the policy-making process as policy-makers themselves are embedded in the social environment. In other cases, public attitudes may indirectly influence the acceptance or rejection as well as the success or failure of policy decisions. The other direction can be the way policies (formal institutions) over time and incrementally influence the evolution of norms and public attitudes. Research on Western European countries has found that the latter has a strong role in shaping attitudinal variation across countries and family policy contexts (Mische, 2014, P. Hall 1986; Rothstein 1998; Mau 2004, Esping-Andersen, 1990).

## **3. Analytical framework**

We aim to measure attitudes on gender roles in the public and in the political elite. Given the relative abundance of existing empirical work on the former, we do not undertake primary data analysis for the first, but rely on a review of existing studies on public attitudes. This allows us to examine attitudes in the political elite in more depth: first by discourse analysis of parliamentary debates, and second, in electoral programmes. In the first, we assume that gender role attitudes are to some extent reflected in political debates, and the minutes of parliamentary debates capture these in a way that is relatively inexpensive to analyse. In the second, we focus on promises concerning family policies as a specific area that is most likely to be influenced by gender role attitudes. Lastly, we analyse perceptions of gender roles in the media, where we expect to be able to capture differences in attitudes between politicians and the public, and also the extent to which the media reinforces or

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<sup>2</sup> North defines institutions as "humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions," where constraints can be formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights) or informal restraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, code of conduct).

mediates certain gender role stereotypes. In each of these areas we use analytical tools appropriate for the focus of the analysis, which we describe in each subsection.

#### **4. Family policies in electoral programmes**

The analysis of electoral programmes of political parties is intended to reflect on the standpoint of the political parties, their perception of the relevance as well as their attitudes towards families, and especially care policies, which tend to imply particular gender roles. We look at party programmes prepared for the parliamentary elections held in 2010 in the Czech Republic and Hungary and in 2011 in Poland. In each case we focus on the parties that gained at least 2% of votes in the parliamentary elections irrespective of whether they passed the minimum threshold for entering the Parliament, but excluding parties with no care policy agenda presented in their programmes.

Two specific aspects were taken into account during the analysis:

1. policy motives behind the (promised) implementation of certain types of care
2. division of care (and the underlying attitudes) that certain types of care contribute to.

Following Scheiwe and Willekens (2008), we distinguish two groups of policy motives for childcare services – the educational model and the work-family (care responsibility) reconciliation model. The educational model promotes universally accessible pre-school education pursuing pedagogical purposes. The work-care reconciliation model represents a care-centred, targeted approach, which aims to facilitate parents' return to work and rather implies flexible mini-nurseries, mini-kindergartens or private nannies.

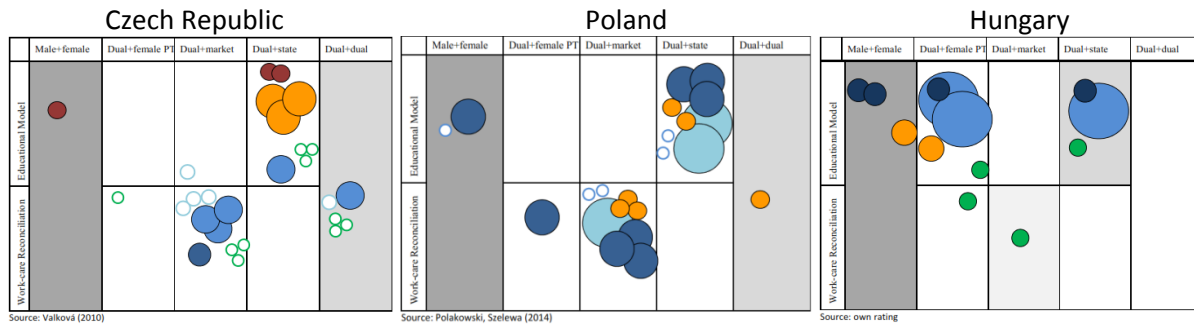
As regards the division of care, we consider parents, the state and the market as the main service providers and based on Crompton (1999), we distinguish five possible models that can be arranged on a scale ranging from the most to the least conservative form:

- a. Male breadwinner – female carer
- b. Dual earner – female part-time carer
- c. Dual earner – state carer
- d. Dual earner – marketised carer
- e. Dual earner – dual carer

In broad terms the two main strands that drive political agendas are the pro-natalist, family-centred discourse and the gender-equality discourse. The former appears to be more internalized, while the latter is still less recognized and applied in Central and Eastern Europe.

