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Combining paid and informal care work in European societies

Paid work and informal care can be seen as independent, autonomous and separate fields of work and identity, but they could also be combined if we look at individual's economical activities over the life course and work history. In every day life paid work and informal work are combined and can not be separated into different spheres of life. Paid work and informal care work have their own institutions and institutional practices and are distributed to different individuals and groups of the population. The way and forms how combinations of work and care take place and influence on employment, social and welfare outcomes are very much shaped by institutional settings of each society.

One major objective of this paper is to describe how separate the fields of paid work and informal care work are. We will examine the combinations of main activity statuses during years 1995–2000 in EU countries. The ECHP -data enables to analyse monthly movements between main activity statuses.

The second objective is to explore how much the informal care work shapes the individuals life and career, possible access back to labour markets and how institutional differences (country effect) and gender affect on the length of care spells. People can combine voluntarily or involuntarily paid work, unemployment, household work, informal care work etc.

The third objective is to examine what kind of personal and social characteristics are specific to family caregivers and persons who succeed in combining the paid work and care work. Therefore it is interesting to explore how satisfied women and men are with incomes in different main activity statuses and are there differences between the societies.

On the base of our empirical results we wish that we can contribute the theoretical discourse on welfare and labour regimes and European employment systems. Widening the discourse from the market related work and regime discourse to the combinations of paid work and household and informal care work and regimes of formal and informal work, we will refine the national and institutional differences in European employment systems. We are interested in pondering upon how far, in which form, with which combinations and with what results would it be possible in Europe to bring forth the system of the combination of paid work, household and informal care work.

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