

Reconciliation of Work and Family Life in Switzerland

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Abstract

This chapter examines the reconciliation policies of Switzerland in a comparative manner. In the first part of the chapter, Swiss reconciliation policies are discussed with a special focus on the different federal level of Switzerland. Two areas of reconciliation policies are described: leave and care policies. In both fields, Switzerland is first compared to 21 other western democracies and afterwards, the policies are discussed in detail for Switzerland. The second part of the chapter aims at explaining the lower state support for reconciliation policies in Switzerland by using two factors that have been identified as important for the different levels of reconciliation policies in international research. These factors are the decentralization of a country and women in politics. As the chapter shows, in both of these factors Switzerland takes a special stand compared to other countries. This may explain the low state support for these policies.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag beschreibt in einem ersten Schritt die Policies zur Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf in der Schweiz, wobei die Aufmerksamkeit vor allem den Kompetenzen und Zuständigkeiten der verschiedenen föderalen Ebenen gilt. Dabei werden zwei Bereiche der Politiken zur Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf im Detail betrachtet: Elternzeit und familienexterne Kinderbetreuung im Vorschulalter. In beiden Bereichen wird die Schweiz zuerst kurz mit den anderen westlichen Industriestaaten verglichen. Anschließend werden die spezifischen Merkmale der Schweiz dargestellt. Der zweite Teil des Beitrags diskutiert Erklärungen dafür, weshalb die Schweiz im Vergleich mit anderen westlichen Industriestaaten weniger öffentliche Leistungen zur Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf bereitstellt. Dabei werden zwei Erklärungsfaktoren herangezogen, die in der internationalen Forschung als wichtige Bestimmungsgründe für Vereinbarkeitspolitik identifiziert wurden. Es handelt sich dabei um den Dezentalisierungsgrad eines Landes (Föderalismus) und um die Stellung von Frauen in der Politik. Wie gezeigt werden kann, nimmt die Schweiz bei beiden Faktoren eine spezielle Stellung ein, was die geringe öffentliche Unterstützung für die Vereinbarkeit von Familie und Beruf erklärt.

1 Introduction

In October 2004, the results from the Babies and Bosses Studies (OECD 2004; Thoenen 2010) were presented in Switzerland. At the press conference, the Federal Councillors Joseph Deiss and Pascal Couchepin stressed the importance of policies to improve the compatibility of family and employment and admitted that the existing policies are not yet at an acceptable level in Switzerland. Deiss (2004) explains why there are obstacles to introduce a reconciliation policy that actually deserves this name. He stresses two reasons: Firstly, the wide range of such a policy combined with the federal system causes a fragmentation of authority. And secondly, the tight financial situation of the state budget constitutes a second obstacle for further reforms.

Are these really the most important reasons why Switzerland shows so low state support, compared to other western countries, in policies to reconcile family and employment? This chapter will have a look at the reasons why Switzerland has comparably low benefits to help parents improve the compatibility of family and working life.

This chapter investigates the factors regarded by international research as important in explaining the variations in reconciliation policies. These factors will afterwards be discussed in the case of Switzerland—always with a special focus on the role of the Swiss political system and its institutions. The chapter is structured as follows: After the presentation of the current stand in reconciliation policies and the elaboration of the theoretical argument (2), a description of the Swiss reconciliation policies will follow (3). After comparing the Swiss public policies to other western countries, it will be discussed why Switzerland has lower public reconciliation policies (4).

2 State of the Art regarding Swiss Reconciliation Policy and Theoretical Considerations

Research on family policy is strongly marked by the research on the welfare state. The family policy typologies existing today

have their roots in Esping-Andersen's (1990) seminal work on welfare states. In the following years, feminist scholars criticized his work for being gender blind. Several feminist typologies arose including the family and gender dimension inside their methodological framework (Daly and Rake 2003; O'Connor et al. 1999; Sainsbury 1999; Lewis and Ostner 1994; Orloff 1993; O'Connor 1993; Lewis 1992). In more recent years, research has focused on single policy fields that are important to help parents to reconcile family life and paid employment. An overview of this research can be found in Kulawik (2005). Morgan (2006) identifies three main areas that are important to help working parents. These are: care policies, parental leave policies and workplace policies. Scientific work of the last ten years has tried to identify care regimes (e. g. Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Anttonen and Sipila 1996; Bergqvist 1999; Bettio and Plantenga 2004) or leave regimes by comparing different countries and their public policy regimes. Here, the work of Moss and Deven (2005; 2002; 1999) should be stressed. They started the comparative research on leave policies in Europe and founded the International Network on Leave Policy and Research. This network still reports on the latest news on leave policies in 20 different, mostly European countries. Research on the third subject, family-friendly work place policies is rather underdeveloped compared to the other two research fields. One reason is the role the state is playing in this sector. In leave policies and also in care policies, the state has a longer and more undisputed position in taking over responsibility. In the workspace this is not the same; here the responsibility is more often left to the market: to the unions and to the employers. As the research question to be answered in this chapter is why Switzerland has less public provisions to help parents to combine paid employment and family life, it just focuses on policies that are clearly in the realm of public policies. Hence, it focuses on care and parental leave policies. Further important areas of family policy are monetary benefits like child allowances, childcare allowances and tax deductions. Although this is a very important support for families in their daily life and also an important cornerstone of family policy, it is not discussed in this chapter since monetary benefits are not a measure to help

parents combine family and paid work obligations in a direct manner. Research on the determinants of women's participation in the labour market has also shown that monetary benefits do not have a significant influence (Kenworthy 2008; Stadelmann-Steffen 2007; van der Lippe and van Dijk 2002).

Studies on the determinants of policies to reconcile family life and paid work have shown that three factors are important to explain the differences between welfare states. These are (1) the position of women in society, in particular the proportion of women in politics, (2) the path dependency of the policies, and (3) the institutions of the country (Thoenen 2010; Bonoli and Reber 2010). These studies also show that the predominant party family in the countries plays a weaker role than older studies looking at financial support (e.g. child allowances) suggested.