The main patterns that emerged from our analysis of party programmes are summarised in Figure 3 below. In all the three countries, the status quo is that child-care is mainly the responsibility of mothers, at least until age three of the child, and alternative care facilities provided by the market or the state are scarce. In the Czech Republic and Poland there are some legal provisions that promote fathers' involvement, mainly in the rules governing parental leave, but in practice these are not fully implemented or used by families. In Hungary, these provisions are weaker, but the legal framework (and to some extent the practice as well) for providing state or marketised care is more developed.

**Figure 3. Party programmes in the „policy motives – division of childcare” space**



Source: Győry (2014). Notes: filled circles: in parliament, unfilled: not in Parliament. Size represents share of votes in Parliamentary elections. Each circle represents one identified proposal. Colour refers to main ideology:

- Christian-Democratic, Liberal Conservative
- Conservative
- Social Democratic
- Green
- Communist
- Extreme Right

The dark grey background represents current practice. The light grey background indicates the existence of legal provisions with limited implementation.

In terms of gender role attitudes, there are some marked differences between the three countries. Family policies did not feature high on the agenda in the Hungarian election campaign of 2010 and the views expressed in party programmes tended to reflect a rather conservative consensus only challenged by a small new party (the left-leaning green LMP). The incumbents all promoted the educational model, combined with the male breadwinner or dual earner – female part-time carer model, though they did mention the dual earner-state carer model as well. It is also notable that market-based solutions were not promoted by any party (except again LMP), which was in fact a general feature of the campaign observed in other policy areas as well (Bíró Nagy 2011).

In the Czech Republic, the issue of childcare received considerable attention. Parties’ views seemed to converge on the issue of care division, as most parties advocated a less conservative form: dual earner with state, market or dual carer. Proponents of increased state responsibility tended to favour the educational model (kindergarten for children aged over 3), while proponents of the market or dual carer model supported the work-family reconciliation model. As in the Hungarian case, the green party presented the most comprehensive and progressive plans, including incentives to increase the involvement of fathers in child care.

The Polish case falls between the other two: party programmes reflecting a mildly liberal consensus over supporting a mixed set of tools: the state-supported educational institutions and marketised work-care reconciliation model.

The above described policy options offered by the parties seem to follow the preferences of the electorate (Table 1.). First, except for Poland, support for the dual care model is not yet widespread, which is reflected in the scarcity of policy options supporting that model. Second, the preference of Polish voters for family based or private care arrangements over state-provided care is clearly reflected in the consensus of parties on the dual earner-market carer model. The opposite applies to Hungary: voters as well as parties opt for public (or family) provision as opposed to private care arrangements. The Czech case is slightly less clear in that the Conservative and Social Democratic proposals for market-based solutions seem to have little grounding in electoral preferences.

**Table 1. Public opinion on family policies in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland**

	PL	Hu	CZ
What is the ideal division of paid leave between parents?			
Mother entire, father none	30	58	63
Mother most, father some	30	19	19
Mother and father half	30	8	8
Other views	10	15	10
Who should be the primary provider of care for pre-school age children?			
Family members	75	54	74
Government agencies	13	38	23
Private / non-profit care	8	6	2
Other views	4	3	2

*Author's calculations using the ISSP survey of 2012, unweighted percentages.*

To summarise, the analysis of 2010 electoral programmes suggests that the Czech political elite is somewhat less conservative (though divided in terms of the detailed solutions) in its attitudes towards female roles in the family than the Hungarian elite, and the Polish lies somewhere between the two.

## 5. Partisan opinions in parliamentary debates

The analysis of parliamentary debates focused on a topic that has been discussed in all three countries in the past ten years and has been among the most hotly debated ones at least in some of the countries. The latter criterion narrowed down the choice of topics to one: domestic violence. We used critical frame analysis of the minutes of parliamentary speeches and supplemented that with a few interviews with stakeholders (Gruziel et al 2014).

