



CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE LABOUR FORCE ATTACHMENT OF MOTHERS IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE

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Despite the recent increase in female labour force participation across the European Union, major obstacles still persist. Using data from 10 countries from the Generation and Gender Survey, this paper examines cross-national differences in the labour force attachment of two specific subgroups of mothers: the stay-at-home mothers (homemakers) and those on maternity or parental leave. The results show the determining influence of individual-level characteristics on mothers' intention to return to the labour market after a short or longer period of absence, including mothers' level of education and values regarding gender roles. At the country level, the results suggest the importance of normative and institutional factors in framing mothers' labour force decisions as well as economic factors.



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1. Introduction

Across the European Union, the labour force participation rate of women has increased rapidly in the past decades. Despite this increase, it stood at 62 percent in 2010, that is, still below the EU target of 75 percent.¹ To support and encourage an increased participation of women in the labour market, the European Union has been promoting the adoption of various family-friendly workplace policies including an increased provision of childcare facilities (European Commission, 2007). Major obstacles to female employment nonetheless persist. In particular, women in most countries continue to have a discontinuous employment over their childbearing years, resulting in substantial lost income (Gash, 2009; Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel, 2007). Furthermore, women's level of satisfaction towards their work-life balance continues to be mixed with a non-negligible proportion of women reporting being stressed and dissatisfied (Duxbury, 2004). An understanding of the barriers to women's employment and of ways to promote a better work-family balance is therefore very important for governments.

This paper examines cross-national differences in the labour force attachment of two specific subgroups of mothers: the stay-at-home mothers (homemakers) and those on maternity or parental leave. The justification for focusing on homemakers is that these women constitute an untapped source of labour and are among those who would need to join the labour market in order to reach the EU employment target. As to those on leave, their temporary absence from work means that they will soon be facing a time when they have to decide whether or not to return to the labour market. They are therefore also a key group to consider. In this paper, the characteristics and labour market intentions of these two subgroups of women are analysed using data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) for ten countries: five Western European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy), and five Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Georgia, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation).

This paper is structured as follows. It first reviews the literature on women's employment by focusing on both individual and macro-level factors, including values,

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¹ The figure of 62 percent refers to women aged 20 to 64 years old (source: online Eurostat statistics). As to the European target, the original Lisbon target aimed at bringing the employment rate for women to more than 60 percent. Subsequently, this target was revised upwards to 75 percent – a new target to be reached by 2020 (European Commission, 2010).

education and family circumstances. It then moves on to a presentation of the data and methods, followed by the results of the data analysis. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results and their policy implications.

2. Background

The focus of the paper is on mothers' attachment to the labour market, measured by their intention to return to work after a short or longer period of absence from the labour market. To provide the theoretical basis of this paper, we draw from the larger literature on the determinants of female employment. In doing so, we discuss the role of institutional, cultural and structural constraints to female employment. These theoretical perspectives are then subsequently examined in the context of the different countries included in this paper and pave the way for our hypotheses and data analysis.

2.1 *Theories about the determinants of female employment*

Four key theoretical perspectives have been suggested in the literature to explain cross-national and individual-level differences in female employment. The first of these is the institutional/welfare state perspective, which states that the labour force participation of women is higher in countries that are more supportive of the dual-earner model (Stier, Lewis-Epstein and Braun, 2001). For instance, numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between female labour force participation and various social and family policy measures (Thévenon, 2011; Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). In general, these studies contrast the Nordic countries, with their high level of female employment and high level of support for families, with that of southern European countries and their lower levels of female employment and a lower level of support for families (Gornick, Meyers and Ross, 1997). In terms of specific policies, studies using the institutional perspective have pointed to the determining influence of the taxation system (especially the tax on the second earner in the family) (OECD, 2004; Jaumotte, 2003), the availability, quality and cost of childcare (Misra, Budig and Croeckmann, 2011; Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011), and the provision of maternity and parental leave entitlements and benefits (Pronzato, 2009). However some studies have also pointed to the potentially adverse impact of long parental leave on the return to work (Gupta, Smith and Verner, 2008; Ronsen and Sundstrom, 2002) and on women's upward occupational mobility (Evertsson and Duvander, 2010).

The second theoretical perspective is the "doing gender" one. As such it is not a single unified perspective, but a collective of various gender-based theories that point to the importance of individual values and societal norms regarding gender roles as a determinant of female employment (Pfau-Effinger, 2004).² According to this perspective, lower levels of female labour force participation are consequently expected in countries adhering to more traditional norms regarding gender roles, especially when young children are present. For example, the presence of traditional norms has been identified as a major determinant for the lower labour force participation of women in countries such as Italy and Spain (Nordenmark, 2004; Guerrero and Naldini, 1996).

² In some studies, norms regarding gender roles are included under the general label of cultural theories.

The “doing gender” perspective can also be understood at the individual level, which in this case posits that adherence to more traditional values reduces the likelihood of women holding a paid job outside the house (van der Lippe and van Dijk, 2002). Among this body of literature, the Preference Theory posits that women have intrinsic preferences for work or for the family and that these preferences have deep influences on their labour force participation (Hakim, 2003). And while this theory has been subjected to various criticisms (see for example Procter and Padfield, 1999; McRae, 2003), other studies have found evidence of the impact of traditional gender-role values on the probability of women’s employment (Fortin, 2005).

The third theoretical perspective draws from human capital theory. At the individual level, it posits that women with higher education levels will be more likely to have a continuous employment pattern than their counterparts with less education owing to the higher opportunity cost they face when withdrawing from the labour market. Numerous studies point to the increasing polarization of women by educational level in terms of their labour force participation (Konietzka and Keryenfeld, 2010). Studies have also shown that the impact of specific work–family policies tends to differ by educational level (Del Boca, Pasqua and Pronzato, 2009). Notably, longer parental leaves and higher childcare costs have been found to have a greater disincentive effect on women with lower levels of education (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011).

Finally, the fourth theoretical perspective is the structuralist one, which points to the determining influence of macro- and micro-level economic and demographic structures on mothers’ ability to join the labour market. In particular, this perspective points to the importance of labour market opportunities (i.e. the availability of jobs) and labour market flexibility in influencing female employment. For instance, the lack of jobs in some Eastern European countries has undeniable consequences on female employment and especially on the return to work after childbirth (Haas et al., 2006). Similarly, it has been argued that a rigid labour market reduces women’s opportunities to return to the labour market in countries such as Italy (Del Boca, Pasqua and Pronzato, 2004). At the individual level, structuralist theories also point to the importance of family responsibilities, namely age and number of children, as well as to the families’ economic needs in influencing mothers’ labour force participation.

In practice, these various theoretical determinants of female employment often coexist or even interact. For example, at the country level it is clear that the predominance of more gender-egalitarian societal norms often coexists with more institutional support for gender equality and dual-earner families. Similarly, it has been argued that women can express their personal preferences for work or family only when supportive policies are in place, when jobs are available and when the household’s financial situation allows it (Kangas and Rostgaard, 2007; Steiber and Haas, 2009; Haas et al., 2006). In this paper, the small number of countries will not make it possible to examine these complex interactions. But these theoretical perspectives will help us to better understand the role of national contexts and individual characteristics in explaining within- and between-country differences in mothers’ intention to return to work.

2.2 *Contrasting national contexts*

The ten countries included in our empirical analysis differ widely in terms of their social, demographic, economic and institutional characteristics. In Table 1, the

countries are simply classified under two broad geographical regions (Western and Eastern Europe) and their values are reported on selected indicators. This classification reveals numerous contrasts between the two regions. First, there is a sharp east/west contrast in terms of the countries' level of economic development, employment opportunities for women and the households' financial needs. These differences are particularly salient in the case of our five Eastern European countries, whose ranking on the Human Development Index stands well below that of the other countries, although with large variations. In terms of female employment, studies have pointed to the severe lack of job opportunities in countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, thus strongly constraining the employment of both men and women despite the economic necessity of actually working (Haas et al., 2006).