Political institutions have an effect on social policies, as different research has shown (Huber and Stephens 2000, 2001). A country's institutional system may affect its policy arrangement through the number of its veto points (Tsebelis 1995: 289; 320). The effect of the policy arrangement has different reasons: Firstly, federal structures have more veto points and therefore it is more difficult to change a political system. Furthermore, in a fragmented fiscal system, where the highest federal level only has marginal fiscal income, the possibilities for generous public policies are restrained (Vatter and Freitag 2002: 69).

The argument regarding the effect of the influence of women in politics is thus: Research has shown that strong women's organizations cooperating with strong social democratic parties can successfully bring women's interests into politics (Sainsbury 1999; Hobson and Lindholm 1997; O'Connor et al. 1999). Women in politics can represent a women's point of view and affect the direction of policies (Borchorst 1994; Norris and Lovenduski 1989). This effect is strongest on policies like child-care, health or education (Lovenduski and Norris 2003). This effect is still relevant although women are not a homogenous interest group with one political vision. However, concerning interests that affect the independence of women, women should have more homogenous ideas and interests that are different from those of men (Borchorst 1994). All in all, research can show that

countries with a higher proportion of women in the political bodies have higher public expenditures for women-friendly policies (Huber and Stephens 2001; Ferrarini 2006; Bonoli and Reber 2010).

In the following, these two points—political institutions and women in politics—will be looked at in the case of Switzerland. The aim is to see if the low public support for families who try to combine family life and paid work in Switzerland can be explained with the help of these two factors. Institutions are operationalized with the decentralization degree of the country. Here the classification by Pippa Norris (Norris 2008) is used to classify the western democracies into unitary and federal states. To measure the influence of women in politics the proportion of women in the national parliaments is used (Stadelmann-Steffen 2007; Huber et al. 2004; Ferrarini 2006). The data are taken from the Comparative Political Data Set I (Armingeon et al. 2009).

3 Reconciliation Policies—Switzerland in International Comparison

The following section gives an overview on the Swiss policies to improve the compatibility of family and working life. Two main areas are looked at: parental leave policies and care policies. The different levels of the Swiss federal states are always taken into consideration. As explained in the introduction, family benefits will not be considered in this chapter because this is not a primary measure that helps parents to combine family and work life. To contrast the public policies with the situation in the Swiss employment market, data of women's employment situation in Switzerland is given in the beginning.

Switzerland is an interesting case with regard to female employment rates and the level of public support to improve the compatibility of family life and paid work. Although public support is low, Swiss women are—according to the basic female employment rate—strongly integrated in the labour market. Does this mean that, in spite of the weak policies, Swiss women are as

well integrated in the employment market as women in other countries? In the following section this will be discussed briefly.

As in other western democracies, the proportion of women in paid employment started increasing in the 1980s (Bauer and Strub 2002). However, this increase is primarily an increase in part-time rather than full-time employment rates. It would be wrong to speak of an increase of full time employment since the total number of working hours of Swiss women remained more or less constant. Despite the high employment rate of Swiss women, Switzerland can still be labelled a male-breadwinner country (Stadelmann-Steffen 2007: 28-30). Looking only at the overall female employment rate, Switzerland has one of the highest numbers compared to other countries and is clearly above the European mean. However, a simultaneous look at the part-time employment rates of Swiss women shows that also here Switzerland has one of the highest numbers, again above the European mean. Monika Bütler (2007) shows in her article that the Swiss reconciliation policies are one reason for this finding: In her research on Swiss women in the city of Zurich she shows that the costs for childcare are higher than the earnings of a mother working more than two or three days a week. She identifies this as one reason of the high part-time employment rate of Swiss mothers.

To conclude, Switzerland is not doing as well as it might seem. At first sight, Switzerland has one of the highest female employment rates, but a closer look at the amount of female employment shows that Switzerland is no longer in a leading position. Compared to other western countries, Swiss women are working more often part time. Mothers reduce the number of working hours significantly while their children are small. All in all, still a male breadwinner-female carer model can be found in Switzerland (Stadelmann-Steffen 2007: 28-30). Compared to the family policies in Switzerland, the integration of Swiss women into the labour market is more advanced. However, in both areas Switzerland is still lagging behind when compared to other western democracies.

3.1 Policies to Reconcile Work and Family Life in International Comparison

After the discussion of the Swiss employment market and the situation of women, the core section of the article will discuss the reconciliation policies of Switzerland and compare them to other western countries. To do so, current data on compatibility of family and working life policies is used and an index of these policies for 21 western democracies¹ is shown. This index gives an overview of the general state for working parents. The index is constructed in the same logic as that of Gornick et al. (1997) to measure the state support of working mothers. The global index to measure the state support of policies to improve the compatibility of family life and employment consists of three sub-indices, each measuring one important dimension of work-care policies (for the discussion of the different dimensions of reconciliation policies see Morgan (2006)). The first sub-index measures the state support for leave policies, the second the state support for care policies and the third the state support to regulate workplace policies. For each sub-index, different indicators have been measured for each country (see the following table). For each indicator, an ideal value was defined. The ideal value was either generated from theoretical arguments or as a natural maximum point. Each country reaches a certain amount of this ideal value. The indicators are then standardized, weighted, and summed into indices.² The index values express the amount of the ideal type each country reaches at the different sub-indices. From these three values then the mean value is taken to have the percentage a country reaches from the theoretical ideal type.

Table 1 shows the content of the three sub-indices and the indicators that are used to generate them.

¹ The index exists for the following 21 western countries: Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Canada, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, and USA.

² For more information concerning the construction of the displayed indices see Thoenen (2010).