Since the beginning of the 2000s the three states took domestic violence more than once on their agenda. In all three contexts the issue was recognized as a distinct offense. However, whereas in the Czech and Polish legislation domestic violence is handled predominantly through the separate legal acts within the Civil Codes, the Hungarian legislation tackles the issue in the act dedicated to the prosecution of a variety of crimes through the Criminal Code.

In all the three countries, domestic violence was introduced on the parliamentary agenda from the outside, by the coalitions of various activists, NGOs, institutions and professionals and backed up by considerable social support. Policy makers did not take on the issue by themselves, but rather were unable to ignore it any longer. This suggests that the overall attitude of those in power to domestic violence was lagging behind the experience and expectations of at least some part of the society. Further, in all the three cases, the government invited non-state actors to participate in the law making process, to some extent opening the floor for professional expertise. The Polish government allowed stakeholders to participate throughout the entire circle of policy making including invitations to address the Sejm and Senat.

Further, in all three countries, there was a shared consensus that the problem of domestic violence exists and that, although generated in the private sphere, it calls for intervention by the state. In this respect MPs' overall attitude in the three analyzed contexts are consistent with the general trends in EU countries.



Though acknowledging domestic violence to be of public concern, the underlying problem of unequal power relations between the sexes was not discussed in either of the three cases. In fact, proponents tended to favour a *degendered domestic violence* framing, though recognizing the predominance of women among the domestic violence victims. A women-centered or *implicit gendered domestic violence* framing was employed sporadically, in references to relevant international documents that tackle domestic violence from women's perspective (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention). The MPs' utterances were gender neutral and even the advocates of the legislative changes often dissociated themselves from the feminist or women's groups' argumentation. The latter may be interpreted as strategic choice (also observed elsewhere in Europe) not to lose valuable support of the hesitating MPs by aggravating them with the women's rights language, which is not commonly accepted in the parliamentary settings.

MPs supporting the cause tended to argue in favor of the legislative changes on the ground of the state's obligation to secure its citizens' constitutional rights. Opponents used various combinations of a *failing state* framing, *privacy* framing, *perpetrators' rights* framing, *family* framing and *social norms* framing. While the human rights arguments were used in all countries, we found considerable cross-country variation in the frames used by opponents.

The debates in the Czech parliament indicate that the content of the bill as well as domestic violence as a social problem were consensual and did not generate a conflict. The parties did not follow any group discipline either with respect of criticizing or endorsing the content of the act or during the voting. There was no strong friction between competing framings of domestic violence meanings and mechanisms of counteracting it. In terms of offering diagnosis and prognosis within a *degendered domestic violence* framing, the advocates disregarded the structural gendered aspects of violence, focused on narrating the state of matter and elaborated on the solutions. We observe a concerted effort to promote domestic violence as an infringement of *human rights* while restraining possibilities of defining it as a gendered phenomenon. The definition of a victim was inclusive (women, children, elderly). Guaranteeing rights to its citizens by the responsible state was the main legitimization to pass the new act. MPs embraced a technocratic approach insisting on working out procedures that would efficiently coordinate a variety of actions undertaken by multiple state and non-state stakeholders. Few MPs who contested the bill employed *perpetrators' rights* framing over a possible infringement of a perpetrator's right to property in case of an eviction or restraining order. We argue Czech MPs were prepared to accept the scale, the specific features of violence committed in the domestic environment as well as the responsibility of the state to intervene with legislative and extra legislative measures, yet not prepared to discuss the issue as resulting from and shaped by the structurally embedded imbalanced gender relations.

In the Hungarian context we observe contesting framings over the diagnosis of domestic violence and what follows differing proposals in relation to the legislative changes to handle the issue. The conservative governing party Fidesz was not willing to acknowledge specific features of domestic violence, framing it instead as one type among numerous crimes handled within the Criminal Code. Although the standpoint of the government on domestic violence did not alter significantly, we observe a notable shift of framings when comparing the debates in 2012 and 2013. In 2012 the Fidesz MPs predominantly engaged a *social norms* framing when contesting the issue of working out new domestic violence policies. Within this framework they pointed to deteriorating moral values, drawbacks of women's emancipation, broken family ties and/or the low child birth rate as the cause

