

*Abstract for the RC28*

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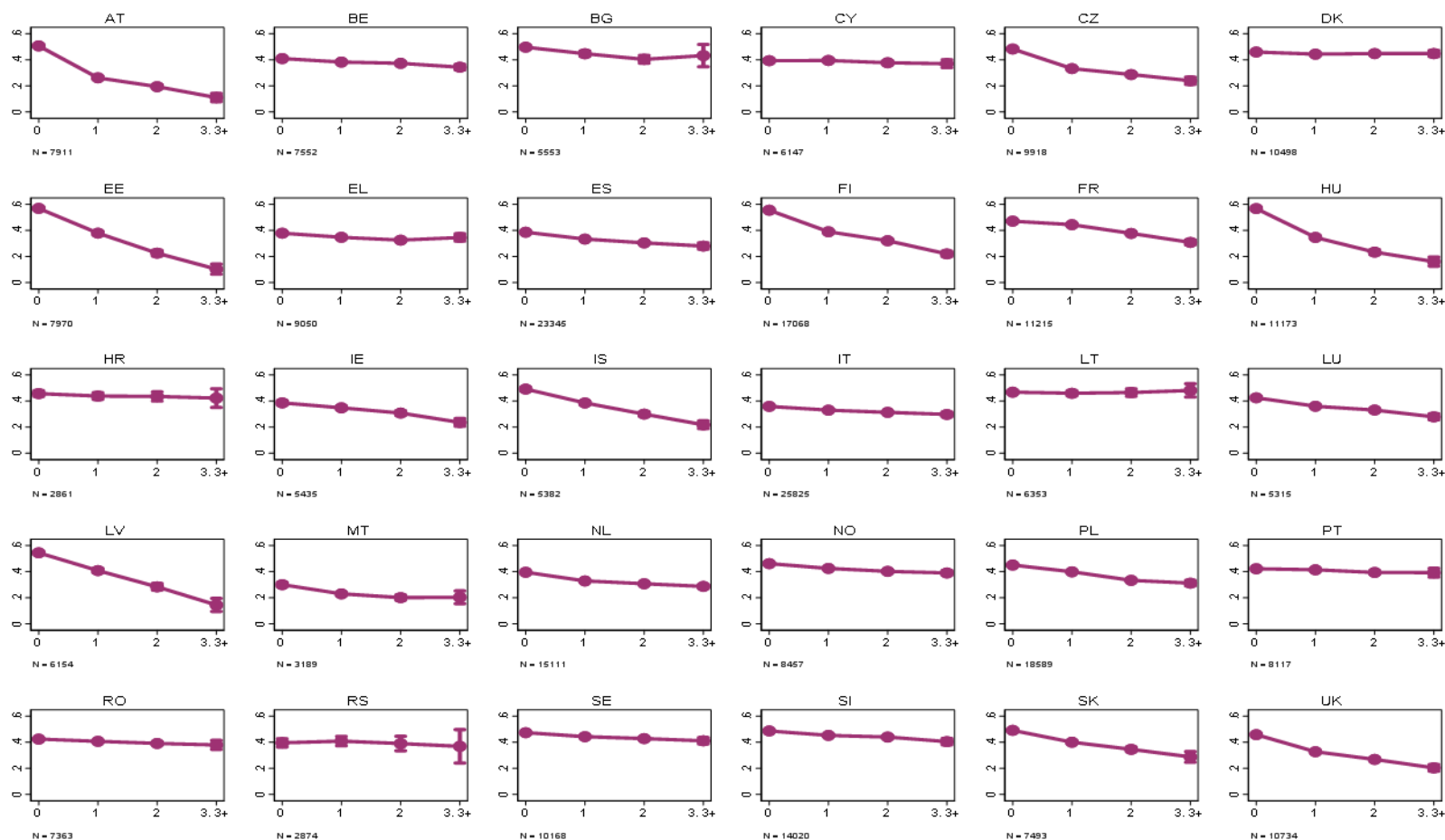
## **Work-family policies and the working hours' differences in couples after childbirth**

The division of paid work within couples contributes considerably to the persistent gender inequalities in professional advancement and the (long-term) distribution of economic resources in households. The birth of children fundamentally alters couples' division of paid labor and has long-lasting effects on parents' division of paid and unpaid labor (Bünning 2015). However, there is variation in how (un)equally mothers and fathers are involved in paid labor across countries (Hipp and Leuze 2015). Public support for parents explains part of this cross-country variation, namely the availability of subsidized childcare and family leave policies (Boeckmann, Misra, Budig 2014; Mandel and Semyonov 2005/2006; Brady, Kmec, Blome forthcoming).

This paper shifts the focus from the impact of specific policies on different-sex couples' division of labor. We examine how the length of paid parental leave (for fathers) and the subsequent availability of child care for young children affects the division of paid labor within couples after childbirth across European countries. We seek to complement previous research by examining the following questions: First, how does the birth of an additional child affect the division of paid labor within couples across countries? Second, how do work-family policies, in particular the extent to which the length of paid parental leave matches the ensuing availability of child care for young children, affect these child-related changes in couples' division of paid work?

Our study seeks to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we consider women in the context of their relationship (rather than in isolation). We simultaneously analyze women's labor force participation and working hours by using the female partner's contribution to the couple's total working hours as the dependent variable in our study. This approach enables cross-country comparisons that capture the variation in both women's labor force participation *and* employment hours. Studies examining women's work hours generally exclude non-employed women. By focusing on women's contributions to the couple's total work volume, we are able to more fully capture the cross-national variation in gendered employment patterns. Second, we examine how the length of well-paid parental leave and the availability of publicly supported childcare for young children affect couples' division of paid work. Our focus is on the interplay of policies rather than the additive effects of different policies. Third, we use panel data from the EU-SILC (2004 to 2015 waves) to estimate changes in parents' division of paid labor with the transition to parenthood and the birth of additional children. This approach addresses the shortcomings of cross-sectional studies with regard to unobserved heterogeneity between parents and nonparents as well as among parents with different numbers of children. The micro-level data are combined with macro-level information on parental leave policies and child care coverage. These data come from the Multilinks data base (2004, 2009) and Eurostat. For both policies we employ different measures, including effective parental leave, i.e., duration of maternity and parental leave in months weighted by income replacement, and paid parental leave reserved for fathers and average duration of attendance in months for children aged 0-2, fulltime childcare coverage, and childcare expenditure data. We apply multilevel modeling techniques and fixed-effects regression models to examine how couples' division of paid work is linked to country-level work-family policies.

Figure 1: Variation in the relationship between different sex-couples' division of labor and number of children by country (2004-2015)



Source: EU SILC data, results are based on country-specific fixed-effects regressions; control variables include marital status, total working hours of male and female partner, the presence of an additional person living in the household, and year