Table 1: The Three Sub-Indices and their Indicators

Sub-indices and their indicators	Description and Source	Ideal value	Justification of the ideal value
<i>Leave Policy</i>			
Effective parental leave	- weighted duration of maternity + parental leave (by payment level); represents weeks of fully paid leave a family has in each country Plantenga and Remery (2005); Pettit and Hook (2005)	52 weeks	- here, the (strongly debated) ideal length of leave is set at 52 weeks of full paid leave (one year) Pettit and Hook (2005); Bruning and Plantenga (1999); Jaumotte (2003); OECD (2007)
Gender sensitivity of the leave	Incentives for fathers to take part of the leave Morgan (2008a); Smith and Williams (2007)	1.0	Scale of four stages: 0.1= no leave for fathers available; 0.33= father has the right to take leave but leave is not paid; 0.66= leave is paid but no part of the leave is exclusive for fathers; 1= leave is paid and one part of the leave is exclusive for fathers.
<i>Care Policy</i>			
Childcare Rate 0-3	Amount of children aged 0-3 in public subsidized childcare Stryker et al. (2008); Uunk et al. (2005); Pettit and Hook (2005)	80%	Because of parental leave and other reasons it is not the aim to have 100% of children of this age group in public childcare. For further discussion see Leira (1992)
Childcare Rate 0-6	Amount of children aged 3-6 in public subsidized childcare Stryker et al. (2008); Uunk et al. (2005); Pettit and Hook (2005)	100%	In this age group public child care for each child is seen as the ideal value. The weekly duration of childcare is not specified.

(Continued)

Table 1: The Three Sub-Indices and their Indicators (*Continued*)

Sub-indices and their indicators	Description and Source	Ideal value	Justification of the ideal value
<i>Care Policy</i>			
Net childcare costs	Childcare net costs in percent of an APW income: Net childcare costs for a dual earner family with full-time arrangements of 167% of the average wage, 2004. Family Database (OECD 2009a)	0%	The ideal value would be free child care for everyone
<i>Workplace Policy</i>			
Maximal hours of work allowed per week	How many hours are maximal allowed per week Plantenga and Remery (2005)	1.0	The lower the weekly working hours are the more time is left for the family. Four value range: 0 > 49 hours a week; 0.33 = 45-49 h a week; 0.66 = 40-44h a week; 1 < 40 hours a week
Legally guaranteed amount of paid free days a year	Legally guaranteed amount of paid free days a year Plantenga and Remery (2005)	30 days	30 paid free days a year are the half of the annual school holidays.

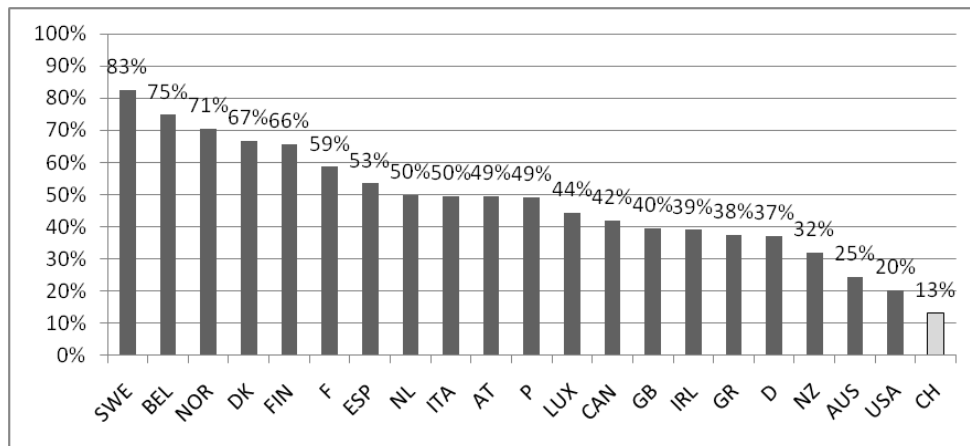
The indicators of each sub-index are afterwards computed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Leave Policy} &= \sqrt[2]{(\text{Effective Parental Leave} \times \text{Gender Sensitivity})} \\
 \text{Care Policy} &= \sqrt[3]{\text{Mean}(\text{Childcare Rate (0 - 3)} + \text{Childcare Rate (3 - 6)}) \times \text{Net Childcare Cost}} \\
 \text{Workplace Policy} &= \sqrt[2]{(\text{Maximal work hours} \times \text{Paid freedays})}
 \end{aligned}$$

The values for each sub-index is added afterwards and then the mean value gives an index for each country as to how near it is from the ideal country in reconciling work and family life.

As Figure 1 shows, Sweden reaches 83 percent of what is considered the ideal type of support a country can offer its inhabitants for parents to combine family work and paid employment, while Switzerland reaches only 13 percent.

Figure 1: Switzerland in international comparison: Policies to reconcile employment and family life



Source: *Index of the global public support to reconcile family life and employment* (Thoenen 2010)

Comparing the index values of state support for working parents in 21 western countries, Switzerland is at the end of the scale. Compared to other western democracies the Swiss public policies are far from a theoretical ideal type. However, this does not tell us much about what Swiss public policies actually do to combine family life and employment. Therefore, the following section focuses on Switzerland and gives a description of its reconciliation policies.

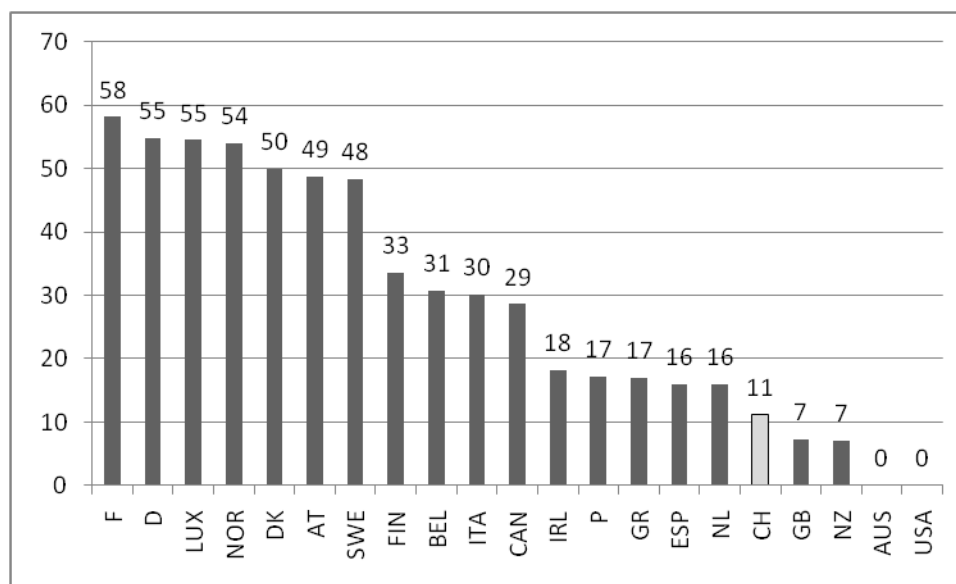
The family benefits existing in Switzerland can be divided into financial support and services for families. On the one hand, the state tries to balance the higher financial costs that families have by different transfer payment systems, for example tax deduction for children or child allowances. On the other hand, the state finances services to help parents combine family and paid work. As a whole, the financial support (transfer payments) is the largest part of the federal family policy (Bauer et al. 2004: 71). However, this article wants to focus on services which—in the framework of parental leave and care policies—help parents combine

family life and paid work, because studies have shown that these are the most helpful measures for parents (Morgan 2006).