of vehement acts in domesticity. In 2013 Fidesz shifted towards a *failing state* framing and produced arguments of merely legislative nature. The narrowly defined technocratic approach helped to delineate the meaning of domestic violence as a juridical problem and silenced the debate on possible connections between crimes in domesticity and other aspects of social life, be it gender order, model of a family or labor force. Between 2012 and 2013 the oppositional green LMP/Independent and right-wing Jobbik MPs shifted from a *domestic violence with an accent on women* framing towards a *degendered domestic violence* framing and promoted meaning of domestic violence as an infringement of human rights and as a crime with specific features that should be recognized in the legislation, but also tackled by other than legislative tools. Regardless of political affiliation the participants declared domestic violence as a public matter that requires the state's intervention, which was a welcome step forward.

The Polish context brings an example of the debate in which the government consisted of the members of the winning party centre-right Civic Platform (PO) had to struggle for the support of their own MPs for the proposed bill. While the oppositional conservative Law and Justice (PIS) imposed party discipline during the debate and voting, the party in power allowed their members to express their position on the amendment according to their own views. The more conservative oriented part of PO allied with PIS at least on the level of a framing employment. It was the oppositional party PIS that set the terms of the debate. Their strong protests in 2005 as well as in the period of the consultancy work on the bill in 2009-2010 forced the advocates to drop a *gendered domestic violence* framing as well as a notion of women as primary victims of domestic violence during the plenary debate. Moreover the opponents of the act became in charge of constructing the meaning of domestic violence as a problem affecting children. They employed several combined contesting framings: *family protection* framing, *privacy* framing, *social norms* framing and *perpetrators' rights* framing. In the course of the debate counteracting domestic violence became framed as a procedure that involved numerous suspicious actions such as an infringement of constitutional rights of parents, destruction of family ties or creation of the police state. In the struggle over meaning of domestic violence between the advocates and opponents, the arguments that emphasized the allegedly dangerous aspects of the state's intervention into the private lives of the citizens became *the* issue and started to function as a benchmark to which other issues became of less importance or absent from the debate. The audience? of the plenary speeches were reminded of the autonomy of the family as the most relevant aspect of the debate on domestic violence. Similarly to the Czech context, we observe the presence of the *perpetrators' rights framing* as one of the main contesting frames. However, in Polish context it did not appear as part of a debate over restraining and eviction orders, which, as argued in the Czech (and to lesser extent Hungarian) setting, could infringe a perpetrators' rights to property, but as part of a debate over the perpetrators' right to privacy, namely their right to prevent the state's collection of personal information without their consent. In 2010 Polish opponents did not question the usefulness of separating victims and perpetrators through restraining orders and evictions, which was a major change when compared to the 2005 debate. The dissenters pointed to deteriorating social values, pornography, poverty or alcoholism as possible cause of domestic violence against children. In terms of prognosis, that is how the problem should be dealt with, they recommended only vague solutions to the problem, within which the state's involvement was envisioned not so much in a technocratic manner, but rather in moralistic terms (combating domestic violence by a general effort of societal moral renewal).

Thus, in all the three cases, to a different extent and for differing reasons – be it a strategic choice of the advocates or MPs` unresponsiveness –, the framings employed in the parliamentary speeches on the legal acts on domestic violence underplayed the gendered aspects of domestic violence. In doing so the MPs implicitly delineated women`s needs, problems and points of view as of secondary importance, as ones that can be addressed after the interest of others (men, children, family) had been secured. From a feminist theorization point of view, the contents of MPs` utterances on domestic violence rather contributed to making prevalent gender inequality invisible than becoming vehicles of promoting more balanced power relations between sexes, counteracting gender discrimination and ultimately bringing gender equality.

## 6. Media analysis

The empirical literature of quantitative media content analysis rests on the assumption that mass media is supposed to shape public thinking and attitudes (Rudy, Popova, and Linz [2010]). Although the fact that mass media have an influence on people is well documented, the actual direction of causation and impact might not be clear. One school of thought argues that consuming mass media satisfies a wide range of various needs: people seek specific types of media to fulfil their desires of knowledge, entertainment, social interactions or escape (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch [1973]). This implies that media compete with other sources of need satisfaction, and topics covered in media and content are tailored to the interests of the audience. However, media workers might not always know exactly what the interests of their audience are, and in some cases, they make their decisions about content based on what they perceive as appropriate for the public (Hagen [1999]). In some cases, politics and various interest groups can also put pressure on media and influence how certain events or groups are presented. Despite the various qualifications on how media messages affect peoples` opinion and behaviour, most of the literature agrees that this effect indeed exists.

