

Families in nonstandard employment: the role of family policies to mitigate their risks (o.i.d.)

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Abstract: This contribution examines the potential role of family policy, defined here as paid parental leave, public childcare support, family cash and tax benefits and adaptable/flexible working hours, for families whose members have nonstandard employment relations. In this article, nonstandard employment relations are understood as those that have high insecurity and uncertainty, which sometime also have limited social and economic benefits and a lack of legal protection (Kalleberg, 2018). This contribution is specifically directed to understand if and how family policies can act as a buffer for the advocated negative effect of precariousness on wellbeing. This includes the objectives of family policies and their support to the working families' wellbeing. With this in mind, the empirical evidence linking nonstandard work and wellbeing within the context of the family is examined and whether the literature has paid attention to the supporting role of family policies. Rich evidence is found but only when examining separate parts, i.e., the link between nonstandard work and wellbeing within the context of the family, and the link between family policy and wellbeing. However, the overall picture, where family policies buffer the effects of nonstandard employment relations on wellbeing, is missing in the literature. How these seemingly separate strands of literature can inform and enforce each other were then further analysed, both from a theoretical point of view but also by concrete examples of family policies from four European countries.

Keywords: nonstandard employment, family policies, family wellbeing, interdisciplinarity, parental leave, wellbeing, work-life balance.

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Introduction

Structural changes in the economic situation of western societies, such as globalisation and technological advancement have given rise to changes in the nature of employment relations. Both governments and companies have invested in increasing the flexibility of the labour market to keep with the increasingly competitive world economy (Kalleberg, 2018b). These new flexible forms of employment are characterised by 'high levels of job insecurity and an overall erosion of workers' employment and working conditions' (Benach et al., 2014: 229). This can be linked to the concept of nonstandard employment which, in some societies or economic sectors, refers to a loss of social protection and other benefits that traditionally were linked to the Standard Employment Relationship (hereafter SER), i.e., full-time work on an open-ended contract, under supervision of the employer and with extensive employee benefits and rights (Kalleberg, 2018b). In the literature, there is a tendency to equate these nonstandard employment forms with one or more type of precariousness which may have negative effects on people's wellbeing. The erosion of the SER has resulted in a shift of 'the risks and responsibility of social insurance programs to individuals and families' (Kalleberg, 2018a: 242).

Recently, research interests in the field of nonstandard work and wellbeing have started to take into account a family perspective. The wellbeing of people often relies on the need to provide or receive care, and care is inextricably related to the family context, whether we talk about parents caring for their children or children caring for their old age parents. Changing labour market structures have an impact on the capacity of families to be providers of care (Lewis and Guillari 2005). In this respect, some scholars emphasize that the insecurity that relates to nonstandard work could be detrimental for the wellbeing of the family members (Carreri 2015; Mauno, Cheng and Lim, 2017; Scherer 2009), while others emphasize that flexible jobs could facilitate the balance

between work and care (Lyonette 2015; Yerkes et al 2010). Moreover, although nonstandard employment increases risks to employees, specific policies might mitigate these risks (Kalleberg, 2018a). However, the literature that links nonstandard work to wellbeing of the family mostly analyzes this relationship independently from the institutional context where it takes place (Carreri 2015; Hanappi et al., 2017; Mauno et al. 2017). Additionally, as research often includes a single country, little knowledge is gained from comparative perspective on how the different institutional contexts perform. This article sketches the role of the institutional context, demonstrating how social policies may contribute to the wellbeing of families whose members are in nonstandard employment. It does so in a country-comparative setting, thus accounting for variations in welfare arrangements, labour market institutions, or cultural profiles of specific countries, to explain variations in the experience of nonstandard work (Kalleberg, 2018a). To shed light on how to conceptualise this relationship, this article focuses on family policies for employees with different forms of nonstandard employment relationships.

The article proposes to use the concept of decommodification to link literature about ‘nonstandard work’ and ‘wellbeing within the family context’. Decommodification refers to “the extent to which social welfare policies allow individuals and families to uphold a normal and socially acceptable standard of living regardless of their performance in the labour market” (Guo and Gilbert, 2010: 307). As in some institution contexts or countries the accessibility and adequacy of family policies depends on the type of employment relationship of the worker, the concept of decommodification may be used to assess to what degree this institutional context may play a role in mitigating the risks of nonstandard workers who have started a family. For example, eligibility criteria to access social policies may have important implications for the wellbeing of families, if their members are in nonstandard employment relationships.