3.2 Leave Policies

With respect to leave policies, Switzerland is again lagging behind compared to the other western democracies, as can be seen in Figure 2. Only four countries have lower effective total leave than Switzerland has. At the very end of the scale are the USA and Australia, neither of which have any leave scheme the national level³. In Switzerland only the maternity leave—called maternity insurance (*Mutterschaftsversicherung*)—is organized at federal level. Paternity or parental leave do not exist either. This section takes a closer look at the leave policies in Switzerland, with a special focus on the different federal levels that are not taken into account by the data shown in this figure.

Figure 2: Effective total leave (in weeks)¹



Source: own calculations based on data from the *International Network on Leave Policy and Research* (2009).

¹ Effective total leave = (maternity leave in weeks x payment) + (parental leave in weeks x payment)

³ The data is just available for the national level. It may be possible that there are leave schemes at a lower federal level.

Maternity Leave

In Switzerland, protection during motherhood has come under federal law since 2003 and came into force in July 2005. Before that date, several attempts to introduce the maternity leave at federal level failed. According to the law, all employed women have the right to maternity leave, but the following terms and conditions must be fulfilled (BSV 2010a):

1. The woman must have paid the mandatory pension insurance nine months before the birth.
2. During five of these nine months the woman must have been employed. The number of working hours is not relevant.
3. By the time of the birth the woman must be in a regular employment contract.
4. A woman, who is not in a regular employment contract at the time of giving birth, but has the right to claim unemployment benefits, also fulfills the requirements to claim maternity benefits.

The right to claim maternity benefits starts on the day of the birth and ends at the latest after 14 weeks. The right ends earlier if the mother starts employment during these 14 weeks or dies. The maternity benefits are paid as a daily allowance and are calculated on the basis of 80 percent of the income before birth with an upper limit of CHF 196 (145 Euros) a day. This equates to a monthly income of CHF 7,350 (5445 Euros) before having given birth (BSV 2010c). The maternity benefits are financed from contributions of the employees, the self-employed persons and the non-employed. The contribution rate is 0.3 percent of the gross income. However, employers and the government are also involved. The employers have to pay half of the contributions of their employees (BSV 2010b).

The employers are free to grant extra benefits to their employees. Already before the national maternity leave scheme came into force, many employers granted a maternity leave of about four months to their employed women.

Paternity Leave

There is no compulsory paternity leave in Switzerland. Only the right to have a paid day off in the case of birth, marriage or moving house is statutory (SECO 2007: 23). Recent political requests at the federal level have been completely abolished. The reasoning of the *Bundesrat* is that the agreements with the social partners are a good solution and that the federal level wants to set its priority to improve the compatibility of family and work by giving tax incentives to use external child care (Bundesrat 2009). This means that paternity leave is regulated in employment contracts, in business regulations or in collective labour agreements (SECO and BSV 2009b).

Parental Leave

There is no general parental leave in Switzerland. This is fully left to agreements of the social partners or at company level. Although there are companies that allow their employees parental leave, there are almost no employers that also grant paid parental leave.

3.3 Care Policies

Comparing childcare services in Switzerland to other western countries, the picture is almost the same as above. Again, we find Switzerland at the very end of the ranking. While in Denmark and Sweden more than every second child is in formal day-care, only 12 percent of Swiss children aged under three years are in formal care. This is also reflected in the public expenditure for formal day-care. Switzerland (at national level) only spends about 0.3 percent of its GDP. Also the fee parents have to pay for formal childcare is higher in Switzerland than in most other countries. Almost 2/5 of an average income must be spent for childcare in a model family with two working parents and two children. In comparison this fee is just about 10 percent in Germany or 15 percent in France (OECD 2009a).

Table 2: Switzerland in International Comparison: Childcare Policies (2005)

	Childcare coverage rate 0-3 ¹ (in %)	Public expenditures for childcare ² (in % of gdp)	Childcare net costs ³ (in % average income)
Denmark	73%	1.64%	8%
Sweden	52%	1.52%	8%
Belgium	41%	0.79%	5%
Netherlands	40%	1.01%	14%
Spain	39%	0.53%	-
Norway	34%	0.77%	10%
France	32%	1.19%	15%
Portugal	30%	0.40%	6%
United Kingdom	29%	0.81%	43%
Finland	26%	0.96%	9%
Italy	25%	0.61%	-
Luxembourg	22%	0.41%	9%
Ireland	20%	0.26%	45%
Germany	16%	0.38%	9%
Switzerland	12% ⁴	0.32%	39%
Greece	8%	0.13%	7%
Austria	4%	0.42%	19%
Australia	-	0.39%	13%
Canada	-	0.16%	29%
New Zealand	-	0.67%	36%
USA	-	0.27%	27%

¹ Childcare coverage rate: Formal childcare by age group in % over the population of each age group. The age group taken here is 0-3 years. Source: (Eurostat 2006)

² Public expenditure for formal childcare in % of the GDP. Source: (OECD 2009b)

³ Childcare net costs in % of an APW income: Net childcare costs for a dual earner family with full-time arrangements of 167% of the average wage, 2004. Source: Family Database (OECD 2009a)

⁴ There is no data available for Switzerland. The data taken here reflects a mean of the two large cantons Berne and Zurich. The mean of these two cantons may overestimate the true value for Switzerland. This is also the value the OECD Study Babies and Bosses refers to (OECD 2004).

