Dynamics of Gendered employment regimes in France and Germany over the last two decades: How Can They Be Explained?
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Introduction

For a long time, German society has been seen as an ideal type of conservative gender regime with a strong degree of ‘familiarization’, based on a traditional and non-egalitarian male breadwinner model in a conservative welfare state. However, over the last two decades the position of German women has dramatically changed in terms of access to employment, with a global employment rate much higher than that in France, and close to the EU average. At the same time, family policy has also been the subject of major reform carried out to improve the work and family life balance. With the objective of improved access to the labour market for women and a strategy of social investment in the field of the family, public policies have officially aimed at promoting the life conditions of women and have called into question the traditional model of social role sharing.

For its part, France has long been recognized in relevant literature as a modernized and original variant of the male breadwinner model, with higher activity rates for women as well as a comprehensive family policy which, despite its pro-natal objectives, aimed to guarantee a strong horizontal redistribution of income and an all-encompassing public system of childcare facilities. However, in recent years the employment of women in full-time equivalents has stagnated and family policy reforms have mainly
aimed at individualizing and increasing the flexibility of ‘choices’ available to parents, including encouraging withdrawals for mothers from the labour market.

Against this background, this chapter aims to analyse how gender regimes in France and Germany have changed over the past two decades and how these changes can be explained. In comparison with the usual conceptualization and content of the gender regime (Betzel 2007), this chapter uses a more restricted definition. I propose the notion of an employment gendered regime, which is conceived as a set of interdependent variables concerning, first, the situation of women/mothers on the labour market – here mainly the rates of employment and working time – which aim to grasp the financial autonomy of women in particular; second, the role of the state concerning the regulation of gender relations, mainly through the objectives and instruments of employment and family policies, which convey, reproduce and fuel lasting differences in the gendered division of work and family (Lemière 2014); and third, social norms regarding the prevailing familial arrangements in a society with a focus on the fertility behaviour of women in order to understand the prevailing tensions between work and family.

The chapter will first provide an overview of employment in both countries since 1945, especially over the last twenty years. Second, it will explore how women’s employment has grown in Germany and France and point out the role played by employment policy in each country. Third, the demographic context in both countries since 1945 will be analysed with a focus on the contrasting behaviour patterns of French and German women concerning fertility. In addition, on the basis of the inversion of the correlation between employment rates and fertility indicators within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries since the mid 1980s, the analysis will consider the reforms displayed in family policy in both countries over recent decades. Next, the chapter summarizes the main changes, with a focus on the activity of mothers and on familial configurations by employment status as a result of employment and fertility behaviours as well as predominant family social norms. Finally, the chapter aims to explain these changes by analysing the arguments made, the driving forces, as well as the actors at their root. The analysis mainly uses data from Eurostat (Labour Force Survey) and from the national accounts for long-term time series on employment and other data on employment, demography and the family from the OECD.
Women’s Activity and Employment in Germany and France since 1945

In Germany the growth of both total and women’s employment was strong at the beginning of the *Wirtschaftswunder*: from 1950 and 1962 the number of female employees increased by 2.3 million to reach 7.1 million. This growth was mainly due to part-time jobs for mothers, who looked for a supplementary income (von Oertzen 1999: 213). After this first period, the evolution of employment patterns in West Germany became more irregular due to stagnation in the 1960s and as a response to the first and second oil shocks. The employment of women aged fifteen to sixty-four, representing 37% of total numbers employed in the late 1950s, also stagnated between 1960 and 1975, before rising from 9.3 to 10.7 million from 1975 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Looking at the activity rates, the huge gap of forty points between men and women at the beginning of the 1960s was only reduced to thirty points at the end of the 1980s. We can therefore speak of a certain overall stagnation in West German society in relation to the increase in women’s employment, even if an upward trend emerged until the late 1970s, thanks to a new development phase of part-time work (Maier 1993).

![Chart 7.1 Total employment in Germany of persons aged fifteen to sixty-four years from 1959.](Image)

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus.
After the fall of the wall, the level of activity and employment of German women underwent profound transformations, which are still ongoing. The first increase took place at the turn of the century, but the real breakaway occurred up to 2005, with a spectacular rise of nine percentage points (from 59.6% to 68.8%) in just a few years; this leap was barely affected by the recession of 2009. Female employment increased by nearly 2.2 million between 2005 and 2013, a rise close to 14%.

In France, contrary to the received wisdom, we know from Maruani and Méron (2012: 31) that the share of women in the workforce followed ‘a chaotic curve and not a downward slope’ throughout the first half of the twentieth century, fluctuating between 34% and 40% (36% on the eve of World War I; see Marchand and Thelot 1991, 50). World War I had only a transitory impact. During the interwar period, France was a frontrunner among the developed countries. Only the change in registration in the status of family helpers in 1954 concealed this fact. Thus, the labour force behaviour of French women has to be considered in the very long term. The immediate post-war period marked a pause in female participation. Yet from the early 1960s onwards, the female participation rate gradually rose again: for the period 1962–68 alone, it increased from 40.5% to 43.1%. The push came mainly from women returning to work after pregnancy (Roux 1970).

From this point onwards, thanks to the dissemination of employed status in the services, women’s employment experienced structural

**Chart 7.2** Labour participation rates and employment rates by sex in Germany (1959–2012). Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus.
growth. According to the series on employment compiled by the Office for National Accounts (Les Comptes Nationaux),¹ the figures for male employment were the same in 2012 as in 1970. Since the male population aged between fifteen and sixty-four increased at the same time by more than 20%, this implies a decline in male employment rates of nearly fourteen percentage points since 1975. Overall, the rate of activity of women increased from 53% in 1975 to 67% in 2012, and the five million jobs created from 1970 to 2008 in France are all women’s jobs – an increase of two-thirds, in spite of the decrease in activity rates of young and older women.

How Has Women’s Employment Grown?

We begin with a comparison of the evolution and share of the overall volume of work in the economy to highlight the uniqueness of the German employment trajectory, before examining the consequences in terms of work time distribution, especially for women, in both countries. It is important to distinguish two clear periods in Germany. The first phase, from 1995 to 2005, was characterized by economic stagnation after the turn of the century. The second stage, from 2006 onwards, has been marked by strong economic growth only interrupted by the 2009 global recession. The volume of work in the economy, that is the number of hours worked, has more or less followed this trend, with a stagnation in

[Chart 7.3 Labour participation rates and employment rates by sex in France (1975–2012). Source: Insee, LFS.]
Chart 7.4 Variation of total employment by sex in France.
In the second part of the 1990s, a decrease (of 4%) from 2000 to 2005 and an upturn of 6% since then. Yet all in all, the volume of work in 2015 is only 2% higher than in 1995 and still has not returned to its level of 1992. In other words, the growth in the employment rates in Germany over the last two decades has been mainly due to a redistribution of almost the same volume of work between more workers. A look at the kinds of jobs created, differentiated by working time and sex, allows us to understand the gendered dimension of this development. From 1995 to 2015, male employment stagnated, with growth of a mere 1.6% over twenty years. Moreover, there are fewer male full-time jobs now than twenty years ago; half of the male jobs created between 2005 and 2015 were part-time. Of equal significance is the fact that women’s full-time employment stood at the same level in 2015 as it was twenty years ago. This means that the 3.7 million new jobs created between 1995 and 2015 are indeed the result of a balance between the destruction of more than one million full-time jobs – mainly male – and the creation of 4.8 million part-time jobs, three out of four of which are female jobs.²

This contrasts sharply with the development of the French labour market. The number of hours worked in the French economy grew almost continuously from 1995 to the onset of the financial and then the Eurozone crisis, yet it remained below its level of 2008 up to the end of 2015. At the same time, from 2008 to 2015, both the female employment rate and the global employment rate stagnated. Thus, the growth in

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**Chart 7.5** Global employment rate, female full-time equivalent employment rates (left-hand scale) and total number of hours worked in the economy (right-hand scale) in Germany.

