

FAMILIALISM IN FLUX: ROLE OF EUROPE AND RECONCILIATION IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

The article analyses the Europeanisation of policies concerning the reconciliation of work and family life in Hungary from the 1990s to 2006 from a domestic actor-centred perspective. More specifically, it looks at how members of the Hungarian Parliament – from government and opposition parties – framed European requirements and/or standards and how they used references to European processes in their arguments. The article distinguishes three periods of Europeanisation. In the first period, references made to the European Union were sporadic. The second period, before 2004, was the period of legal harmonisation. Finally, in the third period, after the 2004 accession, the reconciliation of work and family life became an explicit goal of the government, usually with references made to European processes and European principles. Furthermore, the availability of European funding was an important trigger of reconciliation-related reforms. This analysis underlines the significance of using Europe for legitimating domestic policy changes going against the traditional family policy framework.

Keywords: Europeanisation; family policy; Hungary; reconciliation; usages of Europe

1. INTRODUCTION

National family policies differ in their generosity as well as in how they attribute responsibility for care to the family, the state or the market. In comparison to other countries in the region, Hungary has quite a comprehensive and stable system of family policies, often classified as gendered familialism (Leitner 2003). Historically, during the period of state socialism, familialism in Hungary has meant maternalism.

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Women were distinguished not only in terms of their biological attributes, but also by the social view of their more prominent role in household work (Fodor 2003). In other words, since the 1960s, a 'mother identity' was emphasised over a 'worker identity' for women in Hungary. This framing was supported by the main social actors, as well as by female welfare beneficiaries, who overwhelmingly opposed attempts to reduce family benefits based on their mother identity (Haney 2002). Thus, despite attempts towards a liberal, means-tested and decentralised social assistance system, family policies have been largely kept intact.

Based on this stable familialism in Hungarian family policies, one would expect EU accession to have had a relatively slow impact. However, the process leading up to the country's 2004 accession to the EU brought about gradual but visible policy changes as the country accommodated to a European framework. One of the first examples was the 2003 document on 'The Principles of the Governmental Programme on Demographic Policies', which signalled a shift in the family policy discourse in the direction of reconciliation. This document moved away from previously established demography-based arguments and made reference to several EU documents discussing gender equality and best practices for childcare. This relatively sudden change, as will be shown below, might be attributed to the pro-EU attitude of the major political actors.

The aim of this article is to examine how the observed changes in Hungarian family policies came about in spite of the stickiness of existing policy approaches. In order to do so, the article looks at domestic 'usages of Europe' concerning the reconciliation of work and family life between the 1990s and 2006 in a well-defined political arena, the Hungarian Parliament. In Hungary, the social partners and civil society organisations tend to be rather weak when it comes to influencing legislation, especially regarding reconciliation policies. Furthermore, traditional familialism has been largely supported by the main social actors as well as by the beneficiaries of the system. Therefore, in order to examine policy changes, the most important political arena to look at is Parliament itself. The article describes how members of the Hungarian Parliament framed European requirements and/or standards and how they used references to European processes in their arguments in order to legitimate domestic reforms. Using such an approach, the article aims to shed light on the changing policy directions in Hungary.

The concept of 'usages of Europe' refers to 'seizing the European Union as a set of opportunities' by various actors at the national level (Jacquot and Woll 2003). It also means that domestic actors do not simply adapt their policies and discourses to European requirements and goals, but they also re-construct and re-define these goals and use them in their own national context. When domestic actors 'use' Europe, they can use European concepts, statistics, regulations and financial means as strategic resources in political debates. This usage can be 'cognitive', 'strategic' and 'legitimizing' (*ibid.*).

Research hypotheses relating to domestic usages of Europe are developed by Graziano, Jacquot and Palier (pp. 3–25 in this issue). These hypotheses take into account the country's moment of accession to the EU, as well as its welfare and care regime. Based on these hypotheses, one can suppose that references to the European Union (EU) are more explicit prior to the accession (this is the 'joining the club effect'), and that national actors, to differing degrees, incorporate EU reconciliation policies into new policies. In a pro-European setting, EU reconciliation policies are expected to be brought into domestic discourses more extensively and positively. Concerning the extent of fit between the national and EU level, a large misfit between the two is expected to lead to non-usage or a negative one. This article examines these hypotheses in the case of Hungary.