Second, the two regions also differ considerably in terms of their attitudes towards gender roles. Studies have documented the presence of a double gender standard in Eastern European countries, with a relatively high participation of women in the labour force (partly because of ideological legacies of the Communist regime and partly because of economic necessity) together with societal norms supporting traditional gender roles (van der Lippe, Jager and Kops, 2006). Among them, Georgia has often been singled out in view of the persistence of relatively traditional values regarding family and gender roles (Blum et al., 2009). In Western Europe, the support for gender equality is higher as revealed by the higher ranking and higher scores on our three gender equality indices. These five Western European countries are not, however, at the forefront of gender egalitarianism, particularly compared with Scandinavian countries (not included in our analysis). Among them, Italy has been well documented for the persistence of relatively traditional gender roles, especially regarding the gender division of unpaid work (Romano and Bruzzese, 2007).

The east/west contrast also extends to institutional characteristics in terms of welfare state support and family support. The ten countries represented here do not cover all of the welfare regimes notably because of the omission of the Anglo-Saxon countries and of the Nordic countries.³ Our five Western European countries belong to the corporatist welfare state regime and are usually characterized in the family policy literature as providing relatively high financial support for families but more limited support to working parents with young children (Thévenon, 2011; Leitner, 2003; Korpi, 2000).⁴ Still, this broad typology hides significant differences. In particular, the type of support provided to working parents in Germany has often been criticized for reinforcing traditional gender roles, especially when the children are very young (at least until recently) (Lewis et al., 2008). In contrast, the French family policy model tends to be much more supportive (although less so than in the Nordic countries). As to Italy, it is often classified instead under the Mediterranean (or Latin Rim) welfare state regime (Arts and Gelissen, 2002) and in the family policy literature as a country providing relatively low support to families, the ideology being instead that families – rather than the state – should be supporting each other (Martin, 1996).

³ Data from the GGS were available for Australia but not for the variables of interest.

⁴ In some studies, Norway has been characterized as having a lower level of support for a mother's employment as compared with other Social Democratic countries, such as Sweden (Handel and Semyonov, 2006).

Table 1. Characteristics of countries around the year 2005 ¹⁾

Geographical region	Country	GDP per capita (in PPP 2005 US\$) ²⁾	Ranking in the Human Development Index ²⁾	Net secondary educational enrolment rate (%) ²⁾	Ranking in the Global Gender Gap Index ³⁾	Views on working mothers (high score = less traditional) ⁴⁾	Views on housewives (high score = less traditional) ⁵⁾	Maternity leave and benefits ⁶⁾	Parental leave and benefits ^{6), 7)}	Provision of formal childcare (as % of children less than 3 years old) ⁸⁾
Western Europe	Austria	33,700	15	n/a	27	n/a	n/a	16 wks x 100%	Until the child's 2 nd birthday x FR	1
	Belgium	32,119	17	97	20	3.34	n/a	15 wks x 75%	3 months x FR	23
	France	30,386	10	99	70	3.09	n/a	16 wks x 100%	12 months x FR ^{b)}	17
	Germany	29,461	22	n/a	5	2.95	2.70	14 wks x 100%	24 months x FR	7
	Italy	28,529	20	92	77	n/a	2.41	20 wks x 80%	10 months x 30% ^{c)}	16

Table 1. cont'd

Eastern Europe	Bulgaria	9,032	53	88	37	2.58	2.22	135 days x 90%	Until the child's 1 st birthday x FR ^d)	16
	Georgia	3,365	96	81	54	n/a	2.10	See Parental leave	477 days x FR	n/a
	Lithuania	14,494	43	91	21	n/a	n/a	126 days x 100%	1 year x 70%	4
	Romania	9,060	60	80	46	2.63	2.83	120 days x 75%	2 years x FR	3
	Russian Federation	10,845	67	n/a	49	2.22	n/a	140 days x 100%	18 months x FR	n/a

n/a: not available; FR: flat-rate benefits (with the amount specific to each country)

Notes and sources:

- 1) The year 2005 was chosen because most of the survey data used in this paper were collected around 2005-06.
- 2) Data for the year 2005 from the United Nations Human Development Report 2007/2008.
- 3) Data for the year 2006 from Hausman, Tyson and Zahidi (2006) (<https://members.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2006.pdf>).
- 4) From the European Social Survey, round 4 (in 2008) (own calculations). The values correspond to the respondents' opinion regarding the statement 'A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family' with possible values ranging from agree strongly (=1) to disagree strongly (=5).
- 5) Data from the World Value Survey 2005-09 (own calculations). The values correspond to the respondents' opinions regarding the statement 'Being a housewife is fulfilling' with possible values ranging from agree strongly (=1) to strongly disagree (=4).
- 6) Data for most countries from Moss (2006), with the exception of Georgia, for which data came from the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) Contextual Database and Bulgaria, Romania and the Russian Federation, for which data came from the publication Social Security Program throughout the World 2006. Data for Lithuania came from the GGP Contextual Database and Social Security Program throughout the World.
- 7) In some cases, a longer unpaid leave is also available.
- 8) From Eurostat; the data refer to the year 2006 (2007 for Romania) and is restricted to childcare of 30 or more hours per week. The provision of part-time childcare is also available in some countries but is not reported here. Some of the figures are considered too small to be reliable in some countries.
- a) Norway: an additional 6 weeks of leave are available for fathers only.
- b) France: the benefit is means-tested and varies with the number of children.
- c) Italy: each parent is entitled to six months of leave but the total amount taken by two parents cannot exceed 10 months.

The five Eastern European countries examined in this paper all share a history of communism and as such are classified in some studies under the general label of the “New Eastern European welfare model” characterized by a hybrid mix of liberal, social democratic, and conservative principles (Haggard and Kaufman, 2009). In contrast, other studies instead draw a distinction between sub-clusters of countries. For instance, Fenger (2007) distinguishes the former USSR-type of welfare (in our study represented by Russia and Lithuania), the post-communist European type (Bulgaria) and the developing welfare state type (Georgia and Romania). Yet when it comes to support for working parents in the form of leave entitlements, the five Eastern European countries included in our analysis all provide relatively long periods of parental leave with some financial compensation.

In this paper, we argue that these various national contexts are shaping women’s environment and have large consequences on their intention to return to work. Different dimensions of the national contexts may nonetheless have opposite impacts on mothers’ intention to work, thus making it difficult to predict their net impact. Regarding the group of stay-at-home mothers, we expect them to be more likely to view their situation as temporary rather than as permanent in less traditional countries, but also in countries providing more job opportunities and more support for working parents. Consequently, we expect the group of stay-at-home mothers to be not only larger in size in countries upholding traditional norms regarding gender roles (such as Georgia), but also as being less likely to intend to take up a job in the future. However, in the case of some Eastern European countries, the families’ financial needs may encourage mothers to join the labour market despite the presence of more traditional gender roles. A lack of work opportunities (e.g. in the poorer Eastern European countries), a more rigid labour market (e.g. Italy) and limited governmental support for working mothers may also be expected to reduce the likelihood of stay-at-home mothers intending to take up a job. In our analysis, we also include a separate analysis of mothers of Turkish nationality residing in Germany. In this case, we expect traditional norms regarding gender roles to reduce mothers’ participation in, and intention to return to, the labour market.