Source: OECD and Eurostat.
employment of about 20% or 4.3 million new jobs took place before 2008. Two-thirds of this increase is due to female employment and two-thirds of these new jobs were full-time jobs. This corresponds with an increase of more than 25% in female full-time jobs. In sum, whereas 85% of new jobs in Germany over the last two decades were female part-time jobs, in France 50% of jobs created from 1995 to 2008 were female full-time jobs.

The role of female part-time jobs in the global employment dynamic in Germany can be better understood when compared with some other relevant European countries, with regards to the level and changes of the female Full-Time Equivalent Employment Rate (FTEER) and of the FTEER gap – that is, the difference between the male and female FTEER. Despite a rise of almost fifteen percentage points in ‘raw’ female employment rates since 1995 (ten points since 2005) and a decrease in the raw employment gap by nineteen percentage points over this period, the FTEER gap has reduced less in Germany than in France or the United Kingdom. In other words, German women’s FTEER has undergone an increase and reached a level that is in fact close to those of France and the UK and remains clearly below the Swedish one, which nonetheless has stagnated during the last decade.

A look at the variation in female employment by working time and age provides supplementary information on the relevant developments. In Germany, the global stagnation of full-time employment between 1995 and 2015 is the result of the creation of 1.2 million full-time jobs for women aged over fifty and a loss of 1.3 million full-time workplaces
for women under fifty. As concerns part-time employment, it is mainly the part-time work of women aged from twenty-five to forty-nine that explains the increase between 1995 and 2005. From 2006 onwards, the 3.5 million female part-time jobs created have been driven both by women over fifty years, which contributed to 50% of the total increase, and by women of childbearing age. Against this background, how can we explain the rise in employment rate of females aged twenty to forty-nine by twelve percentage points from 2005 to 2015, in spite of the stagnation of employment in this age category? The explanation lies in the changing shape of the age pyramid: the population aged twenty-five to forty-nine dropped over this period by 14%. On the other hand, the growth in employment of women aged fifty to sixty-four is the product of two factors: first, the rise of the population of this age category by seventeen percentage points, due to the first wave of German baby boomers (1955–65), who reached the age of fifty after 2005; and second, the surge in the employment rate by thirty percentage points over the overall period 1995–2015, partly because of the increase in the legal retirement age for women (Knuth 2014). This trend was mainly due to (highly) qualified women having children. Indeed, Germany belongs to the countries in which the duration of female working life (35.6 years in 2012, 31.2 in France) showed the most rapid rise from 2000 to 2014 (almost five years compared to 3.5 years in the EU, as well as in France).

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<td>France</td>
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<td>71.2</td>
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<td>51.5</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>−8.6</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>FTEER Male</td>
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<td>72.8</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>77.0</td>
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<td>46.1</td>
<td>47.6</td>
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<td>26.7</td>
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<td>FTEER Male</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>72.9</td>
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<td>61.0</td>
<td>62.9</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>52.1</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>32.5</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>−10.6</td>
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* 2014/2002
Source: OECD. See endnote 2.
In France, the 30% increase in full-time jobs between 1995 and 2015 is mainly due to women over fifty years of age. Three-quarters of the increase in part-time employment in the overall period is due to women over fifty, and one-quarter to women of childbearing age. There has been the same demographic push as in Germany, yet with the added temporal effect of an earlier baby boom wave in France, starting in 1942, and lasting longer than in Germany. The increase is primarily due to the arrival of the first wave of the baby boomers in the age group 55–59, for which the activity and employment rates are much higher than those in the 60–64 age group. The changes in activity and employment rates after 2008 reflect, in turn, the impact of recent pension reforms (Conseil d’Orientation des Retraités [COR] 2016). Concretely, the number of women aged fifty to sixty-four began to grow up to the mid 1990s and reached an increase of 50% over the overall period 1995–2015.

If the increase in older employees has played a key role in both countries, the growth of mothers’ employment rates in Germany over the last ten years has been the other main change. Indeed, Germany has been catching up with France. While in 2005 the employment rates of women with one or two children were still higher by respectively 7.6 and 11 percentage points in France than in Germany, in 2015 the employment rate of German mothers with one child had become higher by two points than in France. For mothers with two children, the difference in employment rates between the two countries has significantly reduced, despite a slight rise in France over the last ten years. The reduction has been the strongest for mothers with upper secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary, levels of qualification. The uniqueness of the change in Germany compared to other European countries has to be pointed out.

A look at both countries and what is known in the literature as the ‘(employment) motherhood penalty’ confirms these changes: in 2015 the penalty still remained higher in Germany (twenty-two points) than on average in Europe (fourteen points) or in France (12.7) – partly because of a still rising employment rate for childless women. However, this rate has declined by eleven percentage points in Germany over the last ten years, whereas it has more or less stagnated in France. A significant difference between the two countries has persisted: working mothers with young children tend to work part-time in Germany whereas a clear majority of them have full-time activity in France. Moreover, one-fifth of all female employees are in marginal part-time jobs with monthly earnings of up to €450.

Against this background, it is important to look at the causes of changes in part-time work from 2006 to 2015. In France, more than ever before, it is mainly (40%) the impossibility of finding a full-time job, particularly for young women, and the necessity to care for a child or a frail
Chart 7.7  Employment rates of mothers with children younger than six years: Germany has been catching up with France.

person (40%) that have remained the main reasons for working part-time. In Germany, in 2015 only around 10% (20% in 2006) of women working part-time claimed the impossibility of finding a full-time job, whereas the need to provide assistance to children or adults in need of support concerned one out of two women.

This observation is indicative of a more general issue regarding the global redistribution of working time in both national economies. If the weekly working time of all employees was almost identical in Germany and France in 2013 (34.5 hours, the EU-15 average), the number of hours usually worked per week in the main job by employees is much more polarized in Germany between men and women as well as between women themselves, and the situation has been worsening for years.