The article is structured as follows. The next section (section 2) outlines the main features of the Hungarian reconciliation regime, and discusses the timing of domestic policies. In the third section, an overview of the evolution of policy reforms and related discourses, as well as the extent of compliance with European hard and soft law, is given. Section 4 analyses the usages of Europe for reconciliation reforms by distinguishing specific time periods based on the analysis of parliamentary debates. The final section presents our conclusions with regard to the above mentioned hypotheses.

2. RECONCILIATION IN HUNGARY THROUGHOUT THE 1990s AND 2000s

According to the classification developed by Leitner (2003), Hungary has a familialistic regime, and more concretely, falls under explicit familialism together with other transition countries. In such a setting, the family is responsible for taking care of children, while formal childcare institutions are underdeveloped or lacking altogether. The main pillar of family policy in this case is paid parental leave. In Hungary, family provisions and childcare institutions date back to the 1960s, and by the 1980s, cash benefits in these areas reached 4 per cent of GDP. Until recently, family policy-related spending constituted a large share of the overall social welfare arrangements. Between 1990 and 2006, family benefits cost approximately 13 per cent of all spending – the 3rd largest category after old-age pensions and healthcare (Eurostat 2009).

Although the main tenets of the system remained the same during transition, there have been several adjustments in terms of the amount received and eligibility. The family support system in Hungary has the following pillars: a universal family allowance also including childcare support, and an employment and wage-related benefit (GYED), as well as a flat-rate childcare allowance (GYES). These last two benefits can be received by parents or grandparents as well. Paid paternal leave became

possible in 2003.¹ Table 1 summarises family policies in Hungary from 2006, the end of the period covered in this article.

Table 1. Family policies in Hungary, 2006

Maternity Leave	24 weeks paid at a high level (part of GYES)
Entitlement	universal
Level of Benefits	70 per cent
Extended Leave	3 years GYES, 2 years GYED
Entitlement	universal
Work Option	yes
Level of Benefits	wage related then flat rate
Available to the Father	yes
Rate of children enrolled in crèches (0–2)	9 per cent
Rate of children enrolled in kindergarten (3–6)	85 per cent
Affordability	25 per cent

Source: Szelewa (2006).

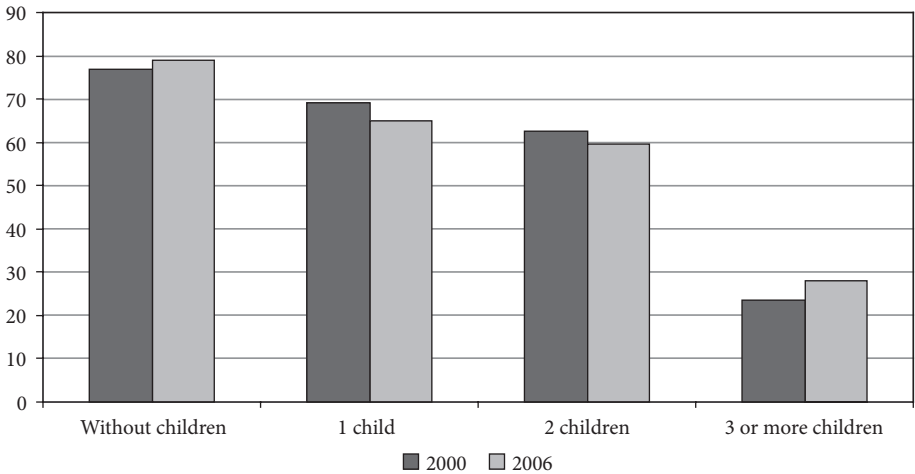
In sum, Hungary's family policy has been characterised by long leave options from the labour market for females, and limited childcare provision outside the home. Accordingly, reconciliation discourses in Hungary have been relatively marginal and are mostly concerned with the difficulties women face when re-entering the labour market after long periods of maternity leave (Meier *et al.* 2007: 110). In Hungary, the economic activity rate of females is estimated to be rather low; for 2007, it was around 73 per cent of that of males (OECD 2009). In addition, the female unemployment rate has surpassed that of males since 2004. Women are, on average, twice as likely to be employed in a part-time job, although it should be noted that part-time employment in Hungary constitutes less than 3 per cent of total employment (OECD 2009). Lastly, the ratio of female to male earned income was around 64 per cent in 2008, indicating a big gender gap (WEF 2008).