As the regulation of childcare services is mostly left to the cantons and to the municipalities this section will take a closer look at these two levels in Swiss public policy. At the end of the section, the situation of Swiss families who try to reconcile em-

ployment and family life will be described to give a more comprehensive view about Swiss reconciliation policies.

3.3.1 Federal Level—Anstoßfinanzierung (Impulse Financing)

The federal level is not taking responsibility for childcare in Switzerland. However, in 2002 the federal level started an impulse program to give financial aid for extra familial child care. This *Anstoßfinanzierung* was meant to boost the development of childcare services in Switzerland and was mostly justified by the aim to improve the compatibility of work and family life and to bring women into paid work. Those entitled to the benefit are day care centres, full-time schools (*Tagesschulen*), and child minder organisations. To fulfil the requirements for the *Anstoßfinanzierung*, the organizing institutions should not be profit-orientated and their funding must be assured for at least six years. In addition, the cantonal quality requirements must be achieved. However, there are no national quality requirements to be fulfilled. The quality control is fully left to the cantonal level. The *Anstoßfinanzierung* is paid for two years in a lump sum—at most CHF 5,000 (3,676 Euros) per place and year.

Six years after the start of that program, the number of submitted requests is rising from year to year. Until 2008, there were 24,000 new places initiated in different childcare facilities (BSV 2006). This equates to an increase in the care services by almost 50 percent. However, it is not correct to ascribe the full enhancement to the impulse financing. The evaluation of the program discovers that most of the places would have been created in any event. Studies estimates the impulse effect of the program at only about 3 percent (BSV 2005). There are two reasons for this low effect of the national program: Firstly, the *Anstoßfinanzierung* covers a maximum of one third of the costs during the first three years. After this period it is difficult to find new investors. However, investors are essential to finance a subsidized pay scale. And this again is important for getting enough clients for the childcare centre. Studies for Switzerland show that the demand for childcare services is highest for low income families. Compared to the demand for low price care services, the demand

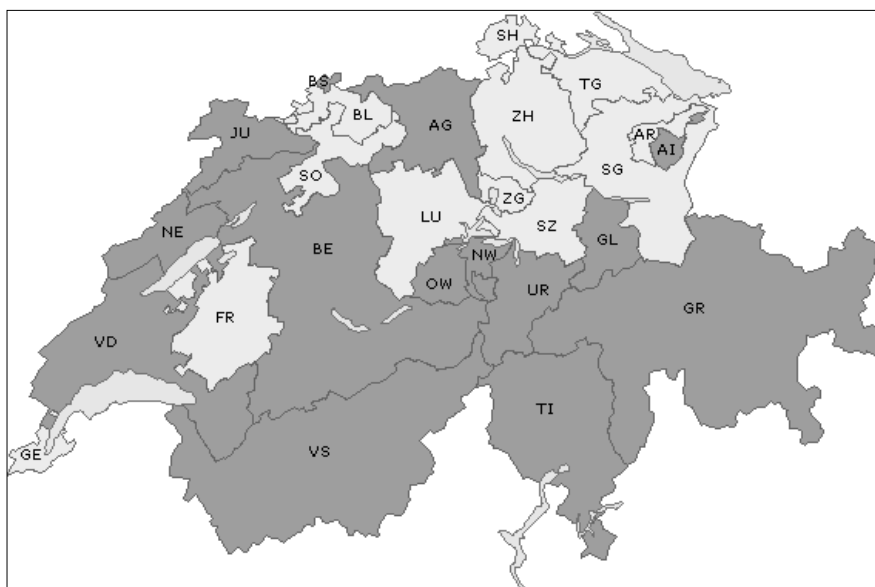
for care services at a full cost level is considerably lower (Osterwald et al. 2005). Secondly, there is a trade-off between the impulse effect and the sustainability of the program. The *Anstoßfinanzierung* is only paid to projects with an assured financing for the next six years. Thus, there are mostly supported projects that would have been realised anyway.

Summing up, the *Anstoßfinanzierung* is the only public support at federal level. There is no national quality request nor is there a basic right for a place in care facilities.

3.3.2 Childcare services in Switzerland—responsibilities shifted across municipal, cantonal and national levels

Most of the Swiss cantons govern and finance the childcare services together with the municipal levels. Twelve cantons are not involved in the financing of these services (see Figure 3). Interestingly, not all cantons involved in the financing of the childcare services also have programmatic aims for these services (Graubünden, Glarus, Uri, Wallis, Appenzell Innerrhoden). None of the cantons has a basic right for a guaranteed care place for children. The most extensive regulations are to be found in the canton Basel-Stadt and Vaud. Here the constitution guarantees parents a place in a childcare centre in a reasonable time and at an affordable price (Verfassung Kanton Basel-Stadt 2005; Le Grand Conseil du Canton de Vaud 2006).

Figure 3: Cantons that are involved in the financing of the childcare services (dark grey = financing)⁴



Source: Informationsplattform Vereinbarkeit Beruf und Familie (SECO and BSV 2009a)

The financing structure is very different between the cantons. Table 3 gives an overview on the financing structures and the splitting of the costs between the cantons and the communes. Three types of structures between the canton and the municipality can be identified: only the canton is responsible (just one case), only the municipality is responsible or they share responsibility.

⁴ For abbreviation of the Swiss cantons see appendix

Table 3: Co-operation in childcare between the cantonal and the communal level (12/2009)

Level of financial and steering responsibility	Cantons	Remarks
Canton is responsible	AI	There is no general cantonal program for public childcare. The canton finances just one childcare center.
Municipality is responsible	AR, BL, FR, GE, GL, LU, SG, SH, SO, SZ, TG, TI, ZG, ZH	In all of these cantons all the costs for childcare are left to the municipalities.
The municipalities and the cantons share responsibility 50:50	AG, BE, GR, OW	The costs for public childcare are split between the federal levels
The municipalities and the cantons share responsibility and financing, but the costs are mostly left to the canton	JU, NE and VS	NE and VS: The costs for public childcare are split but the bigger part is paid by the municipalities (2/3 municipality vs. 1/3 canton) JU: The expenditures for public childcare are split but the larger part is taken by the canton (18% by the municipality vs. 62% by the canton)

Source: Informationsplattform Vereinbarkeit Beruf und Familie (SECO and BSV 2009b)

There is no comparative data on childcare facilities at the cantonal levels. Although most of the cantons have lists of places in childcare facilities, this data is not made public and is not comparable between the cantons because they do not count the same facilities under the same name.