Regarding the group of mothers on maternity or parental leave, we expect them to be generally much more willing than their homemaker counterparts to return to the labour market at the end of their leave. Their prior experience, and therefore their higher opportunity cost, can be expected to provide a strong incentive to go back to the labour market. Still, it is expected their intention to resume work at the end of their leave will be strongly influenced by the level of normative and institutional support for working mothers, especially for those with very young children. In particular, we expect mothers’ intention to resume work at the end of their leave to be lower in Eastern Europe in view of the long duration of parental leave (which reduces mothers’ human capital), limited childcare provision, reduced job opportunities and relatively traditional societal norms regarding gender roles. However, low wages and a low standard of living may again have an opposite effect in providing a financial incentive for mothers to return to the labour market. We also expect mothers’ intention to return to work to be lower in countries such as Italy, but in this case because of a lack of supportive measures for working mothers (especially those with very young children). As to the other Western European countries, we expect them to appear in a middle position in terms of mothers’ intention to return to work.

2.3 *Contribution to the literature*

Ideally, our various hypotheses should be tested in a multi-level framework of analysis, but the small number of countries prevents us from doing so. Nonetheless, we contribute to the literature in three key ways. First, while most of the comparative literature on female employment is based on Western European countries, we expand the analysis to five Eastern European countries (such as Bulgaria, Romania and Georgia) that have been mostly overlooked in the comparative literature. In addition, we include in the analysis a subsample of Turkish mothers in Germany in an attempt to examine the integration of these mothers in the host country and the role of cultural factors. Second, we do not confine the analysis to the employment status of mothers but also examine the intention to return to work of homemakers and mothers who are on maternity and parental leave. Thus, instead of a static picture of female employment, we introduce a more dynamic element based on work intention. Third, we integrate various theoretical perspectives in order to provide a better understanding of the barriers to mothers' employment, including mothers' socio-demographic characteristics, employment history and values regarding gender roles.

3. **Data and methods**

This study uses data from the GGS, which is a longitudinal survey coordinated by the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe). The data used are from the first wave, which is currently available for ten countries: five Western European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy) and five Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Georgia, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation).^{5, 6} In addition, data are available for a sample of Turkish women in Germany.⁷ This additional sample is analyzed separately in the paper because of its very different socio-demographic characteristics. The data were collected in most countries around 2005-06, although data collection took place slightly later in some countries (e.g. Austria and Belgium).⁸ Overall the response rate for these surveys was around 60 percent (see Table A1 in appendix for more information about the surveys).

In each of these countries, a national representative sample of men and women was surveyed on a wide range of issues, including their fertility and partnership histories, their employment situation and demographic characteristics. For this paper, we restrict the analysis to mothers with at least one child less than 12 years old at home.

⁵ At the time of writing, data were also available for Australia, Estonia and the Netherlands, but these countries did not include data on the variables of interest for this paper. Data for Hungary and Norway were also available but some of the key variables of interest were measured differently, thus preventing their inclusion in the analysis.

⁶ In some documents from the United Nations, Georgia is classified as being part of Western Asia. It is loosely classified in this paper as part of Eastern Europe, just as the Russian Federation.

⁷ To be included in the sample, women had to be Turkish nationals residing in Germany. About three-quarters of the overall sample were born outside Germany and are thus first-generation migrants, while the other quarter was born in Germany but has maintained Turkish nationality.

⁸ And while the varying economic conditions in place during these different years may affect the comparability of our data, statistics on female employment have not changed drastically from one year to the other, thus providing a justification for analyzing this body of data.

The paper focuses on two subgroups of mothers: 1) those who declared their main activity as being homemakers, referred to below as stay-at-home mothers; and 2) those who were on maternity or parental leave at the time of the survey.⁹ As discussed above, we decided to focus on these two subgroups to better understand the obstacles to employment among those not currently at work. The analysis, however, excludes mothers who were unemployed at the time of the survey and those in other statuses (e.g. students and disabled persons), as it is likely that their reasons for not being employed are entirely different from those of the others.

3.1 *Work intention*

The outcome variable considered in this paper is whether or not women intend to take up paid work in the future. For stay-at-home mothers the question was phrased by reference to the next three years, while for mothers on leave the question was phrased by reference to the end of their leave. For these questions, women could answer as follows: definitively not, probably not, probably yes and definitively yes.

3.2 *Other variables*

In line with the previous literature, the analysis also includes a number of individual-level economic and socio-demographic characteristics. To measure one's level of family responsibilities, we included the number of children under 15 living in the household, the presence of a young child (under the age of five) and whether or not the mother is partnered (married or cohabiting as opposed to being a single parent). To measure one's level of human capital and potential opportunity cost, we include the mother's level of education where we contrast those having a high level of education (ISEC 5 or 6) with those having a lower level. Women's views about gender roles and their underlying level of conservatism are measured by mothers' answers to the statement, 'A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works', with codes 1 for strongly agree up to 5 for strongly disagree. As such, a high value for this item indicates a non-traditional view.¹⁰ Finally, a family's financial needs is captured by mothers' answers to the question, 'Thinking of your household's total monthly income, is your household able to make ends meet?', where we contrast those answering that the household does so fairly easily, easily and very easily (coded 1) with those answering that it does so with great difficulty, with difficulty or with some difficulty (coded 0).

⁹ This information is based on the following question: "Which of the items on the card best describes what you are mainly doing at present?" The possible answers are 1) employed or self-employed; 2) helping a family member in a family business or a farm; 3) unemployed; 4) student, in school, in vocational training; 5) retired; 6) on maternity leave, parental leave or childcare leave; 7) ill or disabled for a long time or permanently; 8) looking after the home or family; 9) military service or social service; 10) other.

¹⁰ In an earlier version of the paper, we also included a control for those who were foreign-born (because of potentially different values regarding gender roles) and for the presence of a household member aged 65 years and over (as a potential source of childcare or as an obstacle to women's employment if eldercare is needed). For both situations, however, the number of cases was too small to provide meaningful results.

The analysis also includes a number of status-specific variables. In the case of stay-at-home mothers, we examine whether or not they held a job prior to being a homemaker and the number of years since being a homemaker, and if they held a job before, the reason for having giving up employment. In the case of mothers on leave, we examine whether or not they have the opportunity to return to work at the end of their leave, the duration of their leave, and whether or not they were receiving cash benefits during their leave. For some of the analyses, we also report mothers' level of satisfaction with their current activity status (e.g. homemakers or on leave) measured on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely).

3.3 *Methods of analysis*

We first provide an overview of mothers' employment status and their economic and socio-demographic characteristics. The analysis of the determinants of work intention is then undertaken through a series of logistic regressions, which contrast mothers who intend to return to work with those who do not. The analysis is first done by country and includes a series of covariates capturing women's family situation (number and age of children, marital status), socio-economic profile (education and financial situation) and views about gender roles. In a second stage, and in the situation for which the number of cases is sufficient, we also carry out a regression analysis on the pooled dataset and include a series of country dummies to assess the extent to which country-level differences remain after controlling for individual-level differences. In all these analyses, population weights have been applied to ensure nationally representative results. The version 4.1 of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) dataset has been used for all the analyses.