Since households with children form almost half the total number of households, family policies in Hungary have a very substantial impact. Looking at work arrangements in the family, two-earner couples continue to be the most common kind, amounting to almost 40 per cent of all households with children (Hemmings 2007). Family policies and childcare facilities significantly affect women's decisions to participate in the labour market. Despite the lack of longitudinal data on the

¹ Despite the very short (5 day) duration of this leave, it has been argued that it has a significant symbolic meaning in the Hungarian context for sharing care work (Kispeter 2009).

employment records of women with children, indirect indicators point towards a high rate of inactivity among Hungarian women with children.² Figure 1 shows the employment rates of women with and without children for the years 2000 and 2006.

Figure 1. Employment rate by number of children, Hungary, 2000–2006



Source: UNECE (2009).

As mentioned above, family policies are gendered in Hungary and demographic issues are given top priority. This is partly due to the secular decline in fertility rates, which started well before the transition.³ Additionally, the country has an ageing population, which is significantly affecting the viability of the pension system. Hungarian governments, left and right, have emphasised the importance of government action in responding to demographic shifts and, until 2003, they framed their policy proposals mainly in terms of responding to demographic problems.

Concerning the timing of reforms, there is a big gap between the reforms adopted in Hungary and the policy goals and domains that were promoted at the EU level. The transition allowed for the possibility of following EU guidelines in this policy area. However, until right before the accession, Hungary continued to frame and reframe its policy discourse domestically, and the changes were also implemented accordingly. Until recently, the main framework for reconciliation policies at the European level was the Lisbon Strategy, which had the goal of increasing women's labour force participation to 60 per cent. The Barcelona European Council defined one way of achieving this by setting the goal of providing childcare to at least 33 per

² Family care, in general, is expected from women who withdrew from the labour market either through early retirement, or, in the case of child rearing, using the parental leave.

³ Hungary differs from the other transition countries in this respect: the fertility rates began to decline much earlier – in the mid-1970s – than in the other transition countries.

cent of children under the age of three and to at least 90 per cent of children between the age of three and the mandatory school age by 2010 (Council of the European Union 2002). Hungary is far from reaching these targets, since female labour force participation in 2006 was around 45 per cent, and only 9 per cent of children under the age of three were receiving childcare services outside the family (Szelewa 2006). Hence, in terms of sequencing and convergence, Hungary has not reached the EU goals in the area of reconciliation. However, as discussed below, usages of Europe were present in a number of cases, especially during and after accession.

3. EVOLUTION OF FAMILY POLICIES AND DOMESTIC DISCOURSES

As in any other country, family policies in Hungary are also affected by its legacy, domestic factors and external pressures. Given the relative weakness of trade unions and women's organisations in Hungary, political elites are the most significant actors in reconciliation reforms. In any case, as mentioned above, traditional familialism has been largely supported by several of the main social actors, as well as by beneficiaries of the system. As far as external pressures are concerned, during the earlier years of transformation, the country was heavily influenced by recommendations from the World Bank and the IMF. Both of these institutions played a significant role in shaping not only economic, but also social policies. The EU at that stage agreed with these arrangements, and did not push for more active involvement in government (Ferge 2002). Nevertheless, these international organisations were not particularly concerned with reconciliation policies.

From the mid-1990s onwards, with the accession process, the EU became more influential, especially in the field of gender equality. For example, day-care services were largely ignored in Hungary until 2003. Only after 2003 was the significance of care institutions outside the home recognised. It is argued that the EU played a major role in making Hungarian governments recognise that female participation is highly contingent on the type of family policies applied.

Starting with the pre-accession period, there were considerable modifications in family policies. Policy instruments have also varied depending on the period. Table 2 presents the main steps of reforms undertaken in the area of family policy, the policy goals of these changes, as well as the actors supporting and opposing these reforms. Table 3 puts these steps into the framework of the special issue, thus showing together the main policy goals, domains and instruments.