The emphasis on the family context and more specifically on the role of the family policies for the wellbeing of families confronted with nonstandard jobs directly positions this contribution within a more general debate that surrounds the trends towards de-familialism in Western countries. With the increasing (part-time) labour participation of women, the household demographics have changed, and alongside the policies that want to accommodate the reconciliation of work with family life, such as flexible working hours. The responsibility of care has subsequently shifted from the family to the governments (Leitner 2003), and resulted in a context where governments provided certain services to families in order to ensure a balance between work and care. The policies that influence the division and balance between paid and unpaid work are often referred to as either work-life policies or family policies. A general comparison of the literature available shows that both concepts are used simultaneously and have overlapping meanings in terms of working hour flexibility and fiscal benefits for care for a child or other family members. This article chooses to focus on family policies, to which the reconciliation of work and care strategies belong to.

Subsequently, the focus of this contribution is the relationship between nonstandard work and wellbeing within the family context and specifically by taking into account the role of family policy. Rubery et al. (2018) argued that social security might play a role in mitigating risks of non-standard workers, for instance by decoupling the employment status from the entitlement to social security. However, after extracting information from the three strands of literature, little is known about which particular policies may mitigate risks of which particular groups of nonstandard workers, including families whose are in nonstandard employment. As yet, there are still major holes in the protection net, also for non-standard workers and self-employed wanting to access family benefits, while progress is slow, non-linear and includes contradictory trends (Rubery et

al., 2018; Spasova et al., 2017). In order to gain more insight into the precise role of particular policies nonstandard employment relationships, the focus of this article is on the role of family policies to support families who earn their income via a range of nonstandard employment contracts or via self-employment.

Methodology

In order to understand the relationship between nonstandard employment, family policy and wellbeing, this research takes an interdisciplinary approach. Such interdisciplinarity contributes to understanding the interaction between the different individual-life domains, i.e., work, family, and wellbeing, and the context where this interaction takes place, i.e., different institutional and policy contexts. The overarching endeavour within this article is to uncover under which conditions and where nonstandard work could have negative outcomes in terms of the wellbeing of family members.

This article discusses the potential of expanding the literature on the connection between nonstandard work, family policies and family wellbeing as depicted in Figure 1.

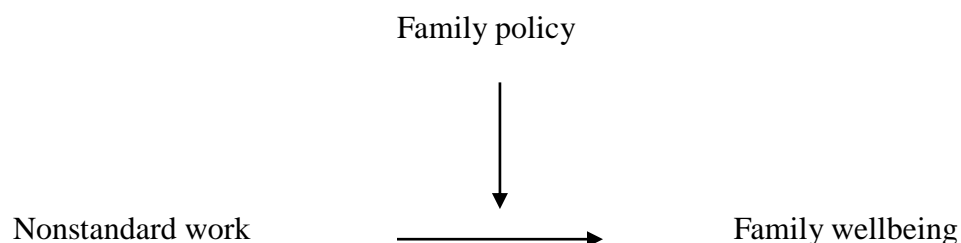


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationships between nonstandard work and family wellbeing

It explores this issue from two sources: a literature review and a case study based on four European countries. The literature review allows to explore existing theoretical and empirical work that focuses on the relationships at interest, while the case studies allow to describe and make more tangible these relationships within specific institutional contexts. The remaining of the paper is organized as follows. First, it presents a description of the analytical approach, in order to clarify the selection of the literature for the review, as well as the arguments that were used to support the selection of the four countries in the case study section. Second, a brief review of the empirical literature that covered (at least partially) our conceptual model is provided. The decision to take into consideration literature that only partially covers the conceptual model was motivated by the fact that no empirical research was found that specifically took into account the moderating role of family policies for the wellbeing of families in nonstandard employment relations. Third, addressing this missing link in the literature, a theoretical exploration of the mechanisms that could underlie the relationship between nonstandard employment and wellbeing within the context of the family is provided as well as a discussion of the role of family policies for the wellbeing of the family but also for the specific case of families in nonstandard employment relations. Fourth, four case studies are discussed by examining in detail how the access to family policies relates to the certain labour market position of families, in order to emphasize the differences in the level of decommodification of family policies between the four countries. As emphasized in this contribution, the level of decommodification of family policies is proposed to be a possible link between nonstandard work and family wellbeing.

Analytical model

Selection for literature review

The literature review encompassed different literature strands, e.g., literature encompassing the rise of nonstandard work, literature linking nonstandard work and wellbeing, literature on work-family balance, and literature examining family policy. From this ensemble, the commonalities and intersections between work done by scholars within each field were extracted, as well as highlights of debates and the scarce empirical work that touched on these topics.