The standard of working time for French women has remained the 35–39-hour week, which concerns nearly one in two women; less than one-fifth of employees work more than forty hours per week, compared to one-third in Germany, while 20% of women work less than twenty hours. This trend towards an increased polarization of working time among German employees has been reinforced over the past years (when comparing the period 2012 to 2000), while in France the distribution of weekly working time among women has remained stable since the turn of the century.

The main explanation for this lies in the way in which working time has been regulated – or not – over the last two decades. In Germany, two major developments have occurred. The first is the derogations to the collective agreements at the industry level (Lallement 2012; Lehndorf 2014), and the second has to do with the kinds of new jobs created. With regards to the first issue, one can say that changes to the labour market, including the consequences of the Hartz laws, and the weakening of the unions’ bargaining power have resulted in only one out of two German employees (60% in the west and 48% in the east in 2012) being covered by a collective agreement, vis-à-vis two-thirds on average in the EU and 90% in France (Bispinck and Schulten 2009). This decrease in collective agreement coverage has caused a deregulation of working time, as in other European countries.

Second, the distribution of working time in Germany must be explained by the dissemination of atypical employment (short part-time, mini-jobs, Ich-AG7), seen mainly among women in the 1990s and immediately after the implementation of the Hartz legislation (Brenke 2011; Wanger 2006).

However, since 2006 the growth in employment has been triggered exclusively by (mainly part-time) jobs, which are subject to statutory social security. Moreover, in France in 2015 the standardized average annual working time of part-time workers (981 hours) amounted to 60%
of a full-time job – 6% above the European average – but only to 47% in Germany (Coe-Rexecode 2016).

Overall, the collective reduction of working time in France triggered by the thirty-five hours legislation, which has subsequently been challenged by conservative governments, has led to less dispersion of work
time in France; the main gap is between qualified and non-qualified workers (Lehndorff, Wagner, and Christine 2011). The collective reduction of working time has reduced the share of part-time jobs by accelerating the frequency of transitions from (long) part-time jobs to full-time jobs (Askenazy 2013). If a majority of parents reported a positive impact of the time reduction on their work/family balance, the inequalities between female wage earners have grown according to the management of working time at the business level (Letablier and Fagnani 2014).

Fertility and Demographic Growth since 1945

The magnitude of the decline in fertility rates has run parallel in both countries. In France, it reached 1.78 children per woman in the early 1990s, while starting at a higher initial level (2.9 in 1964), meaning that since 1945 French women have had ‘half a child’ more than German women on average (Pison 2012).

It should be noted that there has been a (new) increase in fertility rates in most OECD countries since 1995 (Luci and Thévenon 2011). France has had one of the strongest rises since the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) climbed from 1.78 to more than 2 in 2010. There has been also a slight increase in Germany after the lowest point in the early 1990s. Due to the construction of the TFR indicator and the timing of births now associated with prolonged education and delayed marriages (Lebras 1991), completed fertility has remained slightly higher: 2.1 in France and 1.6 in France and 1.6 in

Chart 7.9 Change in the total fertility rate.
Germany over the last past years. This birth revival has been mainly due to the policy of ‘reconciliation’ between work and family life for women (Luci and Thévenon 2011 and below). However, four main differences between France and Germany have to be pointed out as they are useful to help us understand the difference in the fertility behaviour of women in both countries, as well as illustrating some key aspects of the predominant family model.

The first concerns the desire to have children. There is no simple relation between the wish to have children and recorded fertility (Toulemon and Testa 2005). On average in OECD countries women wish to give birth to 2.28 children during their reproductive life, regardless of their age. France stands out here with 2.58 children per woman, placing France in the top ranks of OECD countries. According to OECD data, the ideal number of children for German women is only 1.96, one of the lowest among OECD countries. Data from the European Barometer show a decline in the number of children desired by German women, from 2.15 in 1988 to 1.75 in 2005, as well as a recent recovery (Prognos 2013: 48). If the child is valued both in France and Germany as a major contribution towards a successful life, in Germany the preference for freedom (living without having a child) is more frequent. Moreover, the high costs of children and the high duties attached to motherhood may explain why more women renounce having children or decide to limit their number (Letablier and Salles 2013b).

The second fact to be noted is the difference in the proportion of women who remain childless, especially among the most qualified. France and Germany were two polar cases among OECD countries for the 1965 cohort and infertility has a high correlation with completed fertility (Breton and Prioux 2009). The share of German women who have no children at the end of their reproductive life increased from 14% for the cohort in 1931 to 21% for the 1962–66 cohorts. In France, for all cohorts born between 1946 and 1960, the proportion of childless women at age forty-five has remained the same, at 13% (Masson 2013). In Germany, among the most highly educated women (Akademikerinnen), this proportion reached around 30% (Schmitt and Wagner 2006). These differences are linked to the weight of the traditional family model in the different nations. For now, ‘where the family is strong, the fertility is low’ (Lebras 2007, 150) because the potential costs for professional career opportunities are higher. In Germany, the most important reasons put forward by women are fears regarding employment opportunities. More generally, there is a universal rule: the higher the mother’s level of education, the lower the fertility. However, the orders of magnitude differ significantly in both countries: in Germany, low-skilled women have 1.7 children on
average and the most qualified have only one child. The gap is lower in France, and has been reduced over recent years: qualified women born in 1965 have had on average 2.2 children, and non-graduate women 2.5.

Another indicator of the ‘modernity’ of the familial model is provided by the proportion of births outside of marriage. There is a strong correlation at the international level between the average fertility rate and the proportion of births outside marriage. In this respect, France is at the forefront with the Scandinavian countries and the UK, with more than one in two children born out of wedlock, while Germany and Spain, for example, stay below the OECD average with less than one-third of births outside marriage. More specifically, as shown by Letablier and Sales (2013b), the concept of marriage appears to be a prerequisite for the formation of families in Germany, while in France – including the PACS (Pacte Civil de Solidarité) – it is rather a way of legitimizing the childbirths ex-post.

Finally, the fourth significant difference between the countries is represented in the proportion of large families. In Germany, the proportion of women with three or more children has declined significantly between the cohorts born in the 1930s and those born during the 1940s (13%), before stabilizing at this level. On the other hand, the proportion of women with two children has remained stable from one cohort to another (approximately 37–40%). In contrast, in France, the proportion of women with exactly three children remained stable for women born between 1931 and 1959, at around 30%.