Table 2. Main steps in reforming family policy

Legislation	Year/ No.	Reform promoter	Anti-reform actors/ coalition	Policy orientation	Date of analysed debates
Act on Job Assistance and Unemployment Benefits (referred to as Employment Act)	1991/IV	Conservative government coalition	No anti-reform coalition	Institutionalisation of unemployment insurance, the basis of a social assistance system	21/01/1991
Social Act	1993/III	Conservative government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Institutionalisation of social assistance	28/10/1992
Austerity package	1995	Socialist-liberal government coalition	Parties in opposition	Economic restructuring and stabilisation	N.A.
Child Protection Act	1997/XXXI	Socialist-liberal government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	System of child protection benefits	04/02/1997 11/02/1997 24/02/1997
Family Support Act	1998/LXXXIV	Right wing-conservative government coalition	Parties in opposition	Institutionalisation of a comprehensive family support system (gendered familialism)	24/11/1998
Amendment of the Employment Act and the Social Act	1999/CXXII	Right wing-conservative government coalition	Parties in opposition	Reform of the unemployment insurance and benefit system	30/11/1999
Amendment of the Family Support Act	2001/XII	Right wing-conservative government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Grandparents can receive child care allowance	14/02/2001 09/03/2001
Amendment of laws (Labour Code, Employment Act and Social Act)	2001/XVI 2001/ XXIV 2001/LXXIX	Right wing-conservative government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Legal harmonisation	13/12/2000 15/02/2001 26/03/2001 06/09/2001
Amendment of several laws concerning employment and social provisions	2002/LIII	Socialist-liberal government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Facilitating part-time work, giving fathers extra leave	12/11/2002 03/12/2002
Amendment of the Labour Code	2003/XX	Socialist-liberal government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Legal harmonisation	18/02/2003 25/02/2003

Legislation	Year/ No.	Reform promoter	Anti-reform actors/ coalition	Policy orientation	Date of analysed debates
Amendment of the Labour Code and several other acts	2004/ XXVIII	Socialist-liberal government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Legal framework for telework	30/03/2004 05/04/2004
Amendment of several laws concerning social provisions	2004/ CXXXVI	Socialist-liberal government coalition	Parties in opposition	Re-regulation of social assistance (female employment and reconciliation)	23/11/2004 06/12/2004
Amendment of the Family Support Act	2005/ CXXVI	Socialist-liberal government coalition	Parties in opposition	Reform of the family support system (female employment and reconciliation)	20/09/2005 26/09/2005 10/10/2005 24/10/2005 07/11/2005
Acts establishing and amending the START Programme	2004/ CXXIII 2005/ LXXIII 2007/XIV	Socialist-liberal government coalition	No real anti-reform coalition	Female employment and reconciliation	22/11/2004 29/11/2004 06/12/2004 08/06/2005 20/06/2005 11/12/2006 13/02/2007 05/03/2007

Table 3. Policy goals, domains and instruments

Policy goals	Policy domains	Policy instruments
1995 Economic restructuring and stabilisation; Reconciliation is not a goal	Family policy	Austerity package: cuts, means-testing of parental leave benefits
1998–2001 Gendered familialism and demographic growth; Reconciliation is not a goal	Family policy	Family Support Act: universalism of parental leave benefits, tax-deductions
2002–2004 Increase female employment; Reconciliation as part of this goal	Employment policy Family policy	Legal harmonisation: part-time work; Fathers receive extra leave
2004–2006 Increase female employment; Reconciliation	Family policy Social and employment policy	Family Support Act: reform of the family support system facilitating female employment and reconciliation; Responding to EU 'soft' law and financial incentives (e.g. START programme)

Hungary has a multi-party system, usually with several parties forming coalition governments. Between 1990 and 2006, coalitions always shifted between the political 'right' and the political 'left' (a coalition was first re-elected in 2006), though parties in the coalitions were not always the same. Thus, policy decisions are not expected to be continuous and coherent. However, there has been a gradual shift towards reconciliation policy and a growing emphasis on balancing work and welfare. We argue that this can be partly attributed to the pro-European stance of political actors. This is in sharp contrast to the case of Czech Republic, where Euroscepticism is persistent, and as a result, EU reconciliation policies are often rejected (Sirovátka and Bartáková, pp. 161–177 in this issue).

The first government after the transition – a conservative coalition (1990–94) – explicitly affirmed the household role of women and strongly encouraged a male breadwinner model. Additionally, they constrained the options of having paid work and domestic responsibilities by failing to fund most day-care institutions. Hence, the initial policy making in Hungary regarding family policies continued the pre-transition understanding of a gendered division of labour. Under the next, socialist-liberal coalition government (1994–98), an austerity package was introduced due to economic troubles in 1995. The aim was basically to curb public expenditure without necessarily indicating a shift towards more gender equality or the enhancement of female work. The opposition in the parliament mainly revolved around the issue of whether the targeted and restrained benefits should be used for social inclusion or for boosting birth rates (Kispeter 2009).