Literature combining all three aspects of this model is scarce. The selection for the current literature review encompasses articles written by social science scholars, political science scholars and behavioural science scholars, discussing the concept of nonstandard work, family wellbeing and family policies. The search took a broad approach to all three aspects. Nonstandard employment included search terms such as fixed-term employment, flex(ible) work, nonstandard work or employment, precariousness and job insecurity. Family policy was defined in such a way to involve different types of arrangements, including family friendly policies, (public) child care facilities, parental leave schemes, flexible working hours and work-life reconciliation schemes. The keywords used for that search match the aforementioned concepts accordingly. Wellbeing was searched using the key words: gender equality, work-life balance, depression, work-life reconciliation, life satisfaction, mental wellbeing, marriage and financial wellbeing. Here again the search was broad, in order to attain as much information on different kinds of wellbeing. The search also often combined aspects such as: welfare state and wellbeing, family policies and wellbeing. The general search for this analysis led to diverse outcomes when it comes to both type of employment relation, family policy and wellbeing. For the sake of the argument made in this article, all of the three aspects of the conceptual model have a widespread definition, encompassing

quantitative as well as qualitative research. Moreover, most articles focus on Europe or single European countries, but there are a few articles that use the OECD database (Glass, Simon and Anderson, 2016; Guo and Gilbert 2010). While some articles were found through the Tilburg University or Web of Science databases, others were found through snowballing from the text or bibliography of articles in the database.

Selection of the case studies

The four countries were selected based on high and low accessibility to family benefits and/or maternity and paternity benefits of nonstandard workers and self-employed. The eligibility of the family policies often have a threshold based on a certain amount of working hours or a contribution period (Spasova et al., 2017), excluding or partially excluding certain people from access to the benefits due to their contractual arrangement or employment relationship. That is to say, in some countries, someone with an open-ended employment contract has better access to family policies than someone with a non-standard employment contract or working as a self-employed (see table 1).

	Non-standard workers		Self-employed	
	Family benefits	Maternity/paternity cash benefits and benefits in kind	Family benefits	Maternity/paternity cash benefits and benefits in kind
BE	Full	Full	Full	Full
NL	Full	Full	Full	Partial
SE	Full	Full	Full	Full
IT	Partial	Full	Partial	Full

FR	Full	Full/Partial	Full	Partial
PT	Full	Full	Partial	Full

Source: Spasova et al., 2017

Table 1. Eligibility criteria for various family benefits based on the type of labour market participation

For the case study three different models and four corresponding countries have been selected from the study of national policies (EU Commission 2017). Two of the countries selected have high eligibility of family policies for all types of contracts (Sweden/Belgium); i.e. anyone with any type of employment relationship has full access to social protection. One other country selected had partial/medium access to the benefits of family policies, excluding self-employed arrangements while including non-standard contracts (Netherlands). The last country has a partial/medium eligibility of family policies where the benefits solely rely on the participation in the labour market, indicating a low access to social protection (Italy).

A literature review on the relationship between nonstandard employment, family policies, and family wellbeing

Generally, scholars focus on three types of inquiries: first, a focus on family policies and wellbeing within different welfare state regimes and its effects on specific social groups, second, a focus on precariousness (often entailing nonstandard work schedules) and its impact on family wellbeing, and third, a focus on the link between nonstandard work, family policies and poverty. All three will be outlined below.

Family policies and welfare state regimes

There is some difference in the literature when it comes to how the family policies are operationalised. On the one hand literature uses the welfare-state regime classifications as an indirect way of operationalizing family policies (Guo and Gilbert 2010). Some authors rely on the regime classification of Esping-Andersen's (1990) (Kang, 2018), or make a typology based on the political situation in the country (Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo, van der Wel and Dragano, 2014). Other literature suggests a more direct approach and uses indexes based on the specific family policies (Scherer 2009). Apart from the general effect of family policies (operationalised by welfare state regimes) on family wellbeing, the wellbeing of men and women in relation to family policies was discussed separately.

According to Lunau et al. (2014) the Nordic states have the most generous family policy system, whereas the Southern European states rely more on the family for providing care. Moreover, in the Anglo-Saxon and Bismarckian regimes, the task of providing care relies on part-time working women (Lunau et al. 2014). Because generous family policies, such as parental leave or support, provide opportunities for parents to reconcile their work and care, Lunau et al. (2014) expected differences in work-life balance between different welfare state regimes. Lunau et al. (2014) address the importance of welfare state regimes for explaining work-life balance: Scandinavian respondents were most positive about their work-life balance and those from Southern and Eastern Europe the least. These effects were stronger for men than for women. The probability of reporting a poor work-life balance for men was higher in all other welfare state regimes, compared to the Scandinavian regime, whereas the probability of reporting poor work-life balance between women was similar across different welfare states. This could imply that family policies (as part of welfare state regimes) have a higher influence on men.