3.3.3 Childcare: the Situation of Swiss Families

The statistical report of the situation of Swiss families shows that almost half of all two-parent households with children in pre-

school age and almost 75 percent of all single parents use child-care facilities (BFS 2008: 22). This amount has remained quite constant since 2002 (Bauer and Strub 2002). A look at the type of childcare that is used shows that care is mostly done by relatives, in most instances by grandmothers (51 percent). About one third of the parents use formal childcare arrangements as day care centres (*Kinderkrippen*) or family day care (*Tageseltern*). Care carried out by relatives is used when the care time is less than two days a week. If the care-load is higher, the care work of formal carers gains importance (46 percent) (BFS 2008: 22).

Compared to the development and responsibilities of childcare in Switzerland mentioned above, there is a larger amount of private care arrangements that is not subsidised by any public fund.

Different analyses show that the demand for subsidised care facilities is not met in Switzerland. (Iten et al. 2005; INFRAS and Tassinari Beratungen 2004). Overall, care facility coverage is greater in urban areas than in rural areas. Summing up, however, the supply situation of care facilities makes it difficult for Swiss families to combine family life and employment.

Nonetheless, the number of childcare facilities has been rising during the last 25 years. Between 1985 and 2005, the number of childcare centers rose from 478 up to 1337 (EKFF 2008: 17-18). A look at the cantonal level shows that the biggest rise took place in the cantons that already had a considerable level in 1985. These cantons are Geneva, Zurich and Basel-City (BFS 2008: 23-24).

4 Explaining Work-Family Policies in Switzerland

This second part of the article focuses on explaining why Switzerland has lower state support for working parents than other western democracies. For this purpose, the focus is put on polity factors that have been identified in research to explain the level of public family policies. To do so, this chapter looks at the role of an institutional factor—namely federalism—and a politics factor—the political participation of women—to explain the different level of public support in reconciliation policies in Switzer-

land compared to the other western countries. These two factors have been identified by different researchers as variables that can explain the differences nowadays (Thoenen 2010; Bonoli and Reber 2010; Ferrarini 2006).

4.1 Institutions—Veto points in Switzerland

This section discusses the role of federalism in Swiss reconciliation policies. Former analyses have shown that countries with centralized and consensual structures have more advanced public policies to help parents combine family life and paid employment.

Switzerland is known for its strong federalism and its direct democracy. It is one of the most federal countries in the world (Lijphart 1999: 38). Particularly in the policy domains that are most important for the compatibility of family and employment—family policy, social policy, and employment policy—the cantons have their own substantial powers. This is not only true for the legalisation, but also for financing and implementing policies (Obinger 1998b). Concerning the federal structures, cantons and the federal state share their competences. The allocation of tasks between the different federal levels is regulated in the federal constitution (Art. 3 BV). All policy fields that are not regulated by the federal constitution are in the competence of the cantons. Federal authority in family policy is regulated in Article 116 of the federal constitution. One of the few tasks the federal level has is the area of social security insurances. In all other areas, the federal level is only assigned to financial support (EDI 2004).

This fragmentation of the political system leads to a delay of political decisions or even to suboptimal political results (Obinger 1998a: 246). In Obinger's analysis (1998a) concerning the determinants of the evolution of the Swiss welfare state, he observes that it is mainly the coincidence of federalism and direct democracy which is relevant for the level of public social services. Armingeon (1996: 78) explains the low level of social services in Switzerland by the strong polarity between left and rightwing parties and also—like Obinger—by the principle of subsidiarity together with the strong federalism in Switzerland. In

Switzerland, the principle of subsidiarity is strongly linked with the federal structure of the state. The constitution regulates the responsibility of the federal state and the cantons to reach the social aims “in addition to the personal and private initiative” (Art. 41 BV). This means that political decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level and that higher levels are only meant to step in if necessary.

The long tradition of not having authority in social policy at the federal level and the strong principle of subsidiarity led to a system of social insurances and family policy services at the cantonal and communal levels and also to a system where private organizations like employer associations and unions took extensive responsibility (Obinger et al. 2005). Even today, this pattern can be observed in the area of reconciliation policies. Indeed, the issue of ‘reconciling work and family life’ gained attention at federal level, but with the exception of compulsory maternity insurance there were no political actions taken at federal level to support families in their reconciliation needs. However, also the cantons as the next lower federal level are just starting slowly to take responsibility. For example in the case of care facilities, mostly the communes have the authority and responsibility. The responsibility for parental leave does not lay at all with the federal levels, but fully with the social partners.

The strong federalism in Switzerland also results in very poor tax income at federal level, which means a lack of financial means to pay for new and more extensive reconciliation policies at federal level (Vatter and Freitag 2002).

To sum up, Switzerland acknowledges the findings of other analyses: decentralised public structures and the fragmentation of authority and responsibilities lead to a low level of public services in the field of reconciliation policies. The typical allocation of rights and duties between the federal state, the cantons, and the social partners blocks a nation-wide coordinated policy for compatibility of family and paid work. Federalism is one reason that makes a national policy difficult and in addition, the federal state lacks the authority and financial means to introduce such policies. It can be concluded that federalism is a significant reason why Swiss work-family compatibility policies lag behind those