With another governmental change in 1998, the new right-wing government (1998–2002) adopted a new family policy framework with a focus on demography and the domestic responsibilities of women. One of the motivations was to counteract the previous austerity package. The newly designed system – which primarily supported those with employment income with an emphasis on tax benefits – was widely criticised by the opposition and the policy community. The changes were said to aim at 'strengthening the "middle-class", particularly the middle-class family, and of the "nation"' (Ferge 2001: 112). Thus, as some experts argued, this system contributed to the 'impoverishment of large groups with no earner or only one low-paid earner' (Ferge and Juhász 2004: 243).

With EU accession debates heating up in the early 2000s, the newly-elected Hungarian socialist-liberal coalition (2002–06) openly proposed family policy as a means of increasing female labour force participation and female employment. These reforms differed from earlier ones in the sense that they were linked explicitly or implicitly to EU requirements in political debates, or followed European objectives.⁴ Women were no longer viewed as the ultimate bearers of household labour, but instead

⁴ For example, many of the projects aimed 'to lay down the foundation of legal norms and institutions of a social welfare system after the closing of the 15-year transition period following the change of the political system and after the EU accession' (Ministry of Health 2006).

were pictured as equals to their male counterparts for paid (though rarely for unpaid) responsibilities.

4. 'USAGES' OF EUROPE: RECONCILIATION REFORMS IN HUNGARY

Against this background, this section presents the main 'usages' of Europe found in Hungarian political debates in relation to reconciliation policies. The analysis is based on the minutes of parliamentary debates of legislation concerning the theme of reconciliation of work and family life. The investigation stops in 2006 and does not include parliamentary debates during the governments of 2006–2010 or later. Since the following analysis concentrates on political debates in the Hungarian Parliament, it only looks at how the main political actors – elected representatives and members of the government – use Europe to provide legitimation for their arguments ('legitimizing usage'). This means that this section examines domestic political discourses concerning the role of the EU and reconciliation policies. These political discourses are mapped through a qualitative textual analysis, which aims to answer two main questions.

First, it examines what kinds of references are made to the EU and in which context. In other words, the question that is posed is how politicians frame the need to adapt national legislation to a European framework. This aims to show the domestic usages of Europe as a resource in political debates. Second, the analysis aims to show whether and how members of parliament (MPs) and government representatives use the argument of reconciliation; and if they do not do so, what the main lines of reasoning are instead. The particular interpretations and representations of reconciliation and other 'policy frames' serve 'to construct the problem of a specific policy situation' (Rein and Schön 1994: 33). This problem construction through political discourse is essential for an understanding of the legal and/or policy outcomes of a political process. Finally, our additional goal is to link the changing framing of European requirements and/or standards with the emergence of reconciliation related arguments. With such an analysis, the 'black box' of domestic policy-making is opened and how the EU accession process was able to influence the relatively stable but not reconciliation-friendly family policies in Hungary can be analysed.

For the textual analysis, we chose debates that were relevant to the theme of reconciliation. This involved looking at debates on legislation concerning the family support system, parental leave options, care-related social assistance and the regulation of work arrangements (on part-time work, telework, measures facilitating labour market re-integration, etc.) between 1990 and 2006. Debates that were explicitly related to the adoption of relevant EU legislation were also examined.

Based on the analysis of the dominant usages of Europe in parliamentary debates, a distinction between three main periods, which are connected to the different stages

of Hungary's accession to the EU, can be made. In the first period, between the early 1990s and the 2000s, references made to the EU were sporadic. The second period before 2004 was the period of legal harmonisation. Finally, in the third period, after the 2004 accession, the reconciliation of work and family life became an explicit goal of government, usually with references made to European processes and European principles. The availability of European funding was an important trigger of reconciliation related reforms.

4.1. 'CREATING A STRONG NATION' JOINING THE EU: THE DISCOURSE OF THE 1998 FAMILY SUPPORT ACT AND ITS AMENDMENT IN 2001

In Hungary, in the early 1990s – in the first period of the transition – while EU accession was always an important event to look forward to, legal harmonisation and thus the direct influence of EU legislation, was not too strong. Instead, the dominant EU-related discourse, which was labelled 'cognitive' Europeanisation by Ferge and Juhász (2004), was that of 'catching up' with EU standards and 'reaching the level' of European policies, especially in employment and social inclusion. This could be seen, for example, from debates preceding the adoption of the Employment Act (1991), the Social Act (1993), and the Child Protection Act (1997). Here the legitimating function of Europe was served by references to European standards. Interestingly however, throughout the debates prior to the 1999 amendment of the Employment Act and the Social Act (and to a lesser extent, preceding the adoption of the Family Support Act in 1998), this discourse was not enacted by the government, but by opposition parties. Opposition speakers often argued that they did not support certain proposals because these proposals were against the norms of the EU.