Going beyond the welfare state regime types, Scherer (2009) uses a direct indicator to operationalise family policies. The author uses the indicator ‘welfare state intervention’ (which combines childcare, parental leave and the size of the public sector) to study the wellbeing of the working population with a temporary contract in 16 European countries. The author found a direct positive effect of welfare state intervention on 7 different indicators of wellbeing (work-family balance, family planning, life satisfaction, satisfaction with household income and health). In addition, the author tested the moderating effect of welfare state intervention on the relationship between job insecurity and wellbeing: a significant effect was present only for life satisfaction, indicating that a higher welfare state intervention has a stronger positive effect on the life satisfaction of those with an insecure job compared to their employed counterparts.

What these examples show is that there is not much consensus for whom the family policies and welfare regimes matter and to what extent there is a discussion of families whose members are in nonstandard employment relationships, only the ‘new situation of women’ i.e. women entering massively into the labour market, which can arguably be framed as nonstandard in some ways. However, the only mention of nonstandard employment in Kang’s (2018) research follows the dominant rhetoric of family policies promotion of part-time working schedules through the work/family reconciliation policies, which women tend to take up more frequently than men, elaborated upon below.

Childcare availability, work-life balance policies and family wellbeing

Some papers focus on the availability of childcare or work-life balance policies as a way to increase family or child wellbeing by decreasing participation in nonstandard or part-time jobs often with unsocial working hours. In the context of the family, especially when children are present, non-

standard and part-time employment is proposed as a strategy of combining work and care. That is to say, working nonstandard hours such as evenings or weekends can be a solution to combining work and childcare for parents of preschool children (Bünning and Pollmann-Schult 2016). This strategy to combine work and care is called in the literature ‘split-shift parenting’ or ‘tag-team parenting’ (Bünning and Pollmann-Schult 2016). However, having a parent with a nonstandard job with unsocial working hours was negatively linked to child wellbeing through increased stress and lower involvement at home from parents in nonstandard jobs (Bünning and Pollmann-Schult 2016). The authors then continued to link participation in nonstandard jobs to family policy, including scrutinizing if the availability of childcare decreases participation in nonstandard jobs. They indeed found this to be the case. What this example shows is that there is a connection between the availability of childcare and a decrease in participation in nonstandard jobs. The participation of parents in nonstandard jobs could be the reason why governments would facilitate the availability of childcare. In the case of childcare and nonstandard jobs, there is arguably a connection between the two.

In some cases, part-time employment is mentioned as a solution for parents, especially mothers, because it gives the flexibility to combine work with care (Lyonette 2015). This example departs from a dominant rhetoric of traditional gendered roles of women as caregivers because they are the ones that use this opportunity more frequently than men (Connell 2005; Lewis and Guillari 2005). This also explains the findings by Beham, Drobnič, Präg, Baierl and Eckner (2018) that women in a marginal part-time jobs were more satisfied with their work-life balance compared to men, whereas men were more satisfied being in full-time employment. There was however no indication to the link between the wellbeing of the child and the part-time employment of its carers.

In countries with alternative work-life balance policies (e.g. Scandinavian countries), mothers are more likely to work full-time (Lyonette 2015). Lyonette (2015) finds childcare relevant in this respect: if childcare is expensive, mothers are more likely to withdraw from the labour market and this effect seems to be stronger for women with a low income. The construction of work and care has also been argued to have become a ‘double burden’ for women because they are now subjected to paid and unpaid work while often struggling reconciling the two (Lewis and Guillari 2005; Busby 2018: 109).

Nonstandard work, family policies and poverty after childbirth

According to Kalleberg’s (2018b) understanding, the access to social and economic benefits plays a role in people’s wellbeing. The lack of these benefits can be linked to poverty, more specifically after childbirth. Three studies were found that focus on parental leave, poverty and nonstandard work (Barbieri and Bozzon, 2016; Kil, Wood and Neels, 2018; Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis, 2015). The risk of entering poverty after childbirth for households with nonstandard employment contracts (‘single earner couples on fixed-term contracts or couples in which both are unemployed’) differs across social welfare state regimes (Barbieri and Bozzon, p. 106). In Central and Northern Europe, where family benefits are more extensive, the link between nonstandard work and poverty after childbirth is less strong compared to Southern Europe. This is not surprising given the different eligibility criteria for family policies across different countries in Europe (see table 1). In Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands, parental leave is dependent on types of employment, whereas in Sweden there is a universal leave for mothers (Kil et al 2018). For example, in Belgium, parents may only apply for parental leave should if they have worked with the current employer for 12 out of 15 months, and have a child younger than the age of 12 (Kil et al 2018). The age limit of 12

enables parents to divide their parental leave over different periods during their child's early years. The requisite of tenure limits the access to parental leave for parents who have just started working for a new employer. This might disadvantage workers with fixed-term employment contracts, as they are more likely to have a lower job tenure.

