

# ADVANTAGES OF A UNIVERSAL AND GENEROUS FAMILY POLICY: THE CASE OF DENMARK<sup>1</sup>

Peter Abrahamson

University of Copenhagen  
Department of Sociology  
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## ABSTRACT

Since WWII Europeans have enjoyed a cumulative expansion of social citizenship rights. The sequencing of types of entitlement is the same all over, and family benefits are the last kinds of benefits to be granted to citizens. Hence, a highly developed system of family benefits is an indication of a well-developed welfare society. European states vary with respect to extension of family allowances, child and elderly care and tax policies towards families. The Scandinavian region is more privileged than the rest of Europe because of a combined effort of relatively generous universal transfers *and* services, which has led to labeling it a family (or women) friendly welfare state. In Denmark the encompassing public policies towards the family has resulted in a high female labor market participation rate. The generous policies allow women both to be mothers and workers and has resulted in a relatively high absolute fertility rate of 1.9; up from 1.4 in 1983 when the expansion of social services for families took off. The general low rates of poverty in Scandinavia are associated with high levels of formal labor market involvement. Because of high unionizations rate around 80 percent most jobs are reasonably paid; ie. they are able to keep people above the poverty line. Secondly, those relying on the welfare state for transfers receive a reasonable compensation except in the case of uninsured unemployed persons; i.e. those who have to rely solely on social assistance. The additional transfers and services available to families with children are, furthermore able to lift most children out of income poverty.

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## Introduction

European societies are affluent societies with a long tradition for welfare state protection of citizens. A combination of labor market participation and collective insurance against usual risks has reduced poverty significantly during the post WW II period. However, not all European states were equally well prepared for the turn toward post industrialization which has happened simultaneously with the turn toward globalization. Originally these turns were associated with a crisis of the welfare state and a suggested move toward neoliberalism (OECD 1980). What can be observed in retrospect is that, in the main, European welfare states have survived the crisis, but some have done so better than others. It seems that the Scandinavian societies have best managed to cope with the so-called new social risks associated with postindustrial society such as precarious work, long-term unemployment, single parenthood and difficulties reconciling work and family life (Boloni 2007).

So, even when Europe consists of various welfare regimes all of North-Western Europe has well developed welfare states as is clear from tables 1 and 2 below: States spend between one quarter and one third of their GDP on welfare provision and table 2 shows that the social ‘investment’ in citizens have expanded significantly during the last decade, in most cases by 50 percent.

	2000	2005	2008	2011
Denmark	28.9	30.2	30.7	34.3
Germany	29.7	30.1	28.0	29.4
France	29.5	31.5	31.3	33.6
United Kingdom	26.1	25.8	25.8	27.3
Sweden	29.9	31.1	29.5	29.6
Finland	25.1	26.7	26.2	30.0
Norway	24.4	23.7	22.2	25.2
Iceland	19.2	21.7	22.0	25.0
EU-27	..	..	26.8	29.0

Source: Eurostat (2013).

	2003	2005	2008	2011
Denmark	7.547	7.921	9.164	10.055
Germany	7.372	7.867	8.217	9.148
France	7.277	7.878	8.459	9.258
United Kingdom	6.431	7.202	7.276	7.404
Sweden	8.070	8.305	9.023	9.142
Finland	5.875	6.487	7.598	8.365
Norway	8.235	8.601	9.878	11.023
Iceland	5.620	6.079	6.711	7.014
EU-27	..	..	6.706	7.292

Source: Eurostat (2013).

Table 3. Social expenditure on families and children per capita € PPP, in EU 2003 – 2011				
	2003	2005	2008	2011
Denmark	970	996	1.206	1.202
Germany	798	814	828	925
France	582	631	697	721
United Kingdom	439	439	467	457
Sweden	731	767	925	958
Finland	652	728	855	909
Norway	945	1.029	1.206	1.351
Iceland	750	829	892	790
EU-27	..	..	519	558

Source: Eurostat (2013).

This is, however, one area in which the welfare regimes differ with respect to social policy expenditure and that is regarding families and children. Table 3 shows how the Scandinavian states spend about the double amount of resources than the EU average. This article discusses the consequences of a generous family policy with respect to poverty and fertility by analyzing the development in Denmark in some detail.