Reforms in Family Policy during Recent Years

On average in the OECD countries the total fertility rate decreased from 2.7 children per woman in 1970 to 1.6 in 2000, even if there is a strong heterogeneity between them. In line with the approach taken by the New Home Economics, this drop was explained by the rise in women’s employment. Yet the major development here has been the apparent reversal of the correlation between the fertility rate and the employment rate of women. Until the mid 1980s, the countries with the highest fertility rates also had the lowest levels of employment. In fact, since then, two types of country patterns seem to have emerged: a first group of countries that combine high fertility rates and high employment rates of women, and another group characterized by low fertility rates and lower employment rates for women (Kögel 2004; Thévenon 2009). This fact has been interpreted as a change in the institutional context and in the social norms, which are assumed to have facilitated the balance between work and family. The development of childcare facilities for young children
and a major change in attitude towards women’s work, as a result of women’s aspirations or employment opportunities in services, have led to a change in preferences and terms of arbitration (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000; Castels 2003). In this context, what were the main characteristics of family policies in Germany and France, keeping in mind that public policy may reproduce and encourage the traditional gender division of roles in two distinct ways: some measures and forms of financial support are familiarized (come into effect at the level of the couple or the family), while others can reproduce or reinforce gender inequalities on the labour market (Lemière 2014)? Traditionally, Germany was characterized by a high level of universal child benefits, regardless of the rank of the child, which households could set off to benefit from even greater tax reductions. The country has a joint mode of taxation (marital quotient), which discourages the activity of a second earner. Germany has had a long-term yet low-paid parental leave scheme and was characterized by the underdevelopment of its collective childcare facilities for young children. Comparatively, France has been known for a long time for its generous benefits for large families and young children, the ‘family quotient’ of its tax system, as well as its expenditure on services (childcare facilities). As a result, these combined benefits have led to a redistribution form with a U profile in respect to the distribution of income. Parental leave is long and poorly paid, which encourages low-skilled women to reduce their activity. Finally, if, for a very long time, the French exception has rested on the crèches, childcare options for children under three years old are relatively diversified, but of uneven quality and affordability.

According to the OECD, benefits in cash and tax breaks as a percentage of GDP are high and at a close level in both countries. Yet by calculating the structure and level of family benefit packages for a range of family configurations, it appears that levels of financial support to parents of one or two children are higher in Germany than in France, regardless of income level (Fagnani and Math 2010). However, expenditure in kind devoted to childcare and early education services is higher in France.

Nonetheless, over the last two decades in Germany a new political discourse on family policy has emerged (see below) and major reforms have been established concerning parental leave, the development of childcare facilities for young children and the promotion of gender equality. For decades, the development of childcare services had remained underdeveloped in West Germany, not only because of the weight of the Catholic tradition but also as a result of the decentralized federal structure and the multiplicity of stakeholders (Fagnani and Math 2010). Several initiatives at the local and regional level were progressively supported and financed by federal-level authorities (Giraud and Lucas 2014). After the first
Chart 7.10 Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures (% of GDP).
developments inspired by the ‘alliance for the family’ launched in 2003 by Renate Schmid to expand childcare facilities at the local level, new legislation was adopted, and the law on the development of childcare facilities (Tagesbetreuungsanbaugesetz) entered into force in 2005. Moreover, in 2008 the law for the promotion of children (Kinderförderungsgesetz) was designed to implement the entitlement of parents to a care place before 2013 (providing a concrete coverage rate of 35% for children under three). Meanwhile, financing of this measure at the federal level has improved. The commitment at the federal level to quantitative objectives has eased the rise in young children waiting for childcare facilities, in spite of still ambivalent public opinion in the former West Germany. Moreover, the Bund has encouraged companies to become a Familienfreundlicher Betrieb (family friendly business) by providing several tools, but with mixed results so far (Klammer and Letablier 2008).

Parental leave was reformed in 2007. Inspired by the Swedish model, its main characteristics are a relatively high replacement rate, a limited duration (ten months) – to avoid an overly long period out of the labour market for mothers – which can be extended to twelve months if the father also takes leave. This new leave has achieved its main objectives by improving the income of the households concerned and increasing the female participation rate after the period of parental leave, while a quarter of fathers now interrupt their careers to care for their children (Wrolich et al. 2012). Yet one-third of the recipients are only entitled to the minimum payment (up to €300 per month). The new parental leave scheme provides several advantages, first and foremost for parents with medium and high incomes, while parents with low incomes or none at all do not benefit (Henninger, Wimbauer, and Dombrowski 2008).

Moreover, there are growing inequalities between skilled women, who worked full-time before taking leave and who return quickly to their job, and low-skilled mothers, who often stay away from the labour market for more than three years (Veil 2010). The ‘Elterngeld Plus’ reform, concerning children born since 2015, has aimed to ease the cumulation of the benefit with a part-time job.

Over the last twenty years, family policy in France has undergone two main shifts. If redistribution and selectivity have always been a principle of French family policies, since the early 1970s it has become progressively more important to improve the vertical redistribution of the benefits system. This trend intensified up until the late 1990s (Martin 2010). Otherwise, family policy has become driven above all by the unemployment issue (Dang and Monnier 2011; Martin 2010), which has led to a change in the categorization of ‘reconciliation’ between family and jobs. The Allocation de garde d’enfant à domicile (AGED) was introduced in
1985–87 for mothers with three children, and then extended in 1994 to mothers with two children and followed in 1991 by the *Aide pour l’emploi d’une assistante maternelle* (AFEMA). Both measures aimed to increase employment in the service sector (nannies) and to boost the retirement of (low-skilled) mothers out of the labour market, and were very successful in this regard, with a high decline in participation levels for married women with two children, at least one of whom was aged under three (Piketty 1998). They were merged in 2004 into a single new benefit by the *Prestation d’accueil du jeune enfant* (PAJE), which includes a universal basic allowance until a child reaches the age of three, as well as a *complement de libre choix du mode de garde*, which is supposed to enlarge the freedom of choice in childcare for the parents as well as their choice regarding working time. Parents of a young child are given the opportunity to work only part-time – increasing the inequalities between women on the labour market (Lemière 2014) – or to limit their activity, a device that has proven to be successful (Marical, Minonzio, and Nicolas 2007).

The rhetoric of free choice has led to a shift from Kitas (daycare facility for children) towards benefits in cash (‘cash for care’); more broadly it has led to a system that is primarily aimed at the solvency of families, enabling them to purchase services on the market (Letablier 2009). Consequently, the number of places in all types of care facilities has increased slowly over fifteen years, with only 15% of children under the age of three cared for by Kitas (Observatoire National de la Petite Enfance, 2012). At the same time, the number of children aged two and under who visit the *écoles maternelles* has declined sharply. If the collective care facilities have grown, it is largely due to the promotion of child minders (*assistante maternelle*), whose cost has become heavily subsidized since the reform implemented in 2004, which welcomed over a quarter of young children, for varying durations.

If the theoretical coverage of public care facilities is close to a total of 50% for children under three years of age, significant differences remain according to activity status and income levels. Indeed, the diversification of childcare facilities is contradicted by the logic of free choice because low-income households cannot afford to use registered childcare providers (Martin 2010). Thirty per cent of children under three now benefit from childcare facilities in Germany; it was less than 10% ten years ago. Yet 62% of children under three are mainly cared for by their parents, compared to 50% in France. Thus, the proportion of children attending formal childcare services has remained lower in Germany than in France, but equally the time spent in childcare facilities is notably longer in France (Letablier and Salles 2013b).
From the Male Breadwinner to Contrasting Household Configurations in Both Countries

What kind of picture can be drawn from these developments in employment and fertility behaviours in both countries over the past years regarding the composition of households by employment status and the changes it has seen? This can be taken from the EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) and OECD data on household employment status.¹²

In relation to the proportion of children (aged 0–14) in jobless households, both countries have experienced contradictory developments in line with the global evolution of employment. In Germany the proportion slightly diminished from 2003 to 2013 from 10.6% to 9.2%, whereas it rose in France from the OECD average (8.8%) to 11.3%. Yet the striking fact concerning Germany is the spread of the ‘one and a half’ earners model of employment within households.