Apart from differences between welfare-state regimes, there are also differences in family types in the reduction of poverty: Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis (2015) take a specific focus on single parents, who have a higher risk of falling into poverty compared to dual parent families, because single parent naturally lack the opportunity to combine financial resources. Moreover, they are often time-restricted for employment due to not being able to fall back on a partner for childcare. Because in financial sense, single parents face more risks, family policies could compensate for the financial constraints posed by parenthood more than for coupled parents (Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis, 2015). The authors discovered differences in the relationship between parental leave for different family types: a longer duration of parental leave reduced poverty more strongly among single-parent families compared to two-parent families. This effect was most strongly among single mothers, facilitating their employment. Given the link between parental leave policies and reduced poverty, especially among single mothers (Barbieri and Bozzon 2016; Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis, 2015), general access to parental leave will prove important for improving the (financial) situation of those in nonstandard employment relations.

This brief review of the literature shows that there is not much research done on a combined conceptual model of how family policies moderate the wellbeing of families in nonstandard employment. There are however some intersections between these topics which is elaborated upon in further detail below.

Mechanisms linking nonstandard work and family wellbeing

This section addresses three aspects of family wellbeing in relation to nonstandard employment: family planning, family functioning and work-life balance. Starting with the research evidence on family planning, Kalleberg argues that 'job and economic insecurity have made futures more uncertain, make people wary of and less able to afford, making major commitments such as getting married and having children' (2018b: 142). This starts with moving out of the parental house: being in an insecure job implies having an unstable income that makes it difficult for young people to save enough money to move out (Kalleberg, 2018b). Since leaving the parental home is essential for starting a family, other transitions such as childbirth or marriage are postponed as well. This ties in with the societal expectation that getting married is accompanied by a set of life-style standards, such as buying a house or a car, which are attained as well by having a stable income and a secure job (Lim, 2017). Having a stable income is relevant as well for entering parenthood, because parenthood is associated with numerous costs, such as food, health care or clothing (Pollmann-Schult, 2018). Finally, due to the increasing competition and rising instability on the job market, time and energy that could be invested in family planning is currently increasingly spent on maintaining a position in the labour market (Hanappi et al., 2017).

Job insecurity can also affect the functioning life of the family in multiple ways, which are described by Mauno et al (2017). First of all, the stress associated with anticipated job loss may directly lead to marital problems or decreased energy for family activities or indirectly through decreased occupational health (Mauno et al., 2017; Scherer, 2009). Moreover, anticipated job loss can cause economic stress, which can lead to anxiety or distress and in turn leads to more angry and less sympathetic behaviour towards the partner (Blom, Kraaykamp and Verbakel, 2019). In addition, the spillover theory argues that 'life events and experiences in different domains affect

each other' (Mauno et al., 2017: 719). Individuals take experiences from home to work and vice versa: if work experiences are negative, they can have a negative influence on the home life, and the other way around. Lastly, worries about job insecurity can be transferred onto the partner or children and negatively affect the wellbeing of family members because of their emotional attachment to this person (Mauno et al., 2017).

Finally, the insecure working hours that are associated with being in a precarious job can have a negative association with work-life balance. People with temporary contracts usually work less hours (which can influence work-life balance positively), but they often have less control over working times, which includes 'unsocial working hours' and changes in the schedule on short notice (Scherer, 2009). This leads to a higher time strain for employees in nonstandard employment and will lead them to feel that they do not have the time or energy to spend at home. Furthermore, Carreri (2015) argues that "the increased precariousness of work conditions, due to the spread of temporary contracts with lower employment and unemployment benefits, and the higher flexibility in work performance tend to confer greater responsibility upon individuals to negotiate the boundaries between work and family and to make sense of work and care activities" (2015: 3). On the one hand, the trend towards flexible working hours blurs the boundaries between work and home, which could lead to decreased work-life balance. On the other hand, flexible work is argued to be the most efficient strategy to reconcile work and family life (Yerkes et al. 2010).

In conclusion, there are several ways in which nonstandard employment can be linked to family wellbeing. Job insecurity plays an important role in this respect, because it delays family planning and leads to stress and anxiety among family members. Furthermore, nonstandard or unclear working schedules, associated with nonstandard jobs can lead to a decreased balance

between work and family life. The next section discusses another aspect of our analytical model: the link between family policies and family wellbeing.