### **Family policy in Denmark**

Since early industrialization, if not before, there has been a pronounced concern about the well-being of children in Scandinavia, and various forms of legislation have interfered in the private life of families. Historians agree that family policy has developed through four distinct stages (Christiansen and Markkola 2006). This paper follows that periodization.

#### *1870s to the Great War*

The first period of modern welfare state development in Scandinavia stretches from the 1870s and till after the First World War and can be characterized by poor law legislation and philanthropy. During this period Inger Elisabeth Haavet found that ‘Children have been a popular target for welfare policy and philanthropy since the 1880s;’ and ‘While the Absolutist state during Mercantilism had occupied itself with the quantity of the population, the quality of the population was more at the centre of the discourse at the end of the 19th century’ (2006: 195, 196). It is nothing new that states are concerned with the number of children within their territories, and that they try and develop policies to support the birth and upbringing of children. Maybe the best example is various policies implemented in France in the latter part of the 19th century, when the French state became increasingly worried about the fact that population development went faster in neighbouring Germany. The fear of perhaps not having enough soldiers in case of military conflict triggered the introduction of family allowance in France very early on (Hanes-Olson 1972).

In Scandinavia there was a strong concern about infant mortality especially among illegitimate children who disproportionately died because of lack of mothers’ milk and adequate hygienic conditions during the first critical months.

According to Haavet 'the state's role was to enforce a solution within the private sphere by making both parents responsible for providing for their children' (Haavet 2006: 195). The effort was primarily addressing the cruel destinies of foster children, and the alliance between the medical profession and the philanthropic organizations, with a strong female participation, contributed to improved hygienic and social conditions for many mothers and children.

For instance was the 'Organization of Foster Mothers' (*Premieforeningen for Plejemodre*) established in Copenhagen and gradually the 'Medical Childcare Programme' (*Det medicinske Børneplejeprogram*) achieved major authority (Haavet 2006: 196). Likewise, in the area of childcare Denmark saw the establishment of 'Fröbel' Kindergartens from 1870, which later developed into People's Kindergartens from 1901. They gradually replaced the old asylums that had been established during the first part of the 19th century. While the asylums emphasized discipline and order, the kindergartens had a strong pedagogical dimension and integrated care and educational objectives (Borchorst 2002). 1901 was also the year that saw the first act on maternity leave: all women working in factories with more than five employees had the right to four weeks of (unpaid) leave after having given birth (Hansen 2003: 1). Yet, these family policy measures were not universal, and not all political interests found them necessary or even desirable at that time.

### *The Interwar Period*

With the subsequent period of time from 1919 and till the 1950s the state resumed more direct responsibility for the welfare of families and children resulting in the adoption of family allowances in all Nordic countries by the 1940s (Haavet 2006: 207). With respect to childcare in Denmark Annette Borchorst labels this period 'institutionalization of a residual policy' (2002) and dates it to the Social Reform of the 1930s: the state could now fund the People's Kindergartens with 50 per cent of the total expenditure; obligations gradually increased with amended legislation in 1945 and 1951 'when the Parliament *unanimously* decided that municipalities were obliged to support the running of child care facilities' (Borchorst 2002: 9; emphasis added).

The driving forces were people related to the pedagogical thoughts such as those of Fröbel and Montessori, which together with Social Democrats put the childcare issue on the political agenda. Yet, the proposals got support from all political parties. Regarding the 1919 legislation Borchorst wrote: 'It is remarkable for the time that all the political parties in the two chambers of parliament voted for the proposal' (2009: 10). However, this consensual approach has since then proven to be a hallmark of Danish family policy. With the 1933 Social Policy Reform maternity leave was also improved both in length, now six weeks after having given birth, and in coverage: women working in factories, members of a sickness fund and those without support were now eligible (Hansen 2003: 2).

These improvements in family policy were part of a major social policy reform, resulting from the so-called *Kanslergadesettlement*, which was concluded after 18 hours of negotiation on January 29-30 1933. It was named after the domicile of the then prime minister Thorvald Stauning and included the Liberal Party (*Venstre*) the *Radical Venstre* and the Social Democratic Party, i.e. all parties in the Danish parliament except the Conservatives. It was a compromise where

the Liberal Party in return for not blocking the social policy reforms secured a ban on strikes and lock-outs and a devaluation of the Danish Kroner benefitting agricultural exports. The Social Policy reform was a major step forward towards a more universal, rights based social policy; it reduced the earlier numerous regulation and assembled them in four major acts (Andersen 2005).