4. Results

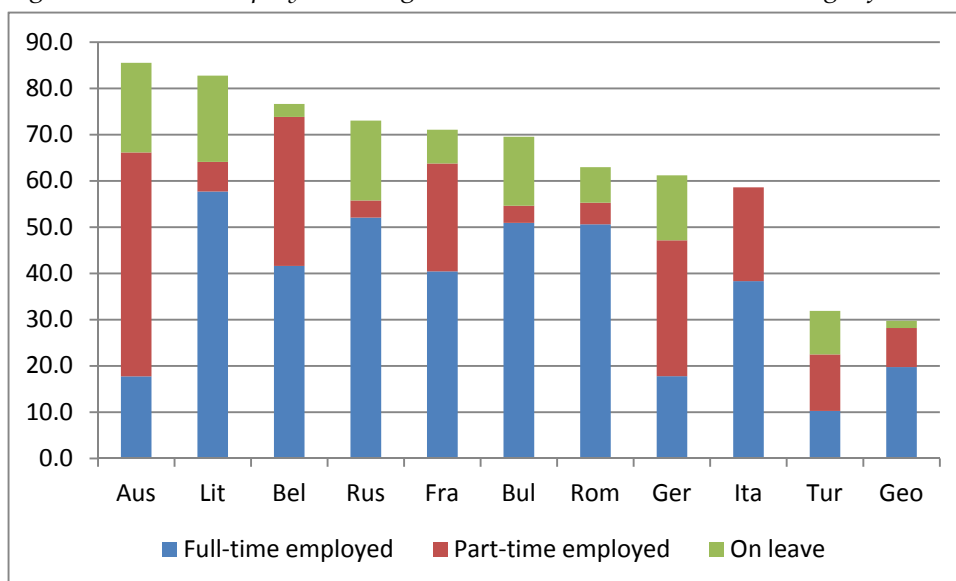
4.1 *The employment status of mothers*

Across the 11 samples represented in Figure 1, an average of 65 percent of mothers were in the labour force at the time of the survey.¹¹ This includes 36 percent who were full-time employed, 18 percent part-time employed and 11 percent on maternity or parental leave.¹² This average, however, hides very large variations across countries. As such, only three countries (Austria, Belgium and Lithuania) exceeded the EU target of 75 percent. At the other end of the spectrum, one finds Georgia and the sample of Turkish-German mothers with barely 30 percent in the labour force.

¹¹ This average does not take into account the actual population size of each sample. It is simply an average across the mean value of each of the 11 samples. As such, Germany is represented twice in that average.

¹² We counted mothers on leave as being part of the labour force. This is in line with the Eurostat guidelines, according to which people on maternity leave should always be considered in employment. However, according to these guidelines, people in full-time parental leave should be treated as cases of long-term absence from work and thus as being in the labour force only if the total absence from work exceeds three months and if the individuals continue to receive at least 50% of the wage or salary from their employer (European Commission, 2003, pp. 12-13). In our analysis, we consider all mothers on leave as being part of the labour force. Compared with Eurostat, we may therefore slightly over-estimate the percentage of mothers in the labour force.

Figure 1. Percent employed among mothers with children under the age of 12



Aus (Austria); Bel (Belgium); Bul (Bulgaria); Fra (France); Geo (Georgia); Ger (Germany); Ita (Italy); Lit (Lithuania); Rom (Romania); Rus (Russia); Tur (Turkish-German sample)

Source: GGP data (own calculations).

The category of women on leave also varies widely across countries: it is much larger in countries having in place maternity and parental leave of longer duration. For example in Austria, where parental leave of two years is available, almost 20 percent of mothers with children were on leave at the time of the survey. This figure even exceeds that of mothers in full-time employment in Austria. In contrast, in Belgium, France, Georgia and Romania, less than 10 percent of mothers were on leave.

Large differences are also observed regarding the prevalence of full-time and part-time employment. In particular, it is worth noting the case of Austria and Germany, where the percentage of mothers working part-time exceeds that of mothers working full-time. In contrast, the percentage of mothers working part-time is relatively small in the Eastern European countries.

What these statistics clearly indicate is not only that the labour market is structured differently in the different countries, but also that there is a large untapped percentage of mothers who are not in the labour force. It is remarkable that in only four of the ten countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation) the percentage of mothers working full-time at the time of the survey exceeded 50 percent.

4.2 The case of stay-at-home mothers

While stay-at-home mothers may nowadays be perceived in most countries as a more traditional group, they nonetheless continue to represent 25 percent of all mothers with children under the age of 12 on average. They even represent more than half of all mothers in Georgia and likewise Turkish-German mothers. In contrast, they form a much smaller group, less than 10 percent, in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, and Lithuania. In the case of Bulgaria, however, we should mention that the actual percentage of stay-at-home mothers is likely much larger than what our data suggest. As argued by

Hofacker, Stoilova and Riebling (2012), a non-negligible percentage of women in Bulgaria are likely to have declared themselves as being unemployed rather than homemakers in order to be eligible for public social assistance.

Who are these stay-at-home mothers? Based on the literature, we expect them to be on average more conservative and to have a lower level of education. As seen in Table 2, this is what we observe in most countries. On average, stay-at-home mothers – in comparison with full-time employed mothers – tend to have a slightly larger number of children, to be more likely to have a pre-school child at home, to hold traditional views regarding gender roles and to have a lower level of education.¹³ However, it is also important to point out that in some countries 20 to 30 percent of stay-at-home mothers have a high level of education. This is for example the case for 20 percent of them in Belgium. Thus, although mothers with a low level of education are over-represented among the group of homemakers, this group also includes highly educated mothers.

Table 2. Characteristics of homemakers (among mothers with children under 12) (weighted)

	Aus	Bel	Bul	Fra	Geo	Ger	Ita	Lit	Rom	Rus	Tur
Age	35.69	37.97	29.84	35.03	30.55	35.02	35.46	33.26	30.13	29.41	31.62
Number of kids (average)	2.14	2.16	1.63	2.18	1.91	1.96	1.70	1.80	1.79	1.53	2.08
Child age 0-4 (proportion yes)	0.56	0.44	0.50	0.58	0.54	0.52	0.51	0.40	0.52	0.59	0.58
With partner (proportion yes)	0.91	0.94	0.97	0.88	0.96	0.92	0.96	0.86	0.96	0.87	0.93
Good income (proportion)	0.55	0.54	0.16	0.38	0.17	0.54	n/a	0.44	0.04	0.11	0.31
Non-traditional view (average score)	2.49	2.66	2.19	2.51	2.11	2.61	n/a	2.28	2.70	2.16	1.92
High education (proportion)	0.09	0.21	0.12	0.20	0.23	0.15	0.03	0.09	0.01	0.33	0.02
N of cases (unweighted) ¹⁾	159	88	76	195	632	379	424	92	337	225	556
Homemakers (as % of total)	9.7	9.8	4.0	15.6	51.4	28.8	36.2	9.2	32.0	16.9	60.7

n/a: not available

¹⁾ Number of cases valid after listwise deletion.

¹³ Based on an ANOVA analysis contrasting the socio-demographic profile of mothers in full-time employment, homemakers and mothers on leave (results not reported here).

As to their previous work experience, data in Table 3 show that the majority of stay-at-home mothers held a job prior to becoming a homemaker. The percentages vary between a minimum of 29 percent in Georgia to a maximum of 81 percent in Germany. The contrast between the figure for the whole of Germany (81 percent) and for the subsample of Turkish-German mothers (29 percent) is notable, suggesting the presence of more traditional views among the group of immigrant women. On average, the group of stay-at-home mothers have moreover been in this situation for around 7 to 8 years.