At the beginning of the 1990s, one household in the working-age population out of two was still composed of one parent working full-time with the other remaining inactive. Since then, the main change has concerned the shift from this traditional male breadwinner model to a new predominant model of households composed of one parent working full-time and the other part-time, rising by twenty-three percentage points, whereas the proportion of households with both parents working full-time decreased by almost five percentage points.

Table 7.2 Employment status of households (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households with children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both parents full-time</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER</td>
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<td>FRA</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households without children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bahle, Göbel and Hubl 2013.
Complementary data confirm the clear line of cleavage between German households with and without children concerning the frequency of the full-time/full-time and full-time/part-time configuration.

In France, the traditional male breadwinner model is no longer dominant. Instead, one can identify two distinct trends. First, since the 1970s, France has experienced a sharp increase in the number of single parents, representing 9.4% of families with children at home under the age of twenty-five in 1975 and 21.8% in 2008. Second, both partners working full-time has become the most common pattern among couples aged twenty to forty-nine wherein at least one partner has a job.
Changes in the Gendered Employment Regimes in Germany and France over the Last Twenty Years: Arguments, Driving Forces, Actors and Scales

According to this book’s general grid of analysis, I will seek to explain these transformations in gendered employment regimes by analysing the arguments implied for both countries and therefore the cognitive and linguistic categories used, the driving forces as well as the main actors of the change. Where relevant, I will also pay attention to the rearrangements of the scales of power at which the recompositions have taken place and gained legitimacy. In order to put the last two decades in Germany and France into perspective, we will look at both countries’ long-term backgrounds.

The male breadwinner model and the assignment of women to the private sphere were deeply anchored in German society. In the 1896 Civil Code, women were legally bound to the responsibility for homework and they were with few exemptions forbidden to seek employment. The economic dependence of women was legally established and remained almost unchanged until the 1970s. In the former West Germany, this role division was encouraged by public policies. First introduced in Prussia at the time of the Civil Code and then reintroduced by the Nazi regime in 1934 with the explicit goal of keeping women away from the labour market, the splitting income taxation – which provides an advantage for couples with unequal incomes – was enshrined in legislation in 1958 and though it has been amended since then, it has never been abolished (Wersig 2013). According to the subsidiarity principle, the kind of federalism at work in West Germany rested on the delegation of gender regulation onto private actors and at the local and regional (Länder) levels, even if some key policy areas such as matrimonial law, abortion legislation or the Bismarckian welfare state were under federal jurisdiction (Giraud and Lucas 2014). The underdevelopment of childcare facilities at the local level and school opening hours remained additional issues for the labour participation of women.

A series of obstacles have held back the modernization of the gender regime in Germany for a long time. These include the influence of Catholic tradition and the already mentioned central place of the subsidiarity principle as a key founding rule of the non-intervention of the federal state in that matter (Giraud and Lucas 2014), the weight of conservative forces in a political system that requires large political majorities, the cultural prevalence of the male breadwinner/women care-giver model, and the central importance of industry (Fleckenstein 2011; Giraud and Lucas 2009; Marry 2012). Yet in the aftermath of World War II, the non-intervention
of the state in the familial sphere was also supported by feminist move-
ments, which have for a long time considered – against the background of
the late nineteenth-century institutional legacy and those of the Nazi era –
the state as an agent of oppression for women (Ferre 2012). The ‘counter-
model’ of the former German Democratic Republic, where the state
controlled feminist movements and formerly promoted gender equality as
well as female employment, was also important for explaining the search
for the autonomy of the familial sphere vis-à-vis the federal state (ibid.).

However, thanks to the claims of the feminist movement, the modern-
ization of women’s rights started in the 1970s. At the same time, women
profited from the Bildungsexpansion (Marry et al. 1998) and from the
gradual process of the generalization of wage earners. The improvement
in women’s political representation, boosted by the emergence of the
‘green party’, the first initiatives on gender equality opportunities at the
local level as well as the first women and gender research programmes,
began to change the situation. The progressive conversion of the domi-
nant political parties during the 1980s shows the gradual de-privatization
of gender relations in the federal public sphere as shown by the support
by federal-level authorities of local women’s policy agencies (Giraud and
Lucas 2014). Yet, as we have seen, the growth of employment remained
limited in the former West Germany.

Just as for other issues concerning contemporary German society, the
fall of the Berlin Wall caused a significant break. Reunification revealed
how West German gender legislation was outdated compared to that of
the new Bundesländer. It led to reform of the basic law regarding the
concrete realization of the equality of rights for women and men and all
elements hindering this equality. Several legislative areas were therefore
concerned: marital and parental legislation granting formal equality to
men and women (1997), legislation on abortion (1998) and on domestic

From an economic point of view, in the 1990s new arguments progres-
sively appeared with the debate on the Standort Deutschland – Germany
as a location for business and investment – and on the prospects of an
ageing population. In the wake of reunification, the rise of public deficit
and the deterioration of industrial competitiveness became predominant
issues (Streeck 2009). At the same time, the long-term sustainability of
public pension systems and of long-term care insurance was placed at
the forefront of concerns by experts (Rürup commission, Hartz com-
mission etc.), who marginalized the traditional expertise from the social
partners (Sozialbeirat, managers of the statutory pension insurance) by
pointing out the threats associated with the law fertility and the future
decrease in the active population (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit
und soziale Sicherung [BGSS] 2003). This demographic concern was deepened by worries regarding the poor results of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment from OECD), which raised the issue of pre-school childcare facilities (Salles and Letablier 2013). The main arguments made were in relation to the ageing population and the necessity to increase women’s employment rates, in order to make the labour market more flexible and to improve the long-term sustainability of pension systems, as well as the macroeconomic performance jeopardized by concerns about the shrinking workforce.

With the new discourse, a paradigm shift in employment and family policies appeared against this background, which gradually changed the categories of thinking and acting: first, the promotion of flexible working hours for women; second, the development of childcare services; and third, substantial reform of childcare leave (Lewis et al. 2008). From the mid 1990s onwards, in the new context of the European Monetary Union, a twofold answer to these issues appeared. First, a strategy of supply side reforms, which consisted of a long-lasting wage moderation and an agenda for reforms of the labour market and the welfare state, was carried out by the red-green coalition, when it rallied ‘the third way’ after the turn of the century (the so-called ‘Agenda 2010’) (Giraud and Lechevalier 2012). Second, employers’ associations and more generally business (die Wirtschaft) began to promote the entry of women into the labour market, aiming at developing low-cost service providers for the industry (Carlin and Soskice 2009) to make the labour market more flexible and to tackle the anticipated issue of labour shortage (Arbeitskraftmangel).

