



**Global Program to Prevent Son Preference and the Undervaluing of Girls**  
**Տղաների նախապատվության եւ աղջիկների թերարժեքման**  
**կանխարգելմանն ուղղված գլոբալ ծրագիր**

**POLICY BRIEF**  
**ՀԱՄԱՌՈՏԱԳԻՐ**

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Համառոտագիրը պատրաստվել է Մարդկային զարգացման միջազգային կենտրոնի կողմից՝ Եվրոպական միության ֆինանսական աջակցությամբ և ՄԱԿ-ի Բնակչության հիմնադրամի կողմից իրականացվող «Տղաների նախապատվության և աղջիկների թերարժեքման կանխարգելմանն ուղղված գլոբալ ծրագրի» շրջանակներում: Սույն փաստաթղթի բովանդակությունը որևէ կերպ չի արտացոլում Եվրոպական միության և/կամ ՄԱԿ-ի Բնակչության հիմնադրամի տեսակետները:



Ծրագիրը ֆինանսավորվում է Եվրոպական միության կողմից  
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# Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) policies in the European Union (EU) and their impact on Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) and female part-time work.



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International experience shows that investing in early childhood care and development services is a vital component to ensure women's access to the labour market, provide them with greater possibilities to achieve a work-life balance and ultimately contribute towards gender equality. The analysis of the development of ECEC policies in the EU between 2014 and 2017 and their impacts on FLFP and gender gaps shows that member states (some more successfully than others) undertook great efforts to boost ECEC enrolment, with the majority of countries achieving a continuous increase in ECEC provision. Concerning Armenia, a provision of efficient ECEC policies would not only be beneficial towards an increased FLFP but at the same time help in combating gender-biased sex selection by providing greater choice and more economic empowerment for women. As previous research has shown, the most important policies that need to be addressed in that matter are the ones concerning ECEC and FLFP. Armenia should thus boost its effort in designing, implementing and monitoring policies offering wide-spread and efficient ECEC provision. The following analysis of ECEC in the EU can serve as guidelines towards well-functioning ECEC policies.

## Children in formal childcare in the EU

The enrolment of children aged three and younger in ECEC facilities varies greatly throughout the EU. The general trend for formal ECEC is the steady increase of enrolment levels in the majority of countries. When comparing data from 2014 and 2017 this becomes apparent. While in 2014 only 13 countries provided more than the EU goal of 30% of formal childcare, in 2017 that number increased to 14 (Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, Sweden, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Malta, Finland, Germany) with an additional six countries (Italy, Ireland, UK, Latvia, Cyprus, Estonia) being directly at or just slightly below the 30% mark. When looking at the hours of childcare provided throughout the EU, differences are apparent that can be categorised into region-specific trends. The vast majority of childcare provided in the Northern European countries (Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland) accounts for 30+ hours with only a small percentage of children being cared for less time than that. On the contrary, the UK, which can be classified as a liberal welfare state where childcare is seen as a more private matter, provides the vast majority of childcare is used between 1-29 hours.

## Formal and other types of childcare

When combining the amount of formal and non-formal childcare offered, almost all countries (except for Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovenia) reach above the EU target of 30%. Throughout the EU, types of childcare differ greatly between countries and regional trends can be found again. Whereas the vast majority of childcare in the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland) is formal, the opposite development can be found in some Eastern European/Balkan countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Poland).



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## **Employment gender gap and the gender dimension in part-time employment**

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When analysing the employment gender gap, thus looking at the percentage of women among the employed in part-time and full-time positions, it becomes apparent that in the majority of countries within the EU, women are a larger part of the part-time workforce than the full-time one. There are no noticeable region-specific trends when comparing the participation of women in full and part-time work, as there are obvious gaps between the two types of employment in every country. A similar trend can be found when looking at a comparison of part-time work between women and men. In order to comprehend the participation of women in the labour market it is important to understand its connection to and dependence on the amount of childcare each country provides as well as be aware of the concepts of choice versus lack of choice. When looking at the differences in part-time and full-time-employment as well as the gender dimension of part-time employment, there are gaps and differences in the Northern European countries, with a larger percentage of women working part-time. However, since countries like Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland provide a large amount of formal childcare with an availability of mostly 30+ hours, it can be assumed that women who work part-time do so out of choice, meaning that because of the good provision of childcare they could choose to work full-time as well. Austria for instance can be seen as an example on the contrary. The country offers little formal childcare, which is mainly used between 1-29 hours while non-formal childcare is wide-spread. The gender gap in part-time employment and the prevalence of women working part-time over full-time in this case can perhaps be seen as a lack of choice, as women have less options to combine work and children. Further research on this topic would be needed to establish a more detailed analysis.

## **Employment rate of mothers**

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The maternal employment rate of mothers has consistently been increasing and is now above 50% throughout the EU, with the majority of countries reaching above 70%. While diverse economic, social and gender related policies also contribute to the percentage of working mothers, this policy brief focuses on ECEC policies influencing the employment rate. One observation concerning the impacts of ECEC policies on the employment rate of mothers can be drawn when looking at the countries on opposite sites of the spectre, with the lowest and highest employment rates. Greece, Italy and Malta (Southern Europe) have the lowest levels of working mothers throughout the EU (53.9%, 55.0% and 59.1% respectively), while also offering only little formal care (Greece) or providing childcare between 1-29 hours for the majority of children (Italy, Malta). Sweden and Denmark (Northern Europe) on the other hand are the countries with the highest levels of maternal employment (87.8% and 83.1% respectively). They also provide the majority of childcare through formal facilities and for more than 30 hours. Thus, a correlation between type and duration of childcare and the employment rate of mothers can be seen on the basis of these country and region-specific examples.

Taking the development of ECEC policies and their impacts in the EU into consideration, it becomes apparent that a considerable amount of efforts have been undertaken to increase the enrollment of children aged three and younger in ECEC facilities and consequently increase FLFP. Effective ECEC policies, as implemented above all in the Northern European countries, allow women a greater amount of choice concerning their productive (professional work) and reproductive (housework, care work, home related matters) tasks. Good ECEC policies also impact fertility as usually the countries with wide-spread ECEC provision have the highest fertility levels as well as the highest FLFP and the lowest gender gaps.

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