

The Gender Equality within the European Union Reconciliation of Work and Family Life Policies: Tackling Gender Inequality or Tackling Unemployment

Authors : Nazli Kazanoglu

Abstract : Reconciliation of work and family life has been an area of interest within the academic as well as in the political debate for more than three decades. With the dramatic changes in the extent to which women and men contribute to unpaid domestic work and paid employment, the reconciliation of work and family life issues have become more prominent than ever before. And they have begun to enjoy an increased attention of policy makers both at the EU and national levels. Over the last three decades the EU has initiated numerous equality programs and strategies and roadmaps regarding reconciliation of work and family life, though particularly because of the crisis and increasing willingness of achieving the EUs target of seventy five per cent of men and women in employment by 2020, those programs, strategies and roadmaps emphasized on eradicating womens familial burdens while entering labor market and providing them as equal opportunities as their male counterparts have. Reconciliation of work and family life policies thus bit by bit moved away from the objectives with a strong commitment to ensuring gender equality towards employment objectives. This paper is thus an endeavor to look at the nature of EU reconciliation of work and family life policies from the angle of gender equality. More precisely relying on the feminist literature, this paper rests on the assumption that reconciliation of work and family policies should provide the sufficient measures indeed with a more emphasis on endorsing gender equality rather than economic concerns and prioritizes two inter-related aspects while evaluating the gender equality of reconciliation of work and family life policies. First providing free choice to women in terms of their family and work lives and second challenge the unequal division of labor at home. In that sense, it investigates the nature of the changing uses and meanings of gender equality in reconciliation of work and family life policies in different stages of the EU social policy development particularly after the introduction of European Employment Strategy which gave a tremendous importance to reconciliation of work and family life during their collaborations with other issues on the EU agenda as well as the major rationale behind their development and implementation and locates them in terms of two inter-related parameters mentioned above.

Keywords : European Union, division of unpaid work, gender equality, rhetoric of free choice

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