### *The Golden Years*

The next period of social policy development is usually labeled the golden years of the welfare state, or the *trente glorieuse* and encompasses the period from the end of World War Two and till the first oil crisis in the mid-1970s. During this period a path breaking reform of family policy took place with the universalization of childcare policy. Borchorst (2002; 2009) views the Danish 1964 reform of childcare as decisive by stating three major principles: a) the relatively high public commitment to providing, organizing and financing childcare for children below school age; b) universalism of the central criterion of the policies; c) social pedagogical objectives of the services.

More generally, the objective of family policy had changed from restoring the home with a present mother as a security net to establishing a working infrastructure for the two-wage family (Haavet 2006: 209). This also indicates a changing role of women as mothers and workers: ‘the 1960s witnessed a shift in both discourse and political praxis towards a new ideal of gender neutrality’ (Melby, Ravn, Wetterberg 2008: 9). Hence, maternity leave was again expanded both in length and coverage in 1960. By then all female employees had a right to 14 weeks of paid leave (Hansen 2003: 3).

This is a period of universalization of social rights in Denmark, most prominently demonstrated with the implementation of the Peoples Pension in 1956. Since then everyone residing in Denmark has had a right to a retirement pension irrespective of means, needs or merit. Jørn Henrik Petersen and Klaus Petersen refer to the implementation of the Peoples Pension as perhaps the most central in the whole post war period (Petersen and Petersen 2012). Equally important in the context of this paper, the pension reform, in its final form, received support from all parties in the Danish Parliament, hence demonstrating the high degree of consensus in this regard.

Other parts of social protection also underwent changes at that time and as in the case of family policy it was based on the working of ad-hoc policy commissions such as the ‘Social Reform Commission’ which sat from 1969 to 1972 (Social Reform Commission 1969, 1972). In connection with the forming of the commission a major social science investigation was launched, which fed it with calculations and estimations of relations and conditions relevant to its work (Andersen 1970, From 1972, Westergaard 1972, Ussing 1970).

The legislature followed quite closely recommendations from the commission when unemployment insurance and social assistance legislation were amended in 1969 and in 1976 leading to a complete change in the way social assistance was understood and conceptualized.

### *1980s and Beyond: Times of Uncertainty and Change*

Historians single out a fourth period of welfare state development which they label new challenges since the mid-1970s (Christiansen and Markkola 2006). Regarding childcare policy this period does not indicate radical changes: 'In spite of cutbacks in the 1970s, there were no radical changes during the next three decades in the Danish model, and the level of provision kept increasing (Borchorst 2009: 14). But the 1980s saw an adjustment to what demographers have labeled the second demographic turn: the decrease in marriages and child births and concomitant increase in cohabitation, divorces and single parenthood and out of wedlock births; an increase in commuting and female employment, etc. This coincided with a shift towards postindustrial society which occurred first in Scandinavia and which the Nordic countries are the only ones that have adapted their welfare states to according to Giuliano Bonoli (2007: 504). Among the new social risks emerging with post industrialization he mentions, as one among many, the inability to reconcile work and family life (2007: 495). With the implementation of a host of care services for children and frail elderly Scandinavian women were able to both maintain main responsibility for the household and engage in gainful employment in the labor market. As Torben Iversen and John Stephens wrote (2008: 610-11): 'Indeed, the main area of welfare state innovation in all four Nordic countries in the 1970s and 1980s was in policies enabling women to enter the labor force, not only through providing services such as day care but also through transfers, such as paid parental leave.'

In the Danish case this was reflected in the gradual implementation of suggestions made by the so-called Child Welfare Commission which sat from 1975 to 1980 and which published its concluding report and recommendations in 1981 (Børnekommissionen 1981). Its title was to reflect upon the above mentioned societal changes and examine the conditions for children of pre-school age and to discuss whether 'the conditions are adequate in view of the needs of the children, the families and the society.' Particularly, it should look into family policy measures; housing and environment conditions; day care institutions and day care services in private homes; and early efforts to ensure a healthy physical, and social development (Børnekommissionen 1981: 285-86). Two things stood out apart from a genuine concern for the well being of children in a post-industrial setting where parents have problems reconciling work and family life: a) recognition of the responsibility for children's welfare as not only lying with the parents, but as one shared among parents, the state and the social partners of the labor market through their negotiated agreements; and b) an emphasis on involving fathers more in the lives of small children. This latter point was reflected in the subsequent change in 1984 where parental leave was introduced allowing fathers two weeks of paternal leave and six of 20 weeks to be shared between the parents (Hansen 2003: 4). The emphasis on the role of fathers was also reflected in the recommendation that all children have the right to two parents, even if they only live with one of them. It was later enacted as the possibility of joined custody after divorce or separation, and in the obligation of single women to name the father of their child.