Table 3. Work-related characteristics of homemakers (among mothers with children under 12)

	Aus	Bel	Bul	Fra	Geo	Ger	Ita	Lit	Rom	Rus	Tur
Satisfaction with status (average score)	7.3	7.9	5.9	7.4	5.3	6.9	7.2	6.0	5.1	5.9	7.7
Whether or not had a job before (% yes)	86.3	60.0	46.1	66.2	29.3	81.1	50.7	61.9	34.2	60.9	39.1
Number of years since becoming a homemaker (average)	7.8	10.1	6.7	8.4	8.8	8.6	n/a	8.9	8.9	6.1	10.0
<i>Reasons for not being employed (percent) ¹⁾</i>											
Work-related	6.8	22.6	23.1	33.8	33.5	10.8	25.7	20.9	44.5	15.5	10.0
Marriage & family	4.3	14.8	11.4	12.7	29.6	8.2	12.0	9.7	10.7	12.5	29.8
Childbirth/children	75.7	46.9	59.3	35.1	28.3	71.6	52.3	60.4	34.6	52.6	51.6
Other	13.3	15.8	6.2	18.4	8.6	9.4	10.0	8.9	10.2	19.5	8.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Intention to take up a job (percent)</i>											
Definitively not	27.2	42.0	14.1	38.4	24.3	28.2	20.0	10.2	11.7	14.0	38.8
Probably not	15.6	18.7	19.4	8.8	19.8	21.1	28.9	26.1	10.9	19.5	18.5
Probably yes	31.6	27.5	43.0	24.7	34.0	23.5	37.1	49.9	33.3	43.2	26.5
Definitively yes	25.6	11.9	23.5	28.1	22.0	27.2	14.0	13.8	44.2	23.3	16.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N (unweighted) ²⁾	159	87	74	195	632	354	411	91	337	224	525

¹⁾ The question was only asked of those who had held a job before (the sample size is consequently smaller). The different reasons include the following: (a) work-related (having been laid off, mandatory retirement, end of contract or end of temporary job, and sale or closure of own or family business); (b) marriage and family (marriage, need to look after old, sick, disabled persons; partner/spouse's job required moving to another place); (c) childbirth/children (childbirth/need to look after children); (d) other (studying, military or social service, own illness or disability, wanted to retire or live off private means).

²⁾ Number of cases for the variable 'Intention to take up a job'.

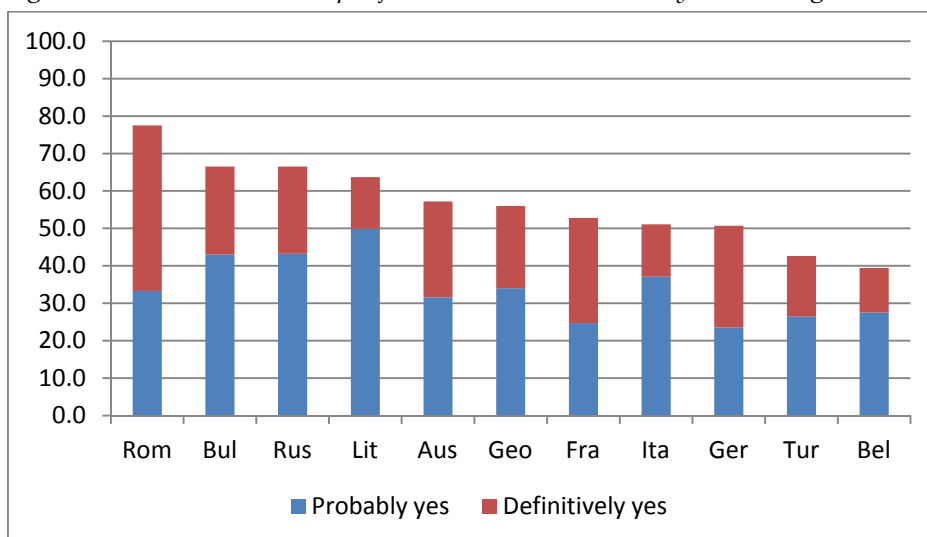
Stay-at-home mothers were also asked about their degree of satisfaction with their status as homemakers on a scale ranging from 0 (not satisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). On average, across the 11 samples, the score on this variable is 6.6. Interestingly, this score is lower than that of full-time employed mothers, whose corresponding figure is 7.4 (data not shown). The gap appears to be particularly large in Bulgaria and Romania,

where stay-at-home mothers expressed a much lower level of satisfaction compared with their employed counterparts.

In the survey, homemakers were also asked about their reasons for not being employed. The results show that in most countries, family-related motives appear to be the main reason this group of women were not employed. On average, 52 percent of homemakers stated childbirth or the need to look after children as the reason for not being employed and 14 percent mentioned other family reasons (including marriage). In Georgia and in the Turkish-German sample, the percentage of homemakers saying that marriage and the family (excluding children) were the reasons for not being employed was higher (around 30 percent), thus reflecting more conservative attitudes to gender roles and family obligations. Work-related reasons were also important in explaining why this group of mothers were not employed. Reasons such as being laid off and reaching the end of a contract or the end of a temporary job were stated by 23 percent of mothers on average. Work-related reasons were reported by a higher share in Romania.

Finally, stay-at-home mothers were also asked to indicate their intention to take up a job within the next three years. The results appear in Table 3 and in Figure 2. If we combine the categories of 'definitively yes' and 'probably yes', we find that on average, 57 percent of stay-at-home mothers intend to take up a job. The figures are particularly low in Belgium and in the Turkish-German sample (around 40 percent). In contrast, more than 60 percent of homemakers in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation said that they were intending to take up a job. In fact, a clear regional gap is visible, with homemakers in Eastern Europe exhibiting a much higher percentage intending to take up a job in the next three years than their Western European counterparts. As discussed later, this east/west divide partly stems from the socio-demographic composition of homemakers in each country, along with greater economic needs in Eastern Europe.

Figure 2. Intention to take up a job within the next three years among homemakers (percent)



Source: GGP data (own calculations).

To better understand the factors influencing the intention to take up a job, we carried out a series of logistic regressions (see Table 4). The results vary across countries but overall having held a job before is the key determinant of mothers' intention to take up a paid job in the next three years. Across the different samples, having held a job before increases the odds of intending to take up a job by a factor of two or even more. Thus for these women, their homemaker status was likely a temporary situation although one that kept them out of the labour force for a relatively long period of time (as seen above on average for 6 to 7 years). Holding a non-traditional view about gender roles and having a higher level of education were also found to increase the odds of intending to take up a paid job. Surprisingly, the number and age of the children did not have a statistically significant impact on the intention to take up a job once we control for other individual characteristics.

In an additional analysis (not reported here), we replaced the variable 'whether or not held a job before' with the actual number of years as homemaker. This variable was also highly significant in reducing the odds of intending to take up a job in the future. In other words, the longer one has been out of the labour market, the less likely one is intending to take up a job in the future. This makes sense since being out of the labour force may reduce women's attachment to the labour market as well as their feelings of competence and related skills.

The previous analysis, by country, allows for the examination of the role of individual characteristics. To better understand cross-national differences, we carry out an additional analysis on the pooled data (across the 11 samples). The idea is to see the extent to which cross-national differences in the socio-demographic composition of the samples explain the observed cross-national differences in mothers' intention to take up a paid job. The results appear in the last column of Table 4.

For the purpose of this analysis, Italy was used as a reference category: a country known for holding particularly traditional attitudes towards gender roles. The results are highly interesting, as they show that differences in the socio-demographic composition of the samples explain in great part the observed cross-national differences. Moreover, the values of the country dummies show that after controlling for individual-level differences, the country differences appear to be totally changed – with homemakers in Western Europe, rather than Eastern Europe, exhibiting higher odds of intending to take up a job. Because we are relying here on country dummies, as opposed to specific variables (as could be done in a multi-level model), we can only speculate as to the reasons that may explain this finding.¹⁴

¹⁴ It should be stressed here that the values of the country dummies and the respective ranking of countries are totally dependent on the country used as a reference category.