Family policies and family wellbeing

Family policy is described in the literature as something that is a part of this conjunction of social/public policy spectrum. However, the literature on family policies does not clarify whether they are distinct from social policies or public policies, making it difficult to get a clear idea as to which the authors refer to. A notable exception is Leitner (2003) who distinguishes social policies as policies designed for public wellbeing, categorising family policies as one component of the social policy spectrum.

The objectives of the family policy strategies, on the other hand, have been taken together by Thévenon and Neyer (2014) where they argue that '[...] family policies involve a range of broad objectives: reconciling work and family responsibilities, mobilizing female labour supply and promoting gender equality as well as ensuring the financial sustainability of social protection systems, combating child and family poverty, promoting child development and generally enhancing child wellbeing throughout the early life course' (2014: 2-3). This is indeed a broad range of objectives, but as this article is mainly concerned with the connection between family in nonstandard employment and their wellbeing, the focus is on the strategies that involve the subjective wellbeing of families in nonstandard employment relationships. One of the objectives that all families face, whether they are in nonstandard employment or not, is the provision of care in combination with work.

Reconciliation of work and care

As stressed by Lewis (2006b) care 'lies at the interstices of relationships between the family, market and the state, between paid and unpaid work, formal and informal provision' (2006b: 106). As this excerpt shows, care is at the center of the triangular formation of family, market and state. Families in nonstandard employment relations are indeed no different from families with open ended working arrangements when it comes to care. Whether family policies make a difference to their wellbeing when in nonstandard employment relations is the question.

Surprisingly, some scholars argue that care is not at the heart of family policies. Lewis (2006a) points out that care has never been the main focus for policy making but rather harness other goals such as increasing female employment to stimulate competition and economic growth rather than the wellbeing of families in particular. As has become apparent from the literature and statistical evidence, there is a decline of nuclear families (breadwinner model) with the increase of women's labour market participation (dual earner model) (Lewis and Guillari 2005). The current pattern of the labour market has developed, as argued in the sections above, into a flexible and more transitional labour market. This changes the situation for families in nonstandard employment, as the main objective of family policies, according to Lewis (2006a), revolves around labour market participation.

Families in nonstandard employment relations often deal with job insecurity and lack of benefits (Dengate 2016). An empirical study on work and care strategies used by European family's shows that the availability of flexible working hours makes it easier for families to combine caring responsibilities with paid work (Larsen 2004). However, in some cases families in nonstandard employment do not have access to flexible hours (Scherer, 2009; Dengate 2016) which then could exclude them from the benefits of the family policies. Furthermore, low wage

jobs and jobs defined within the feminine sector like part-time service and clerical work, most likely do not offer any benefits for family wellbeing such as sick leave, paid leave, and childcare assistance. In other words, the flexibility of working hours or the fiscal assistance is limited within certain sectors where women are most prominently the workforce (Dengate 2016). As such, families in nonstandard employment (and especially women) do not have access to the same possibility to combine work and care as families in SER, which can affect their family wellbeing.

What is at the centre in this section is the centrality of the interdependence and reciprocity of care for the wellbeing of families and how family policies are framed towards balancing care with work for a specific type of family. Families in nonstandard employment seem to be lacking the benefits when it comes to eligibility.

Country examples

This section illustrates, by way of case studies, how decommodification of the family policies are particularly relevant when examining the wellbeing of families in nonstandard employment because it potentially excludes these families from accessing benefits and services. These benefits and services could allow for a better reconciliation of work and care by decreasing financial hardship, and allow for a long term planning in terms of family planning for example. Here four examples were drawn mainly from the European Social Policy Network Thematic Report on access to social protection of people working as self-employed or on non-standard contracts of 2017 to illustrate the availability of such benefits and services (Spasova et al., 2017).

Working definitions

In the report written by the European Social Policy Network (2017), the access to social protection for people working on non-standard contracts and as self-employed in 35 European countries was examined. Family policies were included in the social protection section, and defined as *maternity/paternity cash benefits* and *family benefits*. In most of these countries, maternity/paternity benefit are linked to the participation in gainful employment, which means also nonstandard workers and self-employed are covered, the latter group either compulsorily or in some cases via voluntarily opt-in (Spasova et al., 2017: 34). These entitlements can according to the report sometimes be financed by general taxation. The report does however not specify which conditions are used in each country or criteria, only whether the individuals that reside to the aforementioned excerpt have access to some sort of maternity/paternity cash benefits. Regarding family benefits, most of the 35 countries have universal payments (tax-financed) which do not depend on the employment status, although in some countries specific types of workers are excluded, for instance temporary agency workers or workers who have a zero hours contract (2017: 41). Next to that, it must also be noted that the reports do not include the consequences of nonstandard jobs on people's wellbeing, it only addresses the access to social protection for people working in nonstandard contracts and self-employment in Europe. The next sections take a closer look the four case countries.