We examine attitudinal barriers to promoting work-life balance in messages with respect to gender roles as reflected in selected Hungarian, Czech and Polish daily and weekly newspapers and tabloids, and on their websites between 2003 and 2012. We follow the mainstream media analysis methodology, recommended for example by Neuendorf (2011).

The population of messages in this study was defined based on an exposure-based approach, that is, the population was constituted as messages (claims) widely attended to by receivers (Neuendorf [2011]). In each country, we chose top-selling newspapers – weeklies, dailies and tabloids. The portfolio of newspapers was selected to include the two or three daily newspapers with the largest readership within the country, representing the political left and right; one or two weekly papers (neutral or politically balanced) and a tabloid with the largest readership.

The claims we were looking for during our content analysis covered the three topics we considered most relevant to female employment:

- 1) *Roles at home*: claims that state that different household chores (such as repairing things, do-it-yourself activities, daily cooking, cleaning, looking after children etc.) are mainly done by one of the sexes, or these duties are shared in marriages or relationships.
- 2) *Roles at work*: claims that state that certain professions or positions are more suitable for one of the sexes, or the opposite of it (women and men are equally skilled). Claims about

gender discrimination (or lack thereof) at the workplace, e.g. in salaries or during promotion, also belong here.

- 3) *Conflict of work/household roles*: claims that state that there is a trade-off between career/financial well-being and being a ‘good’ parent, from the employers’, employees’ or the state’s point of view, or statements mentioning parental leave from work.

Just as in the political arena, we find marked differences between the perception of attitudes in the three countries in both the topics and the occurrence of traditional views. In Poland, the most frequently made claims concerned gender discrimination at work and skills differences between men and women, i.e. the discourse was dominated by work related issues. In Hungary, the single most frequent claim was also discrimination at work, but claims around the family, and especially the conflict between having a career and having children also got considerable attention. By contrast, work related issues were relatively absent from the Czech media, and the discourse focused mostly on household roles, looking after children within the family, and parental leave.

Conservative statements are somewhat more frequently made in almost all the topics, though this does not necessarily reflect attitudes, as many of the claims are neutral statements of fact describing the status quo, which tends to be traditional (Table 2). For example, there is ample statistical evidence of the gender pay gap, and this is often quoted in newspaper articles.

**Table 2. Share of traditional statements by topic**

Topic	Share of traditional statements (%)			
	Hungary	Poland	Czech R.	Total
Effects of sharing at-home tasks on the marriage	26.3	12.9	0.0	15.3
Compatibility of career/financial wellbeing and having children	51.6	25.1	53.2	41.5
Skills at work by gender	44.4	39.1	63.9	42.7
Work roles by gender	59.4	30.7	54.8	46.9
Discrimination at the workplace	68.5	47.2	68.9	61.0
Parental leave and staying at home with small children	75.4	64.4	57.9	65.2
Child upbringing roles by gender	75.3	70.0	65.8	69.6
Household roles by gender	78.2	78.9	66.5	73.4
<i>Total</i>	62.9	47.7	61.7	56.5

Source: Adamecz et al 2014.

Household-related topics tend to invite more conservative claims than work related topics, in all the three countries (despite the fact the sharing of household chores is rarely depicted as harmful to the marital bond). In this regard, the Hungarian and Polish media seems to portray (or convey) more conservative attitudes than the Czech media. This cross-country division is less clear cut on the compatibility of children and career. While the Hungarian discourse tends to be relatively conservative in all related subtopics, the Polish discourse is more ambivalent: having children and a career are rarely portrayed as incompatible, while the early return of mothers to work is most often depicted in negative (conservative) terms. In the Czech Republic this ambivalence is hardly detectable and early return to work is more often portrayed in an accepting tone than in either Hungary or Poland.

Importantly, even Hungary and Poland, where the portrayal of household and caring roles tends to be most traditional, statements referring to the future are significantly less likely to be traditional than claims referring to the present or the past.