The Family Support Act was adopted in 1998. According to Ferge and Juhász (2004: 243), this Act established a system that was 'not fully in line with the Union's emphasis on the accommodation of family life with work, an element of the social inclusion strategy'. Based on the parliamentary debates, it can be also seen that the Family Support Act from 1998 did not deal explicitly with reconciliation. During the whole debate, the reconciliation of work and family life was not mentioned as an important goal. Instead, the government framed its proposal as aiming to strengthen the institution of the family and contribute to demographic growth. Accordingly, references to the EU were made in the context of the well-being of families in a future EU. As an MP from a governmental party argued:

'Hungary, the Hungarian nation needs a healthy future in order to join the institutional system of the European Union as a strong and harmonious, and not as an exposed and weak, society. The essential preconditions for this are the healthy family and the healthy child, able in body and mind, growing up in a healthy family and being the value and treasure of the whole society. We often hear that it is not governments who will join the

institutions of the European Union. In this analogy (...), in effect it is Hungarian families who will join the institutional system of the European Union' (Szászfalvi 24.11.1998, authors' translation).

Following this logic, it was argued that 'this act can contribute to a strong and viable Hungarian nation which can find its place in the community of European nations as an equal partner' (Szászfalvi 24.11.1998, authors' translation).

The Family Support Act was amended by the same government in 2001. This amendment made it possible for grandparents to receive the child care allowance instead of the parents. Nevertheless, according to the parliamentary debate, the intergenerational sharing of responsibilities or the reconciliation of work and family was not the goal of the amendment in itself. Instead, MPs from parties in the government coalition once again justified the proposal primarily on demographic grounds. As a governing party politician argued, women might postpone or not even consider childbirth for financial or career reasons, which contributes to demographic decline. However, if grandparents can look after children instead of the mother – fathers were only mentioned by the opposition – then this demographic decline can be stopped. Within this logic, women are seen as choosing work instead of childcare almost solely for economic reasons: they cannot afford to stay at home. Nevertheless, one MP – also from a party in the coalition government – mentioned that women who return to the labour market after a long period of childrearing face problems that could be decreased by returning to their jobs earlier. Furthermore, improving the financial situation of the grandparents was also referred to as a goal. Problems related to enhancing the employment of older women who are sometimes not even eligible for a minimum pension were also discussed in this context. Throughout this 2001 parliamentary debate, no reference was made to the EU.

4.2. USING LEGAL HARMONISATION AS AN ARGUMENT: PRE-ACCESSION DEBATES

The second period of the early 2000s can be characterised by extensive legal harmonisation and the transposition of EU directives. During this period, references to EU requirements – and to a lesser extent, to EU standards – were among the main arguments in favour of certain proposals. In this process, important steps were, for example, the amendment of the Labour Code for the transposition of Directives 97/81/EC on part-time work and 96/34/EC on parental leave, as well as the 2002 framework agreement on telework. In addition, this period was marked by the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination act and of new legal provisions on atypical forms of employment. In this period, the reference to Europe was more mechanical and can be best understood as a response to conditionality pressures. Thus, the EU served as a resource in terms of legal regulations.

Regarding the issue of part-time work, the 2001 amendment of the Labour Code, which had the aim of legal harmonisation, was criticised by an MP from the government coalition for not addressing the issue of part-time work seriously enough. However, according to his argument, instead of referring to the explicit requirement of the EU, he emphasised the increasing domestic need for part-time employment, as well as the comparatively low proportion of women employed part-time in Hungary compared with other European countries (Herényi 13.12.2000). He regarded part-time employment as a means of increasing female employment in general.

Important legislation relating to part-time work includes the 2002 amendment of several laws concerning employment and social provisions and the 2003 modifications of the Labour Code, through which Directive 97/81/EC on part-time work was finally transposed. These amendments took place after the government changed in 2002, when a socialist-liberal coalition followed a conservative one. Besides facilitating part-time work, the 2002 amendment also included a new regulation giving fathers five days of extra leave after their child was born. In relation to the latter, an MP from a governing party argued that this new regulation 'greatly enhances the equal rights of women and men' (Béki 12.11.2002, authors' translation).