Table 4. Logistic regression of intention to take up a job for homemakers (among mothers with children under 12) (odd ratios) ¹⁾

	Aus	Bel	Bul	Fra	Geo	Ger	Ita	Lit	Rom	Rus	Tur	Pooled ⁴⁾
Age	0.97	0.91**	1.02	0.98	0.97*	0.95**	0.91***	0.84***	0.91***	0.91***	0.99	0.95***
Number of kids	0.68	1.21	0.46	1.09	1.00	0.85	0.79	0.73	0.93	0.97	0.87	0.93*
Child age 0-4 (1=yes)	2.04	1.08	5.24	1.52	0.85	0.85	1.03	0.81	1.02	0.48*	1.16	1.01
With partner (1=yes)	0.40	0.19	0.52	0.48	0.62	0.33**	0.80	0.22*	0.86	1.07	0.15***	.44***
Good income (1=yes)	0.58	0.44	0.37	0.65	0.97	0.53**	n/a	0.86	0.30**	0.28***	0.87	--
Non-traditional view (score)	1.57*	0.91	1.58	1.13	0.87	1.52***	n/a	0.98	1.05	1.43*	1.35***	--
High education (1=yes)	1.97	0.89	5.58	1.40	3.99***	2.12**	0.48	2.77	0.38	1.42	2.10	2.02***
Held a job before (1=yes)	2.14	6.99***	5.77**	0.95	2.63***	2.51***	1.75***	4.39***	9.32***	3.52***	2.28***	2.47***

Table 4. (cont'd)

Austria													1.03
Belgium													1.06
Bulgaria													.94**
France													1.02*
Georgia													.99
Germany													1.03
Italy													1.00 (ref)
Lithuania													1.02
Romania													.96**
Russia													.98
Turkish-German													1.06*
N (unweighted) ²⁾	154	85	74	195	632	352	411	91	337	215	514	3,146	
Pseudo R-square ³⁾	0.14	0.18	0.28	0.07	0.11	0.14	0.08	0.24	0.13	0.12	0.12	0.11	

n/a: not available

Statistical significance: * at the 0.10 level; ** at the 0.05 level; *** at the 0.01 level

¹⁾ The model also includes a constant (not reported here).

²⁾ Valid number of cases after listwise deletion.

³⁾ Cox & Snell pseudo R-square.

⁴⁾ To include Italy in the analysis, a restricted number of covariates had to be used. However, the results are very similar when the full set of covariates (excluding Italy) are included.

There are two such possible reasons. On the one hand, better support for working mothers including better childcare provision and greater support for gender equality may explain why homemakers in Western Europe exhibit higher odds of intending to take up a job. In particular, better childcare provision may explain why the value of the country dummy for France is statistically higher than that for Italy (no statistically significant differences are observed for the other Western European countries, compared with Italy, with the exception of the Turkish-German sample – see below). On the other hand, less support for working mothers and fewer job opportunities may be reducing the intention for homemakers to take up a job. This may for instance explain why the value of the country dummy for Bulgaria and Romania is significantly lower than that for Italy. In other words, once we control for cross-national differences in the socio-demographic composition of the samples, a combination of structural (e.g. job opportunity) and institutional factors (e.g. childcare) may explain the remaining cross-national differences in the intention of homemakers to take up a job in the next three years. The result for the Turkish-German sample is somewhat puzzling, however, suggesting that these homemakers, after controlling for their individual-level values, economic needs and family responsibilities, exhibit a higher (as opposed to a lower) likelihood of intending to take up a job in the future. Exposure to more gender-egalitarian values in the host country could be part of the explanation. Such an explanation would be in line with other studies showing that the family-forming behaviour of migrants and non-migrants in some European countries are very similar once one controls for their socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. de Valk, 2008).

4.3 *The case of mothers on leave*

The other subgroup of women of particular importance for policy-makers is that of mothers on maternity or parental leave. As mentioned above, across all 11 samples this group represents around 11 percent, with higher figures observed in countries with longer leave entitlements.

Table 5 summarizes the key demographic characteristics of this subgroup. Compared with mothers who are full-time employed, mothers on leave are obviously more likely to have a young child at home. But they are also younger on average, more likely to be partnered, and in some countries are slightly more traditional in their view regarding gender roles. Mothers on leave also appear to be highly satisfied with their leave, with a score of 8.2 (the comparable score for full-time employed mothers was 7.4).

The interest with this subgroup of mothers is obviously whether or not they intend to return to work at the end of their leave. Because eligibility for maternity and parental leave is restricted to women who were employed prior to childbirth in most countries, we expected most of them to have been in the labour force prior to childbirth and therefore to have a relatively high level of attachment to the labour market. We also expect most of them to have the opportunity to return to work at the end of their leave, since most maternity and parental leave schemes include job protection. What our data show, however, is that across the eight samples for which the sample size is large enough for statistical analysis, only around 75 percent of mothers who are currently on leave said that they have the opportunity to resume work at the end of their leave (see Table 6). We do not have further information about the reasons for not having the opportunity to resume work for the other 25 percent. It is likely that mothers who do not have the opportunity to resume work include some mothers who did not work

prior to childbirth or mothers who did not qualify for leave, for example because the period of employment prior to childbirth was too short.

Table 5. Characteristics of mothers on leave (among those with children under 12) ¹⁾

	Aus	Bul	Fra	Ger	Lit	Rom	Rus	Tur
Age	30.23	27.73	32.00	30.00	27.75	29.27	27.52	28.88
Number of kids (average)	1.70	1.67	2.32	1.56	1.61	1.51	1.46	1.67
Child age 0-4 (proportion yes)	0.97	0.98	1.00	0.98	0.93	1.00	0.96	0.99
With partner (proportion yes)	0.90	0.96	0.95	0.86	0.86	0.97	0.89	0.94
Good income (proportion)	0.67	0.08	0.37	0.60	0.49	0.16	0.11	0.23
Non-traditional view (average score)	3.02	2.21	3.02	3.28	2.35	2.79	2.41	2.38
High education (proportion)	0.15	0.29	0.27	0.16	0.29	0.22	0.48	0.01
N of cases (unweighted)	320	281	103	198	182	77	217	74
On leave (as % of total)	19.4	14.9	7.3	14.0	18.6	7.7	17.3	9.4

* The sample sizes for Belgium and Georgia were too small for any analysis. Italy did not include being on leave as one of the employment status categories.

Table 6. Work-related characteristics of mothers on leave (among those with children under 12)