The overall concern of the legislature seems to have been to secure families' self-provision, in the first half of the 20th century, complemented by the national interest in the size and the quality of the population, in the final part of the century directed by a

focus on productivity and economic growth as a precondition for welfare (Melby, Ravn, Wetterberg 2008: 8).

Changes have been remarkably consensual, since decisions have mostly been unanimous among the different political parties, bringing Denmark in line with the other Scandinavian countries, where: 'all major welfare reforms have been passed by broad parliamentary majorities' (Christiansen and Åmark 2006: 352). In 2002 the most recent changes to parental leave legislation was enacted which expanded the leave period to 52 weeks after birth, of which 32 weeks can be shared between the parents (Hansen 2003: 5).

However, it is important to underline that the act does not entail so-called 'use or loose' days as the opposition would have liked it. Reserving part of the leave for fathers has proven a strong incentive for them to increase child minding responsibilities for their babies as is demonstrated with the development in the other Nordic countries where parental leave does include a period reserved for fathers that cannot be transferred to the mother in cases where fathers decide not to use it.

### **Continuity and change in Danish family policy**

What is clear from the historical overview of family policy above is that on the one hand there is a strong degree of continuity of family policy in Denmark. It is characterized by a concern with ensuring a healthy population, particularly healthy children and a high degree of employment. On the other hand, there are decisive breaks with the development of (at least) childcare and tax policies during the 1960s leading to a shift in focus from securing the self-provision of families to productivity and economic growth, i.e. more societal concerns.

Furthermore, in the 1980s there was another decisive shift regarding the rights of children and the role of fathers in care. Both changes reflect an adjustment to conditions of post industrialism, particularly the dual earner household, and to a lesser degree the increase in single parenthood. But it also reflects an increasing pressure exercised by the women's movement and the concomitant concern with gender equality. Being concerned about the health and reproduction of the population is a longstanding tradition in Denmark, and the publication of the book *Crisis in the Population Question* in 1934 by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal triggered the setting down of the so-called Population Commission, in 1935 (Befolkningskommissionen 1936; 1937; 1938).

The Commission published three reports on issues such as kindergartens, housing allowances to families with many children and the rights of mothers regarding child birth and sex education (Caspersen 1985). Anette Eklund Hansen and Klaus Petersen stated: 'The family policy reflections that they [representatives of the labour movement] promoted were strongly inspired by the work of the Population Commission from the 1930s' (2000: 50; author's translation). The explanation offered for promoting family policies is one of pressure from the women's movement both within the Social Democratic Party and outside and from women within the trade union movement reflecting a change in socio-economic conditions: 'Since the inter war period there was an increase in employed women also among married women. Therefore, both trade union women and party women demanded changes that would help them in their everyday life: kindergartens, maternity leave, house wife substitutes etc.' (Hansen and Petersen

2000: 50; author's translation).

But they did so within a political culture characterized by class compromise and class coalitions.

Peter Baldwin (1990) documented convincingly that the middle classes and the Conservative and Liberal parties played an important role throughout the long period of building up the Scandinavian welfare societies. Particularly so-called red-green alliances, i.e. compromises between Social Democrats and agrarian parties were important for welfare state development. Niels Finn Christiansen and Pirjo Markkola (2006: 17-18) supported this view when they wrote: 'The road to social reforms was prepared not only by broad popular support, but also by big class compromises, involving in particular the working class, the farmers and, at times, also the capitalist bourgeoisie.'

#### *Scandinavian states as late industrializers*

Another explanation for welfare policy development has been the late industrializer hypothesis. In general late industrializers have tended to be economically interventionist and to create public social policy programs at a rather early state in their own development as Christopher Pierson showed (2004). He also showed that the sequencing of welfare state programs is very robust across space. Everywhere family allowance and family policy come last. Hence, a developed set of family policies can be seen as a hallmark of an advanced welfare state, and that fits Scandinavia perfectly.