Sweden

Maternity/paternity cash benefits are framed to include all groups of the Swedish labour market, irrespective of forms of employment (Nelson et al. 2017: 9). Services for pregnant women vary from pregnancy benefits (which can be taken up to 50 days for pregnant women in physically

demanding occupations) and maternity benefits (which are paid 11 days until the estimated date of birth and are paid at the level of sickness benefit). The ESPN report does make it clear that these services are available for all pregnant women in employed or self-employed positions. Both parents receive parental leave up to 480 days per child “(390 days of earnings-related compensation and 90 days of the minimum benefit)” (Nelson et al. 2017: 10). The maximum of paid parental leave is 942 SEK (96.45 EUR) per day. There are however some limitations to the maximum paid parental leave. In order to be eligible for this compensation the yearly income must at least have been “82,100 SEK (8,634 EUR) for a continuous period of 240 days prior to the birth of the child” (Nelson et al. 2017: 10). People in non-standard employment or self-employment may in some cases have difficulty reaching this threshold. So although everyone is entitled to the benefits, not everyone is eligible.

As for **family benefits**, Sweden has extensive arrangements available to parents. Next to the universal tax-free child benefits there is a universal large family supplement, which is paid for the second and any subsequent child (Nelson et al. 2017: 12). Family benefits in Sweden include child-care employed, self-employed or studying, and all Swedish municipalities are obliged to offer childcare for children aged 1 to 13 (Nelson et al. 2017: 12). The national report of Sweden shows a broad spectrum of allowances for parents in all types of employment.

Belgium

In Belgium, there is a difference between self-employed and employed women regarding **maternity leave**. Since January 1 2017, the maternity leave for self-employed women was raised from 8 to 12 weeks, whereas employed women can take up a maximum of 15 weeks of maternity leave (De Wispelaere and Pacolet, 2017). Moreover, women on maternity leave are exempted from

paying social security. Regarding payment during maternity leave, employees receive 82 percent of their earnings in the first month (Merla, Mortelmans and Fusulier, 2018). After the first month, it decreases to 75 percent of the earnings with a maximum of 135 euros per day. Moreover, self-employed women receive 458 euros per week (Merla et al. 2018). All female employees or those who receive unemployment benefits are entitled to leave with maternal benefits (Merla et al. 2018). On the other hand, for fathers there is a different arrangement: those with a (non)standard contract have the right to 10 days of paternity leave, but this right is not present for self-employed and unemployed fathers (De Wispelaere and Pacolet, 2017).

As for **family benefits**, these are available to salaried persons, self-employed persons and civil servants are all entitled. This is a monthly flat-rate benefit, adjusted depending on the age of the child (De Wispelaere and Pacolet, 2017). Supplements may be granted under special conditions (e.g. self-employed under bankruptcy scheme). However, from 2019 on, parents receive a flat-rate benefit supplemented with an additional amount depending on the age of the child and a ‘school’ bonus (Groeipakket, www.fons.be/voor-2019). There is hardly any distinction based on contract type: part-time, fixed-term, agency, casual, seasonal and flexi workers and paid trainees receive full benefits, although student workers and apprentices receive none (De Wispelaere and Pacolet, 2017).

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, 16 weeks of **maternity leave** are standard for both employees and self-employed (Mevissen, Oostveen and Visee 2017: 12). Both groups receive a minimum wage contribution during this period, but through different organisations. As for **paternity leave**, men only receive 5 days of paid leave after the child is born. There is no difference between permanent

contracts, fixed-term contracts and part-time contracts in terms of parental leave. The requirements all depend on the amounts of hour a person works. To receive the maximum benefit (equal to minimum wage) the self-employed worker has to have worked for at least 1,225 hours in the calendar year before the pregnancy (Mevisen, Oostveen and Visee, 2017: 12). Fewer hours worked lead to a lower benefit. The Netherlands changed its parental leave scheme, abolishing the demand of needing to have a tenure of at least one year with the same employer, before being able to request parental leave.

For **family benefits** there is universal coverage, independent of employment status. The general child benefit act is the main source and is available to everyone, regardless of income or employment type. The access to the family benefits is dependent on the income of the parents. Child care allowance is dependent on the number of hours worked by the parent that works the least and the household income. Finally, parents with one or more child(ren) can apply for a tax benefit, depending on the income of the lowest-earning partner (Mevisen, Oostveen and Visee, 2017: 25). As such there is an indication that the Dutch workers have social protection regardless of their employment.

