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• What is the problem/challenge?

• Female employment rates are too low in Europe
  – Lisbon agenda (2000)
  – EU 2020 employment strategy

• More women in employment will contribute to economic growth, social equality, social cohesion and the sustainability of the European Social Model
• What can be done?

• Lisbon/Barcelona (2002): social investment strategy, includes child care target
  – 90% coverage for children above 3 years of age
  – 33% coverage for children under three

• 2020 Strategy: social investment and life-cycle approach to work
  – Includes: child/eldercare, life-long-learning, i.e. programs which are supportive to female employment (FLOWS)

• Just move ahead!
• What about implementation?

• In general, EU strategies, policies and their implementation are based on a partnership between the Commission and the Member States.

• Problem: National member states do not have full authority in areas such as care and life-long-learning

• Policies are in many countries formulated, financed and implemented locally – at the regional or city level.

• Calls for the local as a unit of analysis.
• FLOWS: 11 cities

• Social Democratic cities: Aalborg (Denmark) and Jyväskylä (Finland)

• Liberal regime cities: Leeds (England) and Dublin (Ireland)

• Conservative regime cities: Hamburg (Germany) and Nantes (France)

• Mediterranean cities: Bologna (Italy) and Terrassa (Spain)

• Post-communist regime cities: Tartu (Estonia), Brno (Czech Republic) and Székesfehérvár (Hungary)
Different degrees of autonomy at the city level => different room for maneuvering at the local level:

- **Centralized** (England, Ireland)
- **Multi-level** (Italy, Spain, France, Germany)
- **Decentralized** (Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Czech Republic)

Differences between municipalities in a given country can be as large as cross-country differences.

E.g. Denmark (2013): highest spending municipality (Copenhagen) spends DKK 83,476 per elder per year; lowest spending DKK 29,820 (municipality of Egedal)
1st Flashlight

- Do EU’s employment targets and strategies inform and affect local policy makers, local goals, local political decision making, and implementation?

- What do preferences, interests, world views and cultural orientations of local political actors look like?

- Do local policies correspond to EU policies?
• Traces of EU employment strategies can be found nationally.
  – In some main governmental document (e.g. coalition agreement, government program)
  – More often in National Action Plan for Social Inclusion or the Operational Program of Human Resource Development; these documents are often requested by the EU.

• Supposed to frame local activities
Local studies

• Local policy documents of the cities
• Interviews with 120 local policy makers (snowball method) responsible for policy formation and implementation in relation to care and life-long-learning.
Results

• Only in three local policy documents (for the cities of Terrassa, Spain, Szekesfehervar, Hungary, and Brno, Czech Republic) the influence of EU in local policy-making could be found.

• Hardly any of policy makers interviewed at the local level was aware of EU strategies

• EU policies and guidelines are very weakly translated and transferred into local policies.
What matters locally?

• Least politicized fields in local politics
• Civil servants (not politicians) do to a large degree in most cities shape the action
• Political actors are responsive to local social practices, desires and needs
  – Women’s labor market participation is seen as separate issue from the development of welfare services
• Action is dependent on economic, political and cultural factors
  – Some localities are marked by entrenched gender stereotypes
  – In others, equal opportunities have become a social norm
• All cities marked by economic recession; has increased pressure on women to provide informal care
Conclusion

• For EU policies to become effective, new types of vertical governance and dialogues between different policy levels must be established.
• Not only necessary for reasons of efficiency, but also for reasons of legitimacy
• A EU discourse about Europe's employment strategies takes place somewhere between Brussels and the capitals of Europe, totally disconnected from local political authorities responsible for policy making – and even more distant from ordinary people**.
2nd Flashlight

• Do social investment strategies (care and life-long learning) help women to enter, re-enter or remain in the labor market throughout their life course?

• Do women’s employment lead to social cohesion?
Interviews (8,800 survey interviews, and 44 focus group interviews including 440 women) show that work in general is central to women’s economic independence, intellectual satisfaction, self-esteem, social integration and social cohesion.

However, some snakes in work-paradise:

- Far more women than men are working in precarious-like jobs
  - Runs counter to full citizenship and cohesion
Major findings:

• The role of the local welfare state for women’s employment decisions is much less important than normally anticipated.
Child care institutions

• Employment rate of women with pre-school children is relatively high; i.e. above the average employment rate.
• It is independent of childcare coverage. The provision of public child care is not an absolute precondition for the entry of women into the labor market and child care institutions do not trigger women’s employment.
• Childcare provisions are not totally irrelevant for women’s work and life conditions:
  – Lack of child care provisions leads women to work part-time associated with low income (not cohesive)
  – Daycare institutions reconcile the challenges of work and family life (support social cohesion)
Age

• Employment rate of women 55-64 is very low (often overlooked)
  – Differences in employment rates (in FLOWS cities) can to a large extent be ascribed to differences in the employment rate of older women
• May be a cohort effect.
• But needs to receive more attention if the aim is to increase the employment rate of women
Education

• High initial education is important for women’s employment

• LLL plays a minor role
  – No correlation can be found between employment rates and number of women enrolled in LLL

• LLL display the Matthews effect: most LLL is delivered to women who are already in employment and have a vocational or academic education

• Marginalized groups of women are not included in the target group.
Design and coordination

• Care and LLL policies are not designed from the perspective of women’s labor market integration; ideas about the promotion of female employment have not informed the mindset of policy makers or structured the design of institutions

• Policies are not horizontally coordinated. The reason for lack of coordination is that systems are complex
  – Educational plans are primarily formulated at the national or regional level
  – Care policies are formulated at the local level
• In sum no empirical evidence seem to indicate that supply side oriented social investment strategies and policies foster growth in women’s employment

• Leaves us with two questions:
  – Is social investment really creating employment?
  – Does social investment create new insider/outsider relations (cf. The Matthews effect)
What about demand side measures?

• Overall, demand side factors are extremely important for women’s employment
• Local economy frames women’s employment opportunities
• Of special importance: growth in the service sector – and especially the public service sector providing decent jobs and work conditions
Prospects on the demand side do not look too bright

- Financial crisis constrain women’s employment in local communities
- Dismantling the welfare state to meet the financial crisis only makes things worse (for women)
  - Work opportunity decreases
  - Pressure on women to provide care themselves
    - Increasing work-life imbalances
Conclusion

• No easy solutions if the aim is to raise women’s employment rate
• No single causal factor (e.g. day care) can be manipulated to do the trick
• Supply side oriented social investment strategies do not trigger employment opportunities or new practices
• Women’s employment is to a large extent demand side driven
  – Clear correlation between women’s employment and the size of the public sector
  – But welfare states are dismantled: developments move in the wrong direction
• Keep in mind:

• Women’s decision making is complex. Decisions are made in a broader framework of complex – and often contradictory – cultural, institutional, political and economic contexts.

• Strong predictors for women’s employment are their cultural orientation, self-image, economic and social life conditions.

• Vertical and horizontal discourses perhaps matter the most
Thank you!

5 Policy briefs:
www.flows-eu.eu