Furthermore, being late industrializers meant being influenced by agrarian forms and norms, and in the Scandinavian case these were particular because of the absence of huge estates (Kuhnle and Hort 2004). It should be recalled that 'The Nordic countries were extensively agrarian throughout the welfare state's breakthrough period until the 1930', as Eero Carroll and Joakim Palme reminded us (2006: 18). It is, however of course, not self evident why agrarian forms of cooperation leads to consensus and compromise. The point being that Scandinavia was a particular agrarian society when welfare policies emerged. It consisted of small landholders in a somewhat hostile climate that forced the farmers to cooperate, which is evidenced by the large number of collaborative organizations organized as co-operatives such as slaughter houses, dairies, harvesting machinery etc.

Family policies are framed within a particular political culture, which had developed from agrarian forms and norms of cooperation. It is characterized by a high degree of willingness to make compromises, a strong commitment to a consensus seeking and non-militant process of deliberation, and a strong reliance on and trust in expert advice from civil servants and ad hoc-policy commissions.

#### *Ad hoc policy commissions*

Anna-Birte Ravn and Bente Rosenbeck concluded regarding Scandinavia that instead of emphasizing the relative strength of Social Democracy: 'It might be more relevant to talk about a specific Nordic political culture characterized by negotiation and compromise between political parties representing major groups, including women's organizations' (2008: 25)

Another element peculiar to Danish political culture as shown above is the wide spread



use of ad hoc-policy commissions. Ravn and Rosenbeck also pointed to this phenomenon:

The central role played by ad hoc commissions is a specific feature of Nordic policy processes. The commissions typically included representatives of all political parties as well as interest groups, civil servants from relevant ministries, and academic experts, and they functioned both as knowledge-producing institutions, as instruments for policy planning (commissions would for instance often propose new legislation), and as an arena for consensus-building (Ravn and Rosenbeck 2008: 3).

The fact that policies are framed within this particular political culture explains the consensual and continuous character of Danish welfare policy in general, and of its family policy in particular. The productivist orientation of it is explained by its adaptation to postindustrial conditions particularly towards reconciling work and family life with an eye to try and secure a sufficient number of future workers.

Other elements of family policy in a broad sense such as taxation laws were individualized in the 1960s. Till then, for instance, women could lose their right to vote in local elections if their husbands owed taxes to the municipality (Ravn and Rosenbeck 2008: 18). But,

In a context of increased demands for labour supply and political pressure from women's organizations across class borders, the tax law system was finally changed from joint to individual taxation of spouses. Equality between classes was substituted by gender equality as a main goal in Danish (Nordic) family policies, and women's, especially young women's labour market participation soon came to equal that of men's (Ravn and Rosenbeck 2008: 24).

#### *Dominant actors in Danish family policy development*

When explaining the other decisive path breaking occurrence in Danish family policy, the universalization of childcare from 1964 Borchorst pointed to the interest of the dominant actors, the opportunity structures when decisions were made and the role of timing as an institutional factor.