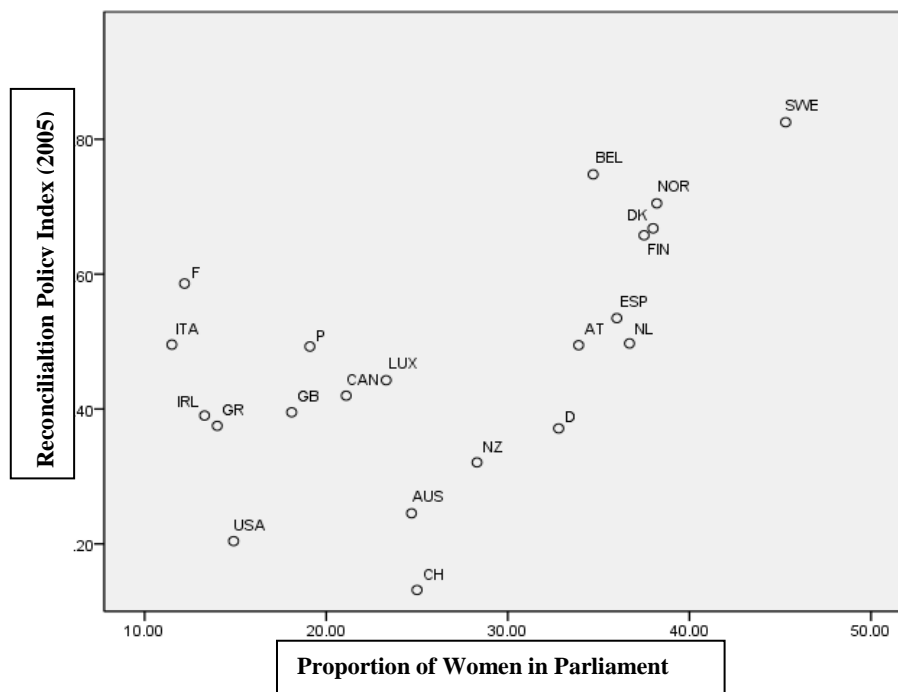
of other countries. The strong Swiss federalism and the strong position of employer organizations in Swiss employment legislation are one reason for the missing federal regulation in the labour law concerning the compatibility of family and employment.

4.2 Women in Politics

Research has shown that the amount of women in politics is one of the most important factors in explaining the variation in work-family policies (Ferrarini 2006; Bonoli and Reber 2010; Huber and Stephens 2001). Countries with a high proportion of women in politics have more and better public support to reconcile work and family obligations.

The relation between women in politics and the state support for working parents can also be shown empirically. Figure 4 depicts the relation between women in politics (percentage of women in the national parliament) and the overall index measuring reconciliation policies (discussed above). It can be seen that there is a positive relation between the number of women in politics (lagged by 5 years) and the development degree of the reconciliation policies of a country.

Figure 4: Relation between women in politics and the reconciliation policy Index (2005)



Source: women in politics: CPDS I (Armingeon et al. 2009); RECON_2: Reconciliation Policy Index (Thoenen 2010)

These findings do not prove a linear relation between the number of women in politics and women-friendly policies. However, research has shown that countries with a high proportion of women in politics do have more family-friendly policies. Still there is the question about causality: Which came first: Women in politics or family-friendly policies? Case studies of Nordic states and Germany have shown that normally the inclusion of women into the political process led to the development of women and family-friendly policies (Naumann 2005; Hernes 1987; Bergqvist et al. 1999; Burness 1999). As the role of Swiss women in politics is constrained by the Swiss institutions, it is important to also look at this factor to help explain the low state support to reconcile family and work life.

4.2.1 Late Right to Vote for Swiss Women

Women in Switzerland did not have the right to vote until 1971, which was at least 40 years later than most other western coun-

tries. The introduction of women's suffrage has taken a long road. Several cantons tried to introduce the universal right to vote at the cantonal level and first attempts in the 1920s failed. In 1929, a petition signed by more than 250,000 people again requested the introduction of the women's right to vote. Despite the large number of signatures, the petition was an action taken largely by social democratic feminists, and the mobilisation of women in general was limited (Hardmeier 1997: 333). Even the national political elite ignored the petition and it took a long time until the first federal bill was put up to vote. In 1959, this referendum was refused by Swiss men in the relation of 2:1. At the same time, the first cantons and some communes introduced general suffrage. These were the cantons Basel, Geneva and Vaud. Henceforward, more and more cantons followed their example and an increasing number of women were allowed to vote (Linder 1999: 60-62). In 1971, equal rights were achieved in politics for women and men, when the national bill was accepted by Swiss men with 65 percent of the total votes (Bolliger et al. 2009).

Where is the link between the institutions and the low and late inclusion of Swiss women into politics? Contrary to parliamentary systems, men have to decide upon women's right to vote in systems with direct democracy. Linder (1999: 62) calls this a real zero-sum game: One party, that of women, gains power while the other, that of men, loses power. There are no deals possible as would be the case in a parliamentary system, where usually the game is to give up something while gaining in another point. This was not possible in Switzerland due to the system of direct democracy.

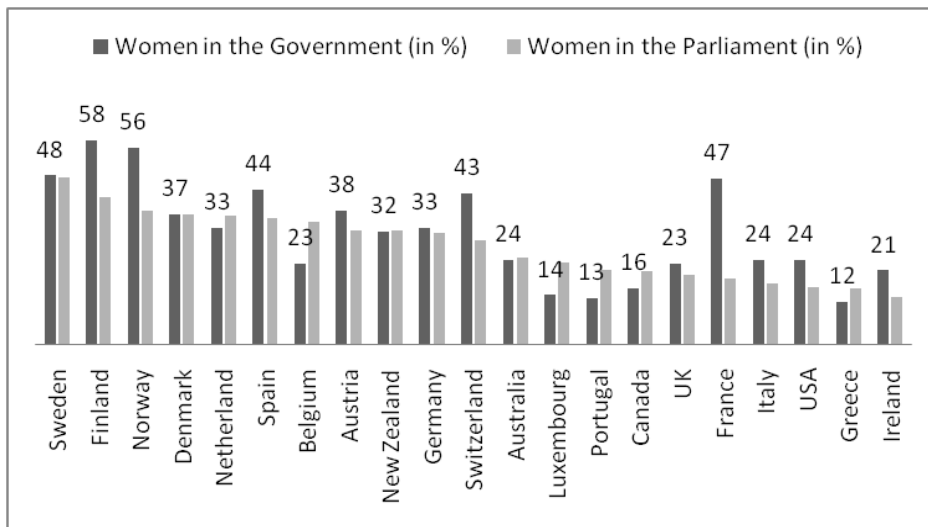
Again the political system is one of the reasons for the absence of a women's movement in Switzerland. Although there was an early mobilisation of Swiss women, it was never to the same extent as in other countries. This was mostly because the movement was not connected to one of the governmental parties. It was however closely linked to the social democrats but this party was not integrated in the Swiss government before 1959.