Under the overall influence of the EU framework, which had already begun to have an influence with the early gender directives in the 1970s (MacRae 2006), and in line with the guidelines of the European Employment Strategy, including gender streamlining and requirements due to the strategy of maximizing employment rates (Giraud and Lechevalier 2012, 2013), public policies regarding gender issues began to change. The EU’s influence has been direct in such domains as employment discrimination, gender stereotypes and sexual harassment, and indirect in domains such as gender quotas in decision-making (European Parliament 2015a), but it has remained weak concerning the implementation of gender equality in the area of employment policy, as shown by street-level analyses (Letablier and Perrier 2008; Perrier 2015). The ‘deadlock of privacy preserving federalism’ has been gradually overcome (Giraud and Lucas 2014). The Federal Equality Law of 2001 introduced the principles of gender mainstreaming into the administration. In 2006, the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) implemented, among others, two European directives: the Gender Equality Directive for goods and
services and the Employment Gender Equality Directive. The AGG covers discrimination in employment and social legislation, private law and civil service law. After 2005, however, the policy of gender equality at the European level, which had always remained ambiguous (Jonsson and Perrier 2009), came to a halt and was mainly reduced to the maximization of employment rates (Maier 2015) and no longer pursued effectively at the national level in Germany (European Parliament 2015b).

The key actors of the new deal have become the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the employer’s union (Henninger and Von Wahl 2014; Veil 2011; Von Wahl 2008). In fact, the appointment of Renate Schmidt (SPD, Social Democratic Party) at the beginning of the 2000s as a federal minister for the family during Schroeder’s second term played an important role in creating the ‘alliance for the family’. This alliance with business has placed the issue of women’s participation in the labour market onto the agenda (Giraud and Lucas 2009). Schmidt commissioned two important reports (the Rürup and Gruescu report from 2003; the Bertram Rosler and Ehlert report in 2005) that triggered a debate about a ‘sustainable family policy’, in which both the labour force participation of women and the birth rate were increasingly formulated as new family policy objectives. Later, in 2005, the SPD manifesto included the expansion of nurseries for the youngest children and proposed the introduction of earnings-related parental leave. After the formation of the grand government coalition in 2005, the new CDU family minister, Ursula von der Leyen, commissioned new expertise, which attested to the ideological turn of the Christian Democratic Party and to the ‘new alliance’ between family and business. This saw female employment as a means to ease the long-term financing of the pension system and to overcome the anticipated labour shortage, rather than a turn towards more gender equality (Fagnani 2009; Henninger et al. 2008). The CDU-CSU (Christian Democratic Union) and SPD (Social Democratic Party) government accelerated this progressive convergence between both parties in this domain, as well as the departure from the male breadwinner model in line with the Hartz reforms. As we have seen, the main reforms implemented concerned the labour market, parental leave and childcare facilities. This change was also eased by other actors, namely a ‘new’ conservative, ‘elitist’ and neoliberal feminism, which prioritized the policy of conciliation between work and family, which was seen more as an economic empowerment of (skilled) women rather than a global strategy of gender and social equality (Klaus 2010). The activating welfare state promoted by the Hartz legislation was, however, not linked with any consistent individualization of social and fiscal law or any significant measures towards defamiliarization. Demographically, the new policy course did
Dynamics of Gendered Employment Regimes in France and Germany

not reward a general increase in birth rate, but rather its increase among highly qualified women (Henninger et al. 2008). The fertility behaviour of women has remained constrained by the choice between career and children (Marry 2013). At the same time, female employment’s norm has become diversified, as shown by the polarization of working times; both changes have led to the dissemination among households of the ‘one and a half’ income earners model.

Despite the controversies within the CDU-CSU, the imperative for the mobilization of women voters and the competition between political parties are key factors (Blome 2014). Nonetheless, this competition has to be understood more accurately in regard to the coalition dynamic within the grand coalition (Henninger and von Wahl 2014): the ‘social-democratization’ of the family policy followed from 2005 to 2009 was undertaken by the CDU in order to pull as many votes as possible away from the SPD. This strategy was successful in view of the female vote in 2009. It was also supported by the German Employers’ Associations, which saw in the generous earnings-related parental leave and the expansion of childcare facilities effective means for reconciling work and family, and for reintegrating women after child rearing (Fleckenstein 2011). The same logic prevailed within the CDU-FDP (Free Democrats) coalition after 2009. It explains the shift to the right in family and gender equality policy from 2009 to 2013 (Henninger and von Wahl 2014) as well as the failure of the implementation of the quota system for leadership positions in private business, which was eventually implemented by the new grand coalition in December 2014.

In France, the image of the full-time working mother had already become rooted during the nineteenth century. The belated nature of rural exodus and urbanization undoubtedly contributed to the social acceptance of the double figure of mother and worker (Marry 2012; Maruani and Méron 2012). The early development of the salles d’asile, replaced after 1848 by the école maternelle (nursery school), as an engine for the development of care services for young children is well documented. Children have always been an affaire d’Etat that legitimizes the intervention of the secular state in the norms of education as well as the care infrastructure (Veil 2011). Yet many aspects of government policy remained closed to the norms of gender segregation, even when it provided improved conditions for working women (White 2009). In 1892, night work was banned (see Lallement’s chapter in this book) and in 1909 the first maternity legislation was passed, whereas other measures were adopted to help women working in the industry. The interwar period was a time of intense struggle. First, tools aimed to ‘reconcile’ work and family (maternity leave provisions and a private system
of family allowance) were implemented in the private sector at the business level. With the Matignon Accords, the issue of reconciliation ‘shifted from being a policy frame to extant norms regarding gender roles and became the principle around which future policies developed’ (White 2009: 393). In contrast, the mouvement familial (especially the Union féminine civique et sociale from 1925 onwards) campaigned from the end of the nineteenth century for public intervention to help mothers to stay at home and claimed for an allowance that rewards the ‘profession of mother’; the work of women is supposed to explain the drop in fertility and a perceived social decline.

Indeed, the French state has developed an explicitly interventionist family policy with its own institutions – as an autonomous field of the social security system – and financing. With the Code de la famille (1939), the state ousted business from the definition and implementation of the family policy. In terms of actors, however, another singularity of French family policy lies in the strong commitment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both in the policy decision process and in the implementation of policy measures. ‘Family Unions’ (UNAF), as an intermediate corps between the state and families, have remained powerful and influential in defining the objectives of family policy (Letablier 2008). This form of unified representation of families, rooted historically in pro-fertility and pro-family lobbies, has always coloured the debate, as there has been a weak counterforce in this field from the feminist side (ibid.). Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s, women’s movements fought for the development of childcare facilities to accompany and to ease the growth of participation in the labour force with some success, alongside the ‘modernizers’ of the Fourth and the Fifth Republic, which began to promote childcare services. Simultaneously, from 1965 onwards, a series of civil law and family policy reforms began to change the situation (Dang and Monnier 2011). At the same time, the long-standing alliance of academic and administrative actors stopped functioning, with the development of independent research programmes at the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), whereas high-ranking civil servants developed their own expertise. They have continued to play a major role since the early 1980s, cushioning more broadly the family policy projects of political actors and referring to a common set of ideas, mainly at the Commissariat général au Plan (CGP), followed by the creation of the Haut conseil de la famille in 2009 (Martin 2010). Academic research bound to the feminist movement has had more success in influencing the policy of gender equality than the content of family or employment policies.

