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Trends in parental leave in the Nordic countries: has the forward march of gender equality halted?

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide an overview of the development of parental leave in the Nordic countries in the last decade or so and explain the different approaches taken by individual countries in this regard. Focusing on recent developments, though mainly on the provision of a father's quota, we discuss whether we are actually witnessing a paradigm shift in some of these countries, i.e. a movement away from an emphasis on the dual earner/dual carer model and a reverting back to a more traditional family model approach where the mother is seen as the main parent. This change is commonly presented under the guise of it respecting the 'free choice' of individual families. Furthermore, the article asks why the changes in question have taken place and examines the positions of different political parties towards the issue. The article

shows that the Nordic countries are developing somewhat different policies and the intra-Nordic gap in both policies and politics seems to be increasing rather than narrowing.

El objetivo de este artículo es el de proporcionar una panorámica sobre el desarrollo de los permisos parentales en los países nórdicos a lo largo de la última década, así como explicar los diferentes enfoques sobre esta materia adoptados por cada uno de ellos individualmente. Centrándonos en los desarrollos recientes, básicamente a través de la introducción de la cuota para el padre, analizamos en qué medida somos testigos en la actualidad de un desplazamiento del paradigma en algunos de estos países; es decir, un movimiento fuera del énfasis en el modelo de doble ingreso / cuidados compartidos, con un retroceso hacia un modelo de familia más tradicional en donde la madre es considerada como la progenitora principal. Este cambio se presenta con frecuencia bajo el disfraz de respetar la 'libre elección' de las familias. Asimismo el artículo se pregunta por qué se han producido estos cambios y examina los puntos de vista de los diferentes partidos políticos sobre esta cuestión. El artículo pone de manifiesto que los diversos países nórdicos están desarrollando unas políticas en cierta medida diferentes y que la brecha intra-nórdica, tanto en las políticas como en el ámbito de la política, parece estar acrecentándose más que estrechándose.

Keywords:

Nordic countries parental leave fathers party-politics

Palabras claves:

Países nórdicos prestación por paternidad padres sistema de partidos políticos

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Notes

1. For an overview on eligibility rules for paid parental leave, see Duvander & Lammi-Taskula ([2011](#)).

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