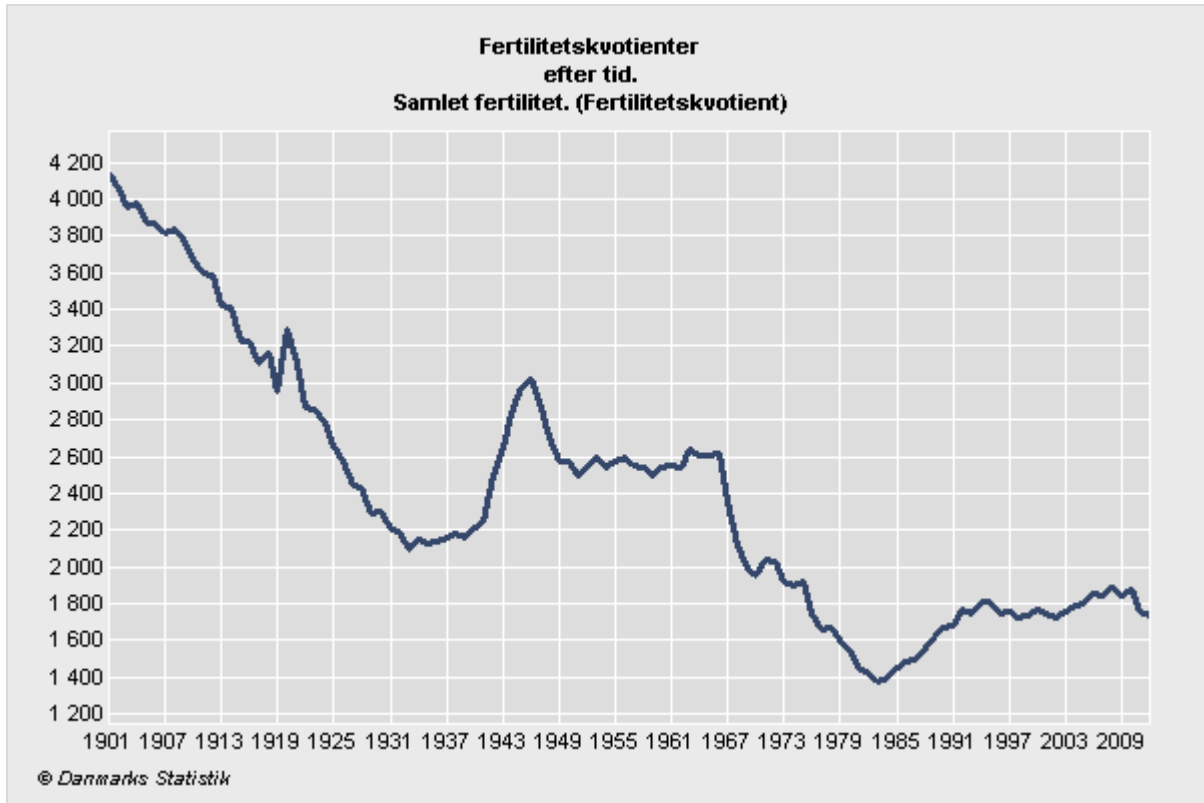
The key actors were progressive pedagogues who were actively involved in preparation of the 1964 Act and they were supported by civil servants involved in the same process: 'The political decisions were unanimous, which also reflects that the Danish political system during the formative years of the welfare state was responsive to political forces, movements and organizations in civil society' (Borchorst 2009: 14).

It has been shown that changes in Danish family policy can be explained as adjustments and adaptations to changing demographic and employment conditions. So, when children's rights were expanded it was an adjustment to an increase in divorce and single parenthood, and the general improvements in day-care coverage and parental leave are adjustments to problems of reconciling work and family life with an eye to ensuring a sufficient number of children in a sufficiently good condition. However, the significant changes towards universalization of childcare, individualization of taxation and the substitution of maternity leave for parental leave, must also, in part, be explained by women's successful political mobilization for a higher degree of gender equality.

### **Impact on fertility**

An overall trend in modernization of European states has been a reduction in fertility. Until the mid-2000s the average for the European Union was 1.5 children per woman, but that has increased a little bit so that it now stands at 1.6. This average masks that many EU states including the Southern European and East European ones have a fertility rate around 1.4 while the others have managed to increase fertility recently to around 1.9. What has appeared as a particular trend is a turn in fertility toward a higher level, which can be observed in Scandinavia and a few other European states such as Belgium and France (Lanzieri 2013:4). Figure 1 below shows the Development in Denmark since 1901, where Danish women in average during their lifetime gave birth to more than four children. With the important exception of WW I and II fertility fell to level around 2.6 children during the 1950s, and during the 1960s and 1970s it fell again to the all-time low in 1983 of 1.4 children per woman. Maybe surprisingly while war seems to promote fertility, which was peaking during 1914 – 1918 and again strongly from 1940 – 1945, crisis prevents fertility with the low level of 2.1 during the 1930s. The interesting development since then and different to most other places, is that fertility has been on the increase since, and seems to stabilize around 1.9 children toward the end of the 2000s.