In retrospect, the immediate aftermath of World War II can be seen as a long phase of the ‘male breadwinner model’, symbolized by the
implementation of the quotient familial (see above) implemented in 1945 as part of the fiscal redistribution system and of the ‘allowance for women raising children at home’ (allocation de salaire unique, which superseded the Allocation de mère au foyer put into force in 1938 under the influence of the mouvement familial). From 1932 onwards, the code de la famille established two central principles for the amount of child benefit: the birth rank of the children and the increase of benefit with the number of children. These principles were set out for the allocation de salaire unique (ASU), created in 1941 for pro-birth policy reasons by the Vichy regime, and were reformed after World War II in 1946. It played a crucial role in explaining women’s labour force behaviour until its termination in 1978 (Martin 1998). Indeed, the scheme was renewed and extended by the 1946 law and the ASU became the masterpiece of family policy – far more important than child benefits. Yet, from 1946 onwards, the ASU was only price-indexed, and its relative level declined gradually compared to the ‘wage of reference’. For a long time, however, it remained a strong incentive for mothers to stay at home, according to the number of children and the period of time (ibid.: 1137–38). In fact, the development of activity rates of mothers from 1946 to the very beginning of the 1980s can be explained rather well by the variation in the level of the ASU. The rise in women’s activity after 1968, especially that of mothers with two children, took place when the level of the benefit began to decline sharply (ibid.).

This growth in female employment up to the late 1960s was eased by the development of service activities and the public sector. Under the influence of the European Union, the gradual and piecemeal institutionalization of the principles of equal pay and equal opportunity – from the Roudy law at the beginning of the 1980s to the Genisson law in 2001 – has accompanied this growth in female employment (see Ricciardi’s and Giraud’s chapters in this book). Another key driving force has been the issue of work and family balance and therefore the kinds of interactions between family and employment policies. More precisely, as pointed out by White (2004, 2009), a consensus was made possible peu à peu among the relevant actors with contrasting interests (the women’s movement, modernizers and employers but also pro-natalists, familists and others) on a main, yet ambiguous, argument: the reconciliation between work and family life, which has mainly been seen as gendered regarding the categories used or the content of public policies (Périvier and Silvera 2010; White 2004). This argument can be traced back to earlier debates, but it became central in the 1960s ‘when both progressive and conservative actors were persuaded that it was in their interests to encourage women to be workers and mothers without having to accept a principle of gender equality’ (White 2004: 258–59). Since women’s employment has been
identified as a major cause of the fall in the birth rate, the demographic issue has provided a link between employment and family policy. This argument not only helped as a focal point around which actors’ interests converged, but it was progressively institutionalized by public policies through a process of normalization (White 2009).

Nonetheless, two different periods of reconciliation policies ought to be distinguished (Martin 2010; 2012). During the first one, from the 1970s to the late 1980s, priority was given to quality of childcare in collective facilities in order to encourage full-time work for mothers. The availability of childcare structures (crèches, nursery schools) improved, the proportion of two-year-old children visiting the écoles maternelles rose (up to one-third), childcare became more professionalized and, as a consequence, female employment increased regularly. The second period, from the late 1980s onwards, has been characterized – as mentioned above – by greater selectivity in family policy as well as by the diversification of reconciliation options between employment and family. Categories of thinking about the issue of reconciliation have in fact changed. Indeed, the fight against massive and persistent unemployment and the necessity to reduce the public deficit have become overarching arguments in the public debate, with far-reaching consequences for the content of family and employment policies. The use of family policy as part of employment policies has been reliant upon the development of new childcare provisions based on a rhetoric of ‘free choice’. Since 2004, with the new PAJE benefit, parents should have a free choice in childcare, but also the choice (in fact the incentive) to reduce working time or to stop working when caring for their young children (Marical, Minonzio, and Nicolas 2007). Otherwise, the development of the domestic and caring services sector has increased female employment and has provided an incentive for them to enter the labour market. The work/family balance issue – reconsidered under the rhetoric of free choice – has been pushed to the forefront by the conservative parties in answering the family NGOs’ claims, which support the pro-family ideology.

As a result, over the past two decades several developments have been less favourable to French women. First, the growth of the global female employment rate has weakened; this mainly concerns women over forty-five years of age. Second, the wage and employment gender gap as well as occupational segregation (Lemière and Silvera 2014) have ceased to reduce. Third, the number as well as the proportion of women living alone has sharply risen and inequalities among women have increased. This background may present a clue to understanding why female part-time employment has not increased since the turn of the century in France in spite of structural push factors,15 and why therefore the two
### Table 7.5 Changes in gendered employment regimes in Germany and France over the last two decades: a synthesis.

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<th>Germany</th>
<th>France</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Arguments and categories</strong></td>
<td><em>Standort Deutschland</em> and wage moderation.</td>
<td>An ambiguous consensus in favour of reconciliation between work and family, which reshaped the interests of the main actors. Fighting unemployment and reducing public deficits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximizing the employment rate (flexibilization of working time for women).</td>
<td>‘Free choice’ for mother between work and family</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Demography: labour shortage and long-term sustainability of the social insurance system.</td>
<td>Influence of the European Employment Strategy as well as gender mainstreaming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scales</strong></td>
<td>Influence of the European Employment Strategy (maximization of employment rates) as well as EU gender mainstreaming.</td>
<td>Influence of the European Employment Strategy as well as gender mainstreaming.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Better collaboration between scales within the federal system (childcare facilities).</td>
<td>Better collaboration between scales within the federal system (childcare facilities).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Growing role for the business at the local level (employment and family policies).</td>
<td>Growing role for the business at the local level (employment and family policies).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Driving forces</strong></td>
<td>Long-term transformation of labour market (salaried employment, flexibilization) and of the employment policy.</td>
<td>Long-term transformation of labour market (salaried employment, flexibilization).</td>
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<td>Conversion of the SPD to the third way and modernization of Christian and conservative parties.</td>
<td>Conversion of the SPD to the third way and modernization of Christian and conservative parties.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Weakening of the unions.</td>
<td>Weakening of the unions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shrinking working-age population.</td>
<td>Shrinking working-age population.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main actors</strong></td>
<td>First, initiatives at the local level under the influence of the women’s movement, then state and political forces at the federal level: ‘Alliance for family’, Christian Democratic Union and business. Experts: mainly from the business (Hartz Commission) and/or from the administration (Rürup Commission). Influence of the university on gender equality (<em>Gleichstellungbericht</em>) policies.</td>
<td>Central state for public policies. ‘Family Unions’ (UNAF) and conservative parties. Weak influence of the feminist movement on family policy but improvement of gender equality policies. Experts: high-ranking civil servants and family policy (<em>Commissariat général au Plan, Haut conseil de la famille</em>); academic research and gender equality.</td>
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earners household model has been so resilient. Two main complementary hypotheses are possible. The first relies on French women’s commitment to full-time employment as shown by the high proportion of involuntary part-time jobs, viewed as a source of emancipation, although depending on the level of the total household income and the number of children (Bourreau-Dubois, Olivier, and Jankeliowitch-Laval 2001). As noticed before, this commitment has been eased by the collective reduction of working time at the turn of the century. This has led to a new norm of working time for women (with a median between thirty-five and thirty-nine hours a week) as well as to a partial substitution of (long) part-time through full-time jobs. The reduction of working time has had a positive yet uneven impact on the work/family balance among women (Fagnani and Letablier 2004). A second explanation might concern the development of a substantial framework on gender equality in France from the 1970s onwards up to the new ‘Law on real gender equality’ in 2014. However, the implementation of gender equality policies has often been heterogeneous and has varied over time, depending on the political will of the respective government as well as on the content and means (voluntary versus obligatory) of the legislation (European Parliament 2015b). Yet the (unequal) progress achieved regarding the representation of women in the political as well as in the economic spheres has all in all contributed to the strengthening of their citizenship as workers (see Ricciardi’s chapter in this book).