During debates on the 2003 modifications of the Labour Code, one of the main arguments legitimating the proposed new regulations was the recurring reference to legal harmonisation and the transposition of EU directives. Regarding part-time work, many MPs emphasised the importance of this form of employment in Hungary, arguing that it helps the reconciliation of work and family life. Similarly, modifications of the Labour Code and several other acts in 2004, with the intention of creating a legal framework on telework, were also linked to EU requirements in the parliamentary debate (though this amendment did not include the transposition of directives and only dealt with the adoption of a framework agreement). As the State Secretary from the Ministry of Employment argued:

'In relation to the EU agreement on telework, it has to be noted that it is not a binding norm, but the European Union views it as important that Member States adopt and implement agreements that are not necessarily in the form of directives. In this respect, fulfilling EU requirements on telework and adopting new national legislation can be regarded as a path-breaking endeavour, even by European standards' (Csizmár 30.03.2004, authors' translation).

The State Secretary also stated that this new legal framework on telework 'can facilitate the labour market participation of women, especially mothers, and of people with altered working ability who cannot leave their homes' (Csizmár 30.03.2004, authors' translation).

4.3. USING EUROPEAN JARGON AND EUROPEAN FUNDS: POST-ACCESSION DEBATES

Finally, in the third period, Hungary was already a member of the EU and started to participate in informal coordination processes such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). Membership had significant consequences on policy practices, for example, through establishing new procedures for developing medium-term strategic plans. This practice of planning and coordination has been relatively new and has also had an important impact on the spreading of both EU policy jargon and EU policy principles in Hungarian policy discourses (Krizsan and Zentai 2006). As Lendvai (2004) argues, the EU has had an important role in the transformation of post-communist welfare:

The open method of co-ordination (OMCs), and specifically the Joint Inclusion Memorandum, are important exercises in countries where there is no word for social inclusion, let alone meaningful understanding of it, and where there has been no serious government poverty strategy, with all the associated properties of deliberation, consensus, implementation, accountability and so forth attached (Lendvai 2004: 330).

Thus, the 2004 amendment of the Social Act and the 2005 Reform of the Family Support System can be explicitly linked to EU legislation and/or OMC processes. The framework for most of these amendments is called the 'SZOLID Project' – a governmental programme that aimed at a 'welfare turn' and improvements to the Hungarian social assistance and family support system in light of European objectives. As stated on the website of the Ministry of Health (2006), '[t]he objective of the SZOLID Project is to lay down the foundation of legal norms and institutions of a social welfare system after the closing of the 15 years of transition period following the change of the political system and after the EU accession'.

Furthermore, partly linked to OMC processes, another 'adaptive pressure' (Goetz 2001) that was based on European guidelines or objectives in the post-accession period has been the availability of EU funding, especially through the European Social Fund or the EQUAL programme. It has been argued that the European Social Fund is of particular importance for reconciliation policies in the EU (O'Connor 2008). In Hungary, since 2004, there has been a recurring reference in parliamentary debates to the EU as a source of funds. In other words, the EU has been framed as an important factor in initiating and adopting certain legislative changes (for example, in connection with the START programme⁵, which involves the preferential treatment of people belonging to certain disadvantaged groups, and which makes explicit reference to the Lisbon Strategy).

⁵ Based on the START Programme, abatements are given on contributions of employers employing disadvantaged people (partly funded by the European Social Fund), providing incentives for employers to employ people belonging to specific groups in this way.

Most of the legislation related to the issue of reconciliation was adopted in this period. The most important acts related to this issue are the 2004 amendment of several laws concerning social provisions, the 2005 Reform of the Family Support System, and the three acts establishing and amending the START Programme. In parliamentary debates, MPs frequently referred to EU related principles – and thus used EU jargon – as well as to soft OMC processes and to the availability of EU funds. When the goal of reconciliation was explicitly mentioned, it was usually done so with reference to the EU.

The reconciliation of work and family life was one of the explicit goals of a series of amendments in 2004. It was framed as a goal that contributed to the increasing employment of women. In addition to the new regulations on social assistance, this amendment aimed at developing day-care services as well, including nurseries for children and day-care institutions for disabled people. As the minister argued: ‘in order to advance in the area of female employment, there is a need for the reconciliation of work and family life, so there is a need for day-care services that can safely take care of those in need of nursing so that women can return to the labour market’ (Göncz 23.11.2004, authors’ translation). According to the Minister, such day-care institutions can be developed with the help of funding received from the EU. Similarly, in the 2005 debate of the Reform of the Family Support System, the Minister argued that ‘[t]he requirement of the European Union is to provide such [day-care] services to 30 per cent of children between 0 and 3 years of age’ (Göncz 20.09.2005, authors’ translation), which is an explicit reference to the Lisbon Strategy.