Examining the share of traditional statements by the source of information we find that representatives of the state are less likely to express conservative views than other actors (Table 3). This is however also reflecting the fact that government representatives are more likely to make statements about future plans or legal provisions, while other actors are more likely to be describing the status quo, which is close to traditional stereotypes. This is obviously the reason why statistical data is the most traditional in all countries. Though seemingly natural, this is still important to note, as the frequent presentation of the status quo, though factually correct, itself may contribute to reinforcing gender stereotypes.

**Table 3. Share of traditional statements by source of information**

Source of information	Share of traditional statements (%)			
	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Total
Statistical data / survey / research	78.0	66.4	73.9	72.4
Other	53.4	59.6	82.4	59.0
Member of an international organisation / independent expert	61.2	50.7	71.1	57.2
Man in the street	70.9	46.8	58.9	56.7
Reporter / journalist	62.8	41.1	59.8	53.5
Member / representative of a political party	57.1	38.1	53.6	52.7
Member of a public authority / public expert	54.9	22.7	50.0	44.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>56.5</b>

Source: Adamecz et al 2014.

Lastly, the difference between the views of public officials and party politicians seems less marked in all the countries than the gap between politicians and the general public (represented by “the man on the street”). This applies especially to Hungary, and less clearly but also to Poland. For the Czech Republic, public officials are the least traditional and the man on the street is the most traditional, but politicians are halfway between the two, rather than being similar to public officials.

## 7. Public attitudes

Despite regular surveys on gender stereotypes and attitudes, comparative studies on public attitudes towards gender roles in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe are not as abundant as one would expect. In this section we survey the existing literature focusing on cross country comparisons and time trends.

Michón (2010) argues that, despite some differences in public attitude towards gender roles, the Visegrad countries are moving in the same direction of more equality for men and women in the labour market. The social approval of the two-breadwinner family model was already high in all the three countries before 1989 (see also Blaskó 2005 and Fodor and Balogh, 2010), which has strengthened over the past twenty years, with a temporary stagnation period.

Other studies highlight some differences however. In a study by Fodor and Balogh (2010), the average score of liberal gender roles varies between 3.41 and 3.75. In the dataset of 13 East and Central European countries, Moldova scored the lowest, followed by Hungary (3.43), and Lithuania (3.49). These findings suggest that in these countries, people tend to hold more conservative views on gender roles than in Slovakia (3.65), Poland (3.72) and in the Czech Republic (3.75). Fodor and Balogh (2010) find that higher levels of economic development and welfare state spending do

correlate with more liberal gender role opinions (for both genders). Hungary, however, in spite of the relatively generous family policies (at least compared to Poland and the Czech Republic) and higher level of economic development, measured in GDP per capita, was found to be markedly less liberal than the other Visegrad countries.

Within the Visegrad group of countries the degree of change towards more liberal views for women's social roles was measured the smallest in Hungary also by the third wave of WVS.<sup>3</sup> In the early 90s on average 66% of the female population in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic agreed with the statement "*Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay*". Between 1994-1999 only 42% of Czech women and 52% of Polish women agreed with this idea, however the rate of Hungarian women grew up to 79%. Similar results are displayed among male respondents: during the first wave on average 73% of men in the three countries agreed with the above statement, while in the next wave the ratio of Czech men who agreed with this idea dropped to 40% (even lower than Czech women's results) and Polish men to 60%. The proportion of Hungarian men agreeing with this statement in fact grew between the two waves (from 79% to 81%).

These findings are in line with Blaskó's and others studies of the past few decades, which indicated more conservative public attitude in Hungary towards gender roles – particularly in the dimension of mothers' employment – than in some of the other Visegrad countries. A study conducted in 2002 that aimed to find out public attitude towards mothers' employment, showed that Hungarians were more conservative in their opinions regarding the placement of pre-school children in crèches than the Poles and the Czechs. 66% of the Hungarian population agreed with the statement "*A pre-school child is likely to suffer if her/his mother works*", as opposed to 57% of the Poles and 48% of the Czechs.