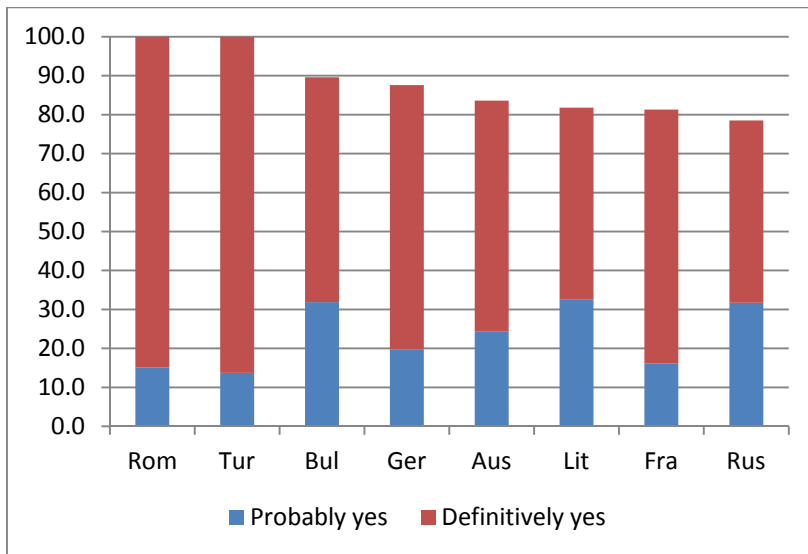
	Aus	Bul	Fra	Ger	Lit	Rom	Rus	Tur
Satisfaction with status	8.9	7.8	8.8	8.3	8.2	8.9	6.5	7.8
Duration of leave (average in months)	13.3	12.4	16.5	22.9	14.0	10.8	15.9	23.0
Receiving cash benefits	99.1	80.2	86.3	86.0	90.7	94.5	61.4	87.5
Opportunity to resume work (% yes)	64.3	63.0	73.7	89.1	72.0	90.8	68.5	67.8
<i>Intention to resume work (and has the opportunity to do so)</i>								
Definitively not	8.3	5.8	9.8	3.6	6.7	0.0	9.3	0.0
Probably not	8.0	4.7	8.9	8.9	11.5	0.0	12.2	0.0
Probably yes	24.4	31.9	16.1	19.7	32.6	15.1	31.7	13.7
Definitively yes	59.2	57.7	65.2	67.9	49.2	84.9	46.8	86.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N (weighted)	216.0	174.0	66.0	91.0	97.0	70.0	156.0	35.0
<i>Would like to resume work (but does not have the opportunity)</i>								
Yes	62.7	37.6	25.7	66.5	37.2	s	18.6	s
No	20.1	36.9	70.5	33.5	35.1	s	68.6	s
Unsure	17.2	25.4	3.7	0.0	27.7	s	12.8	s
Total	100	100	100	100	100	s	100	s
N (weighted)	105	99	23	38	39	s	74	s

s: the sample size was too small for statistical analysis.

Among mothers who said that they had the opportunity to return to work, the very large majority (88 percent) of them said that they were definitively or probably intending to resume work at the end of their leave. The figures vary between a minimum of 79 percent in the Russian Federation and a maximum of 100 percent in Romania and in the Turkish-German sample (although in the later case, the sample

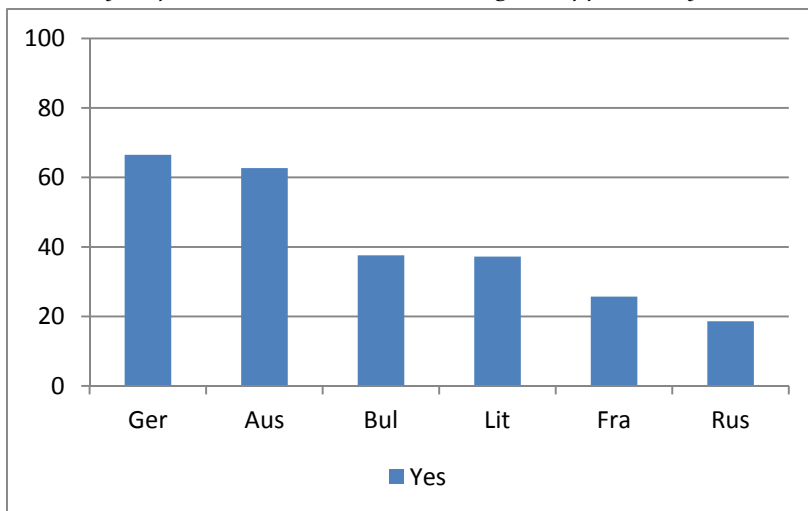
size is quite small) (Figure 3a). Thus, and to a large extent, this group of mothers demonstrates a high level of attachment to the labour market. For the other group of mothers, those not having the opportunity to return to work, the results are much more mixed, with only 41 percent of them saying that they would like to resume work if they had the opportunity. The figures are particularly low in the Russian Federation and much higher in Austria and Germany (Figure 3b). Still, this leaves around 60 percent of mothers who said that they would not return to work or who were unsure. This subgroup thus exhibits much less attachment to the labour market.

Figure 3a. Intention to resume work after the end of their leave among mothers currently on maternity or parental leave and having the opportunity to return to work (percent)



Source: GGP data (own calculations).

Figure 3b. Intention to resume work after the end of their leave among mothers currently on maternity or parental leave and not having the opportunity to return to work (percent) ¹⁾



¹⁾ For this subgroup of mothers on leave, respondents could only answer yes, no or unsure.

Source: GGP data (own calculations).

To further understand the factors influencing the intention to resume work, a series of logistic regressions were carried out. Results appear in Table 7 for six samples (Romania and the Turkish-German samples are not included because all women said they were intending to resume work). The analysis is restricted to women who said that they had the opportunity to resume work at the end of their leave since much less is known about their counterparts (who said that they did not have such an opportunity). Overall, the results are not very revealing with very few statistically significant variables. In other words, the variables included in our model do not explain very well why some mothers intend to resume work at the end of their leave and others do not. There are various possible reasons to explain this result. Among them, it may be that the intention to resume work is better explained by other variables not included in our model. For example, our model does not include an indication of whether or not the mother intends to have another child in the future, which may possibly influence her decision to resume or not her work. But it could also be that the sample size is too small (especially in three of the six samples) to reveal statistically significant associations. Alternatively, it may be that the percentage of mothers not intending to resume work at the end of their leave is too rare an event (on average 16 percent in the six samples included in the regression analysis) to lend itself to that type of analysis.¹⁵

Table 7. Logistic regression of intention to resume work at the end of their leave for mothers on maternity or parental leave (among mothers with children under 12. who said that they had the opportunity to resume work at the end of their leave) (odd ratios) ¹⁾

	Aus	Bul	Fra	Ger	Lit	Rus
Age	1.05	0.98	0.99	1.07	0.99	0.99
Number of kids	1.13	1.29	0.35*	0.62	1.22	1.38
With partner (1=yes)	0.00	1.84	10.75	0.00	0.00	0.52
Good income (1=yes)	1.11	0.25*	4.53	1.00	1.18	1.66
Non-traditional view (score)	1.67*	0.92	1.65	1.31	1.63	0.83
High education (1=yes)	2.66	1.26	0.76	3.12	1.32	0.71
Receives cash benefits	0.00	0.65	0.32	1.44	0.64	0.45
Duration of leave	1.00	1.01	1.11	0.99	1.01	1.02
N (unweighted) ²⁾	213	167	66	87	95	142
Pseudo R-square ³⁾	0.096	0.085	0.205	0.072	0.054	0.057

n/a: not available

Statistical significance: * at the 0.10 level; ** at the 0.05 level; *** at the 0.01 level

¹⁾ The model also includes a constant (not reported here).

²⁾ Valid number of cases after listwise deletion.

³⁾ Cox & Snell pseudo R-square.

¹⁵ We did not carry out a pooled regression analysis for the subgroup of mothers on leave since we were left with only six samples, three of which having a relatively small number of cases. As such, there was a risk that the results would be dominated by a small number of samples and could not reveal much in terms of country-level differences.

5. Discussion, conclusion and policy implications

Across Europe, the labour force participation of women still lags behind that of men especially when children are present. The employment rate of mothers has increased rapidly in all countries but barriers to the combination of work and family life persist. The aim of this paper is to better understand some of these barriers by focusing on two specific subgroups of mothers: those who are homemakers (stay-at-home mothers) and those who are currently on maternity or parental leave. Altogether these two subgroups comprise a third of all mothers with children under the age of 12. The interest is been thus to examine their intention to return to work and to understand the related determinants. In particular, we are interested in the role of the national context (including governmental support for families) and in the role of personal characteristics (including work vs. family preferences).