Soft processes were referred to in the debate on the 2004 amendment of several laws concerning social provisions and the START programme. For example, as the Minister for Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities argued in the 2004 parliamentary debate, the proposal ‘also answers the requirement of the European Union – articulated by the European Union as a whole – according to which all Member States have to develop plans for tackling social exclusion and poverty’ (Göncz 23.11.2004, authors’ translation). Moreover, the European Employment Strategy was mentioned in the 2005 debate of the START Programme.

Throughout the parliamentary debates, EU related principles were used by both the government and the opposition. In both cases, reference to these principles served as an argument in favour of a given statement. This was especially the case in the 2004 debate on the amendment of several laws concerning social provisions. In this debate, such principles mentioned by the Minister for Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities were, for example, legal certainty (‘Legal certainty is a very important expectation and requirement in all countries of the European Union’ (Göncz 23.11.2004, authors’ translation)), subsidiarity, or partnership (‘As it is established by the core principles of the European Union, such issues cannot be solved solely at a central governmental level. We can only advance in this area if there is partnership between the main actors’ (Göncz 23.11.2004, authors’ translation)). When

criticising the proposal, opposition speakers emphasised the principles of transparency, subsidiarity, and social security. Furthermore, one MP from the opposition claimed that the proposed amendment would ‘seriously endanger tackling poverty, which is a central concern of the government and also an EU requirement’ (Mátraí 23.11.2004, authors’ translation).

The framing of the EU as a source of funds was especially articulated in the 2006 debate on the START Programme. While the EU or the EU average was often mentioned as a benchmark for the quality of life, EU-related arguments mainly highlighted the availability of funding from the European Social Fund.

5. CONCLUSION

In the Hungarian context, this article has distinguished three periods of Europeanisation (see the summary in Table 4 below). In the first period, while the government rarely mentioned the EU, references were made to European standards by the opposition. Policies adopted in this period aimed to protect the institution of the family to ensure demographic growth, and thus did not prioritise reconciliation and female employment. The second period before 2004 was the period of legal harmonisation. The main legitimisation strategy of all governments was an emphasis on European requirements. Reconciliation-related legislation (for example, on part-time work and telework) was mainly adopted as an answer to European expectations and conditionality criteria. Finally, in the third period after the 2004 accession, Europe was mentioned in terms of three important resources: cognitive (using European jargon), standard-setting, and financial. This means that MPs started using the jargon of the EU, and the availability of European funding was an important trigger for reform. In this period, the reconciliation of work and family life became an explicit goal of the government, usually with references made to European processes and European principles. All in all, throughout the period analysed, policy discourse slowly shifted from a strong orientation to demography towards a stronger emphasis on the reconciliation of work and family life.

‘Usages’ of Europe in Hungarian policy discourse indicate a rising influence of Europe on domestic policy-making. Hungarian family policies have been relatively enduring and have traditionally not been supportive of reconciling work and family life. Yet, as shown above, reforms until 2006 indicate a broadening understanding of reconciliation policy, aiming to increase the role of formal institutions in care-taking.

Table 4. Usages of Europe

Policies	Role of Europe	EU Resources	Usages of Europe
1990–2000/2001	Implicit	Cognitive	Legitimizing
2000/2001–2004	Reform initiator/supporter	Legal	Legitimizing
2004–2006	Reform initiator/supporter	Cognitive, Financial	Legitimizing

With regard to the hypotheses set out by Graziano, Jacquot and Palier (pp. 3–25 in this issue), we see that ‘joining the club effect’ is evident but is not crucial in the Hungarian case, since after the accession, reconciliation discourses continued to refer to Europe as an important resource, and national policies moved slightly away from gendered familiarism. Given the pro-European attitudes of political elites in Hungary, policy makers generally referred to Europe in a positive manner. While most changes were made in order to meet EU requirements, political actors used Europe in their political discourse more and more often. The EU was referred to as a benchmark for the quality of life, as a source of legislation and as a source of funding. Finally, in terms of the misfit between the national and the European reconciliation policy structure, the Hungarian family policy system still does not facilitate a balance between work and welfare. However, this misfit has decreased and did not prevent policy makers from using the EU as a recurring resource in debates.

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