Nevertheless, Michón claims that Polish society resists the idea of *mothers' employment* the most, in comparison to other Visegrad countries. Relying on WVS results between 1989 and 2004, he points out that Poles agree with the statement "*A pre-school child is likely to suffer if her/his mother works*" in highest proportion in all the measured periods. Between 1989 and 1993, 94% of the Poles agreed with the statement, compared to 71% of the Czechs and 70% of the Hungarians. In Hungary results of 2000-2004 are close to Blaskó's 2002 estimates (63%), while in the Czech Republic the proportion of those who agree with the statement is the lowest (47%). Similarly, according to Michón's calculations, Poles are less likely to support the idea that "*A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work*" than the Czechs (81%) or Hungarians (77%)

The other trend that most authors highlight is the contradiction of surfacing opinions of rejecting nurseries, but supporting the two-breadwinner family model (on average 90% of the population of these countries) (less in Poland than in the other two countries). Haskova and Mudrak (2012) confirm for the Czech Republic – but Michón 2010, Blaskó 2005, Fodor et al. 2002 identify similar patterns in Hungary and in Poland – that while both men and women declare preference for the two-earner model and recognize the importance of the economic activity of the mothers, the mothers are still

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<sup>3</sup> Michón analyses trends in gender role attitudes in the Visegrad countries based on the four waves of the World Value Survey: 1989-1993, 1994-1999, 1999-2004, 2005 – 2008. The time series analysis of World Value Survey data unveils divergent trends in some aspects of gender role opinions within the three countries of the Visegrad group.

supposed to return to the labour market without influencing or putting additional burden on the fathers' economic activities. The tension of work-life reconciliation is still borne by the mothers.

## Conclusions

The pattern of cross country differences seems rather similar across the four areas we examined: gender role attitudes are more traditional in Hungary than in the Czech Republic, and Poland stands somewhere in between. As Fodor and Balogh (2010) also note, this appears to somewhat contradict the development of family policies and especially the availability of services that support work-family reconciliation, which is more advanced in Hungary than in the other two countries.

The distinct trend towards less conservative gender role attitudes in the Czech Republic is reflected in opinion surveys, in the media portraying men looking after children, taking parental leave and sharing in other household roles, as well as in the political sphere where domestic violence is discussed in a consensual interpretation as a human rights issue and where paternal leave appears on the agenda of party programmes. Interestingly, the media seems to play an ambiguous role in the formation of attitudes: though portraying the change in male roles, the superficial coverage of doubts over the compatibility of childcare and career and further modernization in gender roles is also frequent, especially in the tabloid press.

In Hungary, public opinion surveys, media coverage and party programmes reflect a dominance of conservative gender roles attitudes and a preference for public services as opposed to market-based childcare. Yet, there are a few signs suggesting a slow move towards less conservative views: the incompatibility of child-rearing and having a career appears relatively frequently and is portrayed as a controversial issue in the media. Further, the tabloid coverage of gender roles tends to be less conservative than broadsheet press.

In Poland, opinion surveys, the media and party programmes all suggest a move towards less conservative gender roles, especially regarding the involvement of fathers in childcare. Though the division of care in the household is not often discussed in the media, when it is, men are often portrayed in non-traditional roles (such as looking after a child or taking parental leave) and statements about future trends are also significantly less traditional than the descriptions of the past or present. The contrast between the seemingly consensual acceptance of the dual earner model in party programmes and the emergence of rather conservative views in the parliamentary debates over domestic violence seems to suggest that cleavages remain in the political elite.

Politicians tend to hold somewhat less traditional views than the public and in the Czech Republic and Poland, family policies that promote father's involvement in child care have started to appear on the political agenda. Based on congruent and increasingly egalitarian political and public views, progressive measures in family policy seem more likely to happen in the Czech Republic and Poland than in Hungary.

Though largely descriptive, these results are encouraging in the sense that there is some coherence in the patterns that emerged from the four rather distinct areas. A possible next step is to deepen this analysis in terms of the more subtle differences between the attitudes of the political elite and the population and in terms of differences in the views regarding the respective care roles of the state, families and the market.

Regarding policy implications, the prevalence of traditional attitudes towards gender roles points to the need for more action on the part of agencies promoting equal opportunities, in monitoring the media and other channels that may reinforce gender stereotypes, raise awareness about them among journalists and experts who may, often unwittingly, contribute to the process.

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