After several bitter backlashes in the 1920s, Swiss women no longer dared to fight for the right to vote. The start of feminist

movements is situated around discussions about the revision of the Swiss civil law. At this time, in 1896, the first Swiss women's congress (*Schweizerischer Frauenkongress für die Interessen der Frau*) was held to strengthen women's interests. In the aftermath of this event, local interest groups for female suffrage were founded, though this early mobilisation was stopped abruptly by the beginning of the First World War. The unions for women's suffrage served their country in the hope that the federal state would accept their help and would reward it by introducing female suffrage. After the war, this hope disappeared. All the public bills that were made to get the right to vote were refused and the civil society was rebuilt without the political inclusion of Swiss women (Hardmeier 1997: 330-333).

One reason for the low mobilization of the Swiss women's movement is that Swiss women were not radical enough. The Swiss feminists were strongly integrated in the civic dominated state. Demonstrations, strikes, and similar action were too strongly associated with the social democratic milieu that had at this time no power in Swiss politics. Hardmeier (1997: 343) states that Swiss women were lacking the considerable portion of anger necessary for radical actions against the political elite. Most women were rather content with the status they had in Swiss society at this time. Compared to other western countries, the situation in other spheres than the political was rather progressive; the educational sphere may serve as an example. In addition to the lack of anger against the political elite, the Swiss women's movement was divided. At the end of the 1950s, the women's movement distanced itself from the feministic work of Iris von Roten (1958), who emphatically announced that Swiss women had obligations to work but that they had no rights to do so.

The late inclusion of Swiss women into politics and the weak women's mobilization may also be a reason for the small amount of women in politics nowadays. Although there has been at least one woman in the Swiss *Bundesrat*, the proportion of women in the Swiss parliament is rather low compared to other western countries.

Figure 5: Women in Government and in Parliament (2007)

Source: United Nations Development Programme (2009: 186)

In this case we can again identify the effect of the institutions: Since the introduction of female suffrage, the proportion of women in the National Council (*Nationalrat*⁵) has always been higher than the proportion of women in the Council of States (*Ständerat*⁶). Indeed, even in the first election after the introduction of female suffrage, a woman gained a position in the small chamber, but till the beginning of the 1990s, the proportion of women in the *Ständerat* remained very low (under 10 percent). In the mid 1990s, the quota also rose in the *Ständerat* and since the 2007 election, the quota has been 22 percent. The development in the *Nationalrat* was more consistent and the proportion of women was rising up to 30 percent after the elections of 2007. Most of the women engaged in politics are members of the red-green political parties. But also the bourgeois parties have rising numbers of female representatives (Bundesamt für Statistik 2010). The fast catching up of Swiss women in the *Nationalrat* is

⁵ Nationalrat: The main chamber of the Federal Parliament (Federal Assembly), the National Council has 200 members. It is also known as the People's Chamber, because its members are elected in a general election by the people, the citizens who are eligible to vote.

⁶ Ständerat: The smaller chamber of the Federal Parliament (Federal Assembly), comprising 46 members. The Council of States is the chamber representing the cantons because its members act as delegates of their respective cantons.

due to the proportional representation election system (*Proporzwahlrecht*). Meanwhile, the majority election systems in the *Ständerat* is an obstacle for minorities (Linder 1999: 62).

Again, the Swiss institutions have shown to be a good explanation for the low state support for the compatibility of work and family life. As other studies have found, the integration of women into politics is one of the most important factors for the state support to reconcile family and work, the analysis of the integration of Swiss women into politics explains why this support is so low in Switzerland. And again it can be observed that also for the low mobilization of Swiss women, a look at the institutions can offer a satisfying explanation.

5 Conclusion

This article analysed whether indications can be found for the low state support for the reconciliation of work and family life in Switzerland by looking at the Swiss institutional arrangements. It was shown that institutions in Switzerland are indeed important to explain the work-family policies nowadays. They not only have a direct impact on policies, but also an indirect one, via the integration of women into politics.

The strong federalism constitutes important veto points to the employers, with the result that work-life-balance policies and social policies in general have developed only lately. Other authors see also the cultural values and the domination of liberal and conservative parties as an important influence to explain Swiss family policy. In Switzerland, children are seen as a private good and the public state should not intervene in family life. In addition, the long exclusion of the social democratic party till 1959 certainly had a major effect, too. But again the Swiss federalism has enforced the conservative and liberal cultural heritage. The strong veto points make political, cultural and societal change difficult.

Switzerland is a special case compared to other western countries. As it was shown, the relevant factors to explain the level of reconciliation policies are interdependent in Switzerland. The

specific institutional framework in Switzerland is working hand in hand, so that progressive support for families, who have to combine family life and paid work, is hard to introduce into the political system. Not only was the influence of social democratic parties over a long period extremely low due to the political institutions, but institutional arrangements—especially the direct democracy—were also the reason for the late and marginal influence of Swiss women in politics. As we know from previous research, these are the factors which can help to explain public policies to help parents combine their family and paid work obligations.

6 Appendix

Table 4: Abbreviations of the Swiss Cantons

AG	Aargau	NW	Nidwalden
AI	Appenzell Innerrhoden	OW	Obwalden
AR	Appenzell Ausserrhoden	SG	St. Gallen
BE	Bern	SH	Schaffhausen
BL	Basel-Landschaft	SO	Solothurn
BS	Basel-Stadt	SZ	Schwyz
FR	Freiburg	TG	Thurgau
GE	Genf	TI	Tessin
GL	Glarus	UR	Uri
GR	Graubünden	VD	Waadt
JU	Jura	VS	Wallis
LU	Luzern	ZG	Zug
NE	Neuenburg	ZH	Zürich

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