**Conclusion: Towards Growing Inequalities between Women**

In sum, we can synthesize the kinds of dynamics of ‘gendered employment regimes’ that have been at work over the last twenty years in both countries. In Germany, a series of changes to the labour market, amplified by the Hartz reforms and eased by the structural rise in women’s qualification levels, as well as the modernization of family policy, have caused a sharp increase in employment rates of mothers and women aged over fifty. The fertility rate remains narrowly connected to the different levels of qualifications and one-third of highly qualified women remain childless. At the same time, in a context of growing employment rates it is mainly the medium-skilled mothers who have experienced the largest increases in employment. These trends are even more pronounced when one looks at mothers with children under six. The persistent deficit in care facilities for young children (i.e. lack of full-time school or childcare facilities in the afternoon), but also the enhanced polarization of working time
(an increasing dispersion of weekly working time), has significantly raised inequalities among women, while hindering any real de-differentiation of the social roles between men and women. The heterogeneity between women regarding employment and fertility has widened. The resilience of the traditional family model is still strong, consolidating a kind of gender regime, characterized by structurally low fertility, the dissemination of part-time jobs and of in-work poverty, which is ultimately leading to an extended version of the male breadwinner model through extra female pay. The Gender Equality Index ranks Germany lower than the EU average; only in the areas of work, money and time has Germany achieved better results than the EU average (European Parliament 2015a).

The French case remains transitional, situated somewhere between the ‘state care-giver’ and the ‘marketized care-giver’ model, even though the latter is being highly subsidized by the state. Full-time employment has remained the dominant employment norm in France, and thanks to the thirty-five hours legislation, implemented at the turn of the century, the dispersion of working time has remained more limited than in Germany. But the gradual institutionalization of the discourse on reconciliation between work and family, which has allowed the emergence of a consensus among actors with divergent interests, has remained ambiguous. In a context of persistent high unemployment and growing employment precariousness, it has been reinvested with the rhetoric of parental ‘choice’, showing the traditional gender division still underlying French family policy. Since the reform of 2004, the priority given to the cash-for-care model in family policy has increased inequalities between highly qualified women, for whom the presence of children has little effect on participation in the labour market because they can outsource some domestic tasks, and low-skilled women, who cannot do so to the same extent and who are forced to decrease their activity.

One of the main conclusions to be drawn suggests that the transformation of the labour market, reforms in family policy and the changes to the prevailing familial models have led both countries to a growing polarization as well as to growing inequalities among women. In Germany, this has even led to a fallback in the egalitarian two earners model; the proportion of households with two full-time breadwinners has decreased, whereas in France both partners working full-time has become the most common pattern among households with children.

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European integration and Social Europe, comparative analysis of employment systems and welfare states in France and Germany, as well as on gender and public policies. From 2007 to 2013, he was Gastprofessor at the Europa University Viadrina in Germany.

Appendix


<table>
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2015/1995

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Source: LFS (Eurostat); own calculations.

Table 7.A2 Female full-time employment.

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<td>50–64 years</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>106.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>120.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>15–24 years</td>
<td>105.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>25–49 years</td>
<td>169.1</td>
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<td>50–64 years</td>
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Source: Eurostat.
Table 7.A3 Female part-time employment.

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<tr>
<td>15–24 years</td>
<td>221.6</td>
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Source: Eurostat.

Table 7.A4 Total female employment.

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<td>109.0</td>
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Source: Eurostat.

Notes

2. See Table 7.A1 in the appendix.
3. Full-time equivalent employment is the number of full-time equivalent jobs, defined as total hours worked divided by average annual hours worked in full-time jobs.
5. That is the difference in employment rates between women aged twenty to forty-nine without a child or with a child aged less than six years.
6. In 2015, two-thirds of active women with a child younger than six years had a part-time job in Germany, compared to less than one-quarter in France. Three-quarters of German mothers with two or more children under six worked part-time; only two out of five did so in France (Eurostat).
7. ‘Ich-AG’ (Me Inc.): a new benefit introduced by the Hartz legislation to help unemployed to become self-employed.
8. The average number of children born to women belonging to the same cohort once they have reached the end of their reproductive lives (in practice at the age of fifty).
10. Since 2011, the Elterngeld can no longer be combined with long-term unemployment benefit or with social assistance or family benefit. These cost-saving measures are driven by a workfare logic that has impoverished 16% of recipients (Kahmann 2015).
11. At first with the *code de la famille* in 1939, according to the number and rank of the children within the family and a progressive scale of benefits (Martin 1998).
12. We use three main sources: OECD family database, EU-SILC and the German Mikrozensus. The statistical classification is not exactly the same according to each source and the considered reference year. The indicator from the OECD database presents information on children in different types of households (couple families, sole-parent families and other ‘complex families’). The EU-SILC allows us to distinguish between households with and without children.
13. ‘Local alliance for families from an economical point of view’, ‘The expansion of child care: an investment to strengthen the Standort’, and so on (see Veil 2011).
14. In 1946, the ASU increased from 25% to 40% for the second child (in comparison, child benefits increased from 10% to 20%) and from 30% to 50% for the third child (30% for child benefits) of a ‘reference wage’, that is the wage earned by workers in the metal industry in the Paris area. When mothers with two children remained or became inactive, the sum of benefits reached 60% of the reference wage, and 80% with three children (Martin 1998: 1131).
15. That is the growth of the services sector (mainly cleaning, accommodation and restaurants, retail, education and health care).
16. This highlights, from a gender perspective, the debate in France in 2016 on the ‘law on labour’ (the so-called El Komeri law). One of its main aims is to allow the working time regulation (to be less favourable for workers) at the company level.

References