With regard to first subgroup, the stay-at-home mothers, we found large variations across countries in its prevalence, ranging from less than 10 percent in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria and Lithuania, to more than 45 percent in Georgia and in the Turkish-German sample. Yet what is important to know about this subgroup of mothers is that the large majority of them had held a job prior to becoming a homemaker (56 percent on average). Furthermore, most of them had discontinued employment because of family-related reasons. At the same time, we also saw that these stay-at-home mothers tended to hold more traditional views regarding gender roles than other mothers. Overall, what we found was that only two-thirds of these stay-at-home mothers, on average, said that they were intending to take up a job within the next three years (34 percent answered 'probably yes' and 23 percent 'definitively yes'). From a policy perspective these are very low figures. Moreover, the results clearly showed that the longer mothers stayed out of the labour market, the lower the likelihood that they would intend to take up a job. As such, this is a special group of mothers, who may require more support if the political aim is to encourage them to return to the labour market at an earlier stage. A perceived lack of support for working mothers, combined with limited family-friendly work opportunities and more traditional views regarding gender roles, appear to be keeping these women out of the labour force. When it comes to cross-national differences, however, our analyses revealed that a large part of the cross-national differences in homemakers' intention to take up a job in the future could be explained by individual-level differences. The findings for the pooled regression analysis were particularly interesting and suggestive of the determining influence of some macro-level characteristics, including the institutional and normative support for working mothers and the economic context (e.g. job opportunities).

The second subgroup of mothers, those who are currently on maternity or parental leave, is quite different from the first one. For one thing, these are mothers who nearly all have a very young child at home (more so than the stay-at-home mothers). By being on leave, it would be easy to assume that they were all employed until very recently and that they all had the opportunity to return to work at the end of their leave. Our results nonetheless showed that only 75 percent of all the mothers on leave said that they had the opportunity to return to work at the end of their leave. We can only speculate as to the reasons why not all of them have the opportunity to do so. This includes not having been eligible for the maternity or parental leave and therefore having no job to return to, not having held a job before and/or not being technically on

leave but having declared so simply because having a very young child at home. Clearly this dimension would call for more investigation. Among the mothers who said that they had the opportunity to return to work, the very large majority said that they were intending to do so at the end of their leave (88 percent). This was in line with what we expected, since most of these women would have had a job prior to their maternity or parental leave and therefore would have faced a high opportunity cost if they had decided not to go back to the labour market at the end of their leave. As to the mothers who said that they did not have the opportunity to return to work, only about 41 percent of them said that they would like to resume work if they could. Again, this appears to be a special subgroup of mothers – a group perhaps not that dissimilar to the stay-at-home one and mothers who may deserve special attention if the political aim is to encourage them to return to the labour market.

In contrast to other studies, however, we did not find evidence of an impact of the duration or cash benefits of the leave scheme on mothers' intention to resume work. An explanation may be that we measured these variables at the individual level, while a multi-level approach would have been needed to properly test the influence of maternity and parental leave entitlements and benefits on mothers' intention to return to work.

There are two major policy implications of these findings. First, our results clearly highlighted the importance of personal and societal norms regarding gender roles in influencing mothers' labour market decisions. In particular, our analyses suggested that while being homemakers was a temporary situation for some women and in some countries, for others it was considered a more permanent situation. This lends support to the Preference Theory in suggesting the presence of a subgroup of mothers with more traditional views and a lower inclination to join the labour market. And while it may be difficult to change personal and societal norms, the availability of quality and affordable childcare may be an important factor in influencing women's views regarding non-parental care.

Second, our findings also pointed to the importance of education. In particular, women with a lower level of education appear to be over-represented among the group of stay-at-home mothers. Furthermore, the results of the logistic regression also showed a lower level of education as reducing the likelihood of intending to return to work among mothers on leave and among homemakers. The results, however, were not statistically significant in all countries. And while providing more educational opportunities for women may be a political objective on its own, it may also have a broader impact on work intention through its link with income and views about gender roles, which in turn are also related to work intention.

The results presented in this paper are based on data from the Generations and Gender Survey. One of the main advantages of this source of data is the availability of recent information from a large number of countries, including Central and Eastern European countries – a geographical area often neglected in the literature. On the other hand, the currently available data do not provide good coverage of the different types of welfare state regimes. Our analysis included no country belonging to the liberal or social-democratic welfare regime, and only one southern European country (Italy). In the years ahead, the coverage of GGS will be extended to other countries. One other limitation of our data resided in their cross-sectional nature, therefore preventing us

from examining the dynamics of employment and especially movements in and out of the labour force. In particular, it is important to keep in mind that mothers who were in employment at the time of the survey may have had interrupted spells of employment in the past and/or may have some in the future. Several countries have since carried out a second wave of the survey and will consequently allow in the future for a more dynamic analysis of the barriers to employment.

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Appendix

Table A1. Survey information ¹⁾

Country	Number of respondents	Age range	Year of data collection	Overall response rate (%)
Austria	5,000	18-45	2008-09	64.6
Belgium	7,163	18-83	2009-10	n/a
Bulgaria	12,914	18-79	2004-05	78.2
France	10,079	18-79	2005	71.7
Georgia	10,000	18-19	2006	78.2
Germany	10,017	18-79	2005	55.4
Turkish-German ²⁾	4,045	18-79	2006	n/a
Italy	9,570	18-64	2004	n/a
Lithuania	10,036	18-79	2006	42.6
Romania	11,986	18-79	2005-06	n/a
Russian Federation	11,261	18-79	2004	49.7

n/a: not available

¹⁾ All these surveys are part of the Generations and Gender Programme. They are the first wave data.

²⁾ The GGS German survey included an over-sample of Turkish migrants. This sample is analyzed separately in the paper.

ABOUT NEUJOBS

“Creating and adapting jobs in Europe in the context of a socio-ecological transition”

NEUJOBS is a research project financed by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme. Its objective is to analyse likely future developments in the European labour market(s), in view of four major transitions that will impact employment - particularly certain sectors of the labour force and the economy - and European societies in general. What are these transitions? The first is the **socio-ecological transition**: a comprehensive change in the patterns of social organisation and culture, production and consumption that will drive humanity beyond the current industrial model towards a more sustainable future. The second is the **societal transition**, produced by a combination of population ageing, low fertility rates, changing family structures, urbanisation and growing female employment. The third transition concerns **new territorial dynamics** and the balance between agglomeration and dispersion forces. The fourth is a **skills (upgrading)** transition and its likely consequences for employment and (in)equality.

Research Areas

NEUJOBS consists of 23 work packages organised in six groups:

- **Group 1** provides a conceptualisation of the **socio-ecological transition** that constitutes the basis for the other work packages.
- **Group 2** considers in detail the main drivers for change and the resulting relevant policies. Regarding the drivers we analyse the discourse on **job quality**, **educational** needs, changes in the organisation of production and in the employment structure. Regarding relevant policies, research in this group assesses the impact of changes in **family composition**, the effect of **labour relations** and the issue of financing transition in an era of budget constraints. The regional dimension is taken into account, also in relation to **migration** flows.
- **Group 3** models economic and employment development on the basis of the inputs provided in the previous work packages.
- **Group 4** examines possible employment trends in key sectors of the economy in the light of the transition processes: energy, health care and goods/services for the **ageing** population, **care services**, housing and transport.
- **Group 5** focuses on impact groups, namely those vital for employment growth in the EU: **women**, the **elderly**, immigrants and **Roma**.
- **Group 6** is composed of transversal work packages: implications of NEUJOBS findings for EU policy-making, dissemination, management and coordination.

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