The overall declining trend in fertility is a long time trend and not only associated with the so-called second demographic turn. Together with an increase in longevity the trend signals an unfavorable reproduction ratio where a smaller group of people in working ages must support an increasing group of elderly citizens. What is promising however is that within those societies where family policies have had a high priority that is where we find the highest and increased fertility rates. This goes for all of the Nordic countries and Belgium and France. Hence development in north Western Europe indicate that a comprehensive family policy allows women both to maintain paid employment and waving children at the same time. The various family policies help reconciling work and family life. When fertility is broken down into educational attainment it is so that women with the highest education, in the Danish case, are also those with the highest fertility of more than 2.0, while those with lower education have fertility rates around 1.5 and 1.6 (Lanzieri 2013: 11). Given that educational attainment is expected to go on increasing, demographic prospects for the Scandinavian region and beyond looks promising.



### Impact on poverty

Two things have a profound impact on poverty: one is the distribution of paid employment, the other being distribution of social policy transfers and services. With highly unionized and well regulated labor markets people in employment, are, generally speaking, able to stay above the poverty line since wages and salaries are adequate. Furthermore, the distributional effect of social policies can be significant.

	2000	2005	2008	2012
Denmark	11.7	11.8	11.8	13.1
Germany	..	12.2	15.2	16.1
France	12.0	13.0	12.7	14.1
United Kingdom	18.0	19.0	18.7	16.2
Sweden	11.3	9.5	12.2	14.2
Finland	11.0	11.7	13.6	13.2
Norway	10.8	11.4	11.4	10.1
Iceland	10.0	9.7	10.1	7.9
EU-27	..	16.4	16.5	17.1

Source: Eurostat (2013).

In the Danish case the at-risk-of-poverty rate drops from 22 to 10 percent of the households before and after transfers in 2011 (Eurostat 2013c: 2). In the Scandinavian case there are relatively low rates of being at-risk-poverty in general, between 14 and 19 percent, while the EU-average is 24. Particularly does it stand out that the rate of children at-risk-of-poverty is lower than the overall rate for the whole population in Scandinavia; different to the EU-average where it is three percentage points higher. However, after transfers the difference is less pronounced as is demonstrated in table 4 above. Hence, Scandinavian stats are relatively good at protecting the whole population against risk-of-poverty, and they are particularly good at protecting children. We attribute this situation to the high degree of formal labor market participation for all, men and women, young and old, on the one hand side, and to the comprehensive family policies on the other hand. These elements are, furthermore, intimately linked. It is precisely the comprehensive family policies that enable women to participate in the formal labor market; and with higher employment rates we can expect less poverty. Adding a comprehensive package of family protection the effect has been that families with children in Denmark have a lower rate of poverty than the rest of the population.

	2000	2005	2008	2012
Denmark	2.0	3.2	2.0	2.8
Germany	..	4.6	5.5	4.9
France	6.1	5.3	5.4	5.3
United Kingdom	..	5.3	4.5	5.1
Sweden	3.0	2.3	1.4	1.3
Finland	3.8	3.8	3.5	2.9
Norway	2.7	2.7	0.8	2.4
Iceland	2.5	2.7	0.8	2.4
EU-27	..	10.8	8.5	10.2

Source: Eurostat (2013).

Looking at severely deprived people as listed in table 5 that goes for ten percent in Europe on average, but in Scandinavia it is only one to three percent, while the big countries have about five percent deprived citizens.

## Conclusion

All indicators point to Scandinavia as the welfare society with the best conditions for families with children. This is a combination of high labor market participation of both fathers and mothers and fairly generous transfers and services toward these families. Besides the security this provides it has also encouraged a relatively high fertility rate. The comprehensive family policy package has made it possible for mothers to continue their labor market participation after having given birth; hence enabling them both to be chief responsible for care of their children and staying within the labor market at the same time. This presupposes not only extensive family policies but also a changed distribution of household work between fathers and mothers. And, even when Scandinavian men are not doing as much household work as moth-

ers, they are doing more over time; thus bringing round a more equal distribution between parents.

These Scandinavian experiences are, however, not easily exportable since they are embedded in a particular historical development and a particular political culture. Denmark and the rest of the Scandinavian countries were late industrializers, and these tended to develop welfare policies rather early in their own development and rather generously so. Furthermore, Scandinavia has developed a system of governance based on consensual democracy where negotiating compromises to reach a consensus is common. Since the constitutions allow relatively many smaller political parties in Parliament via low entry clauses (two percent) we very often have minority governments that have to seek their parliamentary support from the opposition. Hence a political culture revolving around consensus and compromise has developed, and it is demonstrable that all major social policy legislation in Denmark has been carried through by large parliamentary majorities.

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