Italy

Maternity/paternity cash benefits are categorised as cases of healthcare which is theoretically universal for all workers regardless of employment status. In practice there is however a difference in terms of access to public services for nonstandard workers and self-employed persons. (Jessoula, Pavolini and Strati 2017). Local Italian authorities apply strict criteria when it comes to ensuring that certain profiles of household have priority access to child care. In the report the priority households are described as “dual-earner households with full-time employees on open-ended

contracts are more likely to have priority access to public childcare” (Jessoula, Pavolini and Strati 2017: 9). The reasons why these households have a priority relates to their perceived need to reconcile work and family life. Another reason for the priority of these households stems from their capacity to make higher co-payments, which in retrospect reduces the costs for local authorities (Jessoula, Pavolini and Strati 2017: 9). Irrespective of employment status, in terms of benefits it is the worker’s right to abstain from work for 5 months before and after childbirth. This amounts to 80% of the overall salaried personnel, provided that the workers has paid contributions for at least 3 months in the previous year (Jessoula, Pavolini and Strati 2017: 18).

In terms of **family benefits**, a general family allowance is provided to a two-parent household with children under 18 years of age which may come up to 137.50 euro per month (Jessoula, Pavolini and Strati 2017: 13). This scheme is not available for people in self-employed positions. There are other schemes available such as contribution-based family allowances which are granted to self-employed workers. These allowances are considered low in relation to the general family benefits. More support is provided to households with four or more children with low annual income. These benefits are available irrespective of employment status (Jessoula, Pavolini and Strati 2017: 13). In the latter schemes, tax deduction (with 950 euros per child a year as basic deduction) is also taken into consideration. The deduction however decreases in line with the increase of the annual income of the household. What these example show is that the self-employed people and workers with nonstandard contracts do potentially have to cope with more social risks than the full-time workers due to the inadequate social protection coverage.

Conclusion

Kalleberg (2018) stressed the need to examine the rise of nonstandard employment and its impact on wellbeing. This article takes up this challenge and looks specifically at families in nonstandard employment relations. Due to the changes in the labour market, the number of insecure employees (and thus also the number of families that rely on the income of these insecure employees) has grown. The question is if and how family policies can act as a buffer for the advocated negative effect of nonstandard employment relationships on wellbeing. However, most of the literature only analyse parts of this question, for instance looking at the wellbeing of nonstandard workers, without taking into account the effects of policies. According to the authors within the fields of nonstandard work, the amount of remuneration associated with having a precarious occupation can lead to several issues of material deprivation such as lack of access to healthcare, child poverty, and poor living conditions, to name a few. This is not addressed in the literature on family policies, where no attention is paid to the issues of nonstandard employment, family policies and family wellbeing.

In conceptual set-ups of studies there is thus a lack of attention to the insecure situation of families and their wellbeing through family policies. In the case studies, looking at how some family policies are regulated in four countries, it seems that most of the time nonstandard workers do have access to maternity and paternity leave; parental leave; and a range of family benefits, including child care and parental leave. In these countries most parents have access to these benefits, regardless of their employment relationship. Sweden and the Netherlands seem to have the most inclusive systems, in this respect. There are some exception which should be noted, and it seems that especially self-employed have a less good access to family policies compared to workers who have an employment contract (whether fixed-term or open-ended).

For instance, in Belgium self-employed are not entitled to paternity leave, and maternity leave for self-employed women, although recently extended from 8 to 12 weeks, is still shorter than the 15 weeks employed women have. In addition, whereas family benefits are quite universal, student workers and apprentices are excluded. In Italy, the public child care is universal in its set-up, yet, in practice favours dual-earner households with full-time employees on open-ended contracts. Moreover, the general family allowance is not available for people in self-employed positions. However, even though most policies do not discriminate on employment relationship (even though self-employed have a less favourable position in some countries), the eligibility of the family policies could nevertheless make access to policies more difficult to nonstandard workers. Policies often have a threshold based on a certain amount of working hours or a contribution period (Spasova et al., 2017), which might be difficult for certain groups of nonstandard workers to obtain. The Dutch changes in the parental leave system has improved the access of workers with a fixed-term employment contract, by abolishing the requirement of a tenure of at least one year with the same employer.

For further research more thorough empirical analysis of how such policies affect family wellbeing is suggested, and in particular what kind of families are affected, which was subsequently not addressed in the literature. How does their reality look like and what kind of family policies could improve their lives and precarious situations? These questions are still left unanswered.

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