Sustainability@Leave
CA21150

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Parental Leave and Social Sustainability: How Can the Design of Parental Leave Meet a Social Sustainability Agenda?

cost
EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
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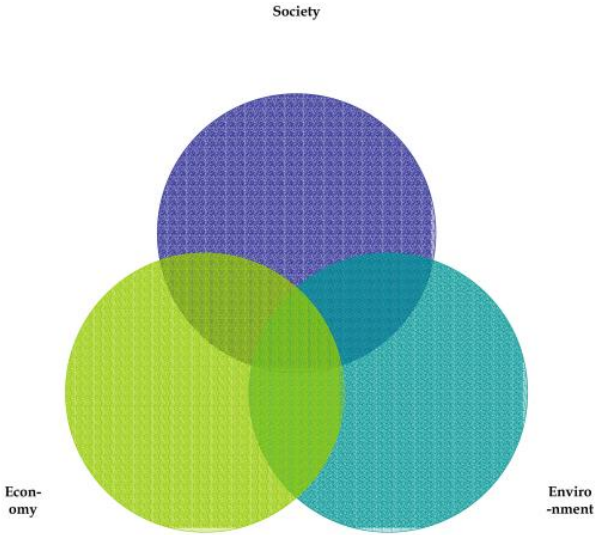
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Sustainable Development Goals

- Brundtland Report (Our Common Future (WCED, 1987))
- → Definition of “sustainable” development:
- “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the **present** without compromising the ability of **future** generations to meet their own needs.”
- → **Maintaining** (present) and **sustaining** (future)

Three pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

- Environmental Sustainability
- Economic Sustainability
- Social Sustainability



(McKenzie 2004)

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Social Sustainability and Research

- Most research is done on environmental and economic sustainability
- Social Sustainability as a “complementary” dimension in research
- Concept in chaos (Vallance et al. 2011)
  - How to define? What role does the context play?
  - How to measure?
  - Too much of a normative concept?

Social Sustainability Goals & Paid Parental Leave Policies

- Present
  - Supporting SDGs in relation to **social protection** of individuals through policy
  - Supporting SDGs in relation to **redistribution** mechanisms in society through policies
- Future
  - Policies as an **investment in the future**, both on the basis of individuals and in relation to society (social cohesion, welfare, health, …)

Paid Parental Leave Policy Design & Social Sustainability

- Which design of parental leave policies can be considered socially sustainable?
- What criteria should parental leave policies fulfil?
- How can the level of sustainability be measured?

Parental leave allowance as a means of security and equality

- EU DIRECTIVE 2019/1158: Aiming at gender equality
- “When setting the level of the payment […], Member States should take into account that the take-up of parental leave often results in a loss of income for the family and that first earners in a family are able to make use of their right to parental leave only if it is sufficiently well remunerated, with a view to allowing for a decent living standard.”
- “With regard to parental leave […], such payment or allowance shall be defined by the Member State or the social partners and shall be set in such a way as to facilitate the take-up of parental leave by both parents.” (Article 8/3)

Paid Parental Leave Design Elements

- Duration
- Level of payment
- Eligibility criteria (Gender, type of employment, living with child, definition of “parent”, …)

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Conflict?: Payment according to former earnings

Data from Germany, 2020 (Statistical Office):

	All	Women	Men
Benefit minimum of 300 Euro/ month	25.1%	31.5%	10.3%
Income before birth lower than 1,200 Euro	15.8%	20.8%	4.8%
Reduction of income (ceiling: 1,800 Euro)	5.5%	1.8%	14.4%

	Men	Women	Gender gap
Mean monthly benefit	1,223 Euro	742 Euro	481 Euro

Discussion

- Parental leave policies are a set of rights and benefits that should meet individuals' and societies' needs both for the present and the future
- "Social Sustainability" as a perspective may help to rethink parental leave policy design
- However, SDG "Reduced inequalities" and parental leave policy design: a matter of conflict, setting priorities and compromises

COST Action “Paid Parental Leave & Social Sustainability” (CA21150)

- The Action aims to advance and disseminate research and knowledge about the significance of paid parental leave (PPL) for the social sustainability of societies. Our aim is to set the scene for future PPL research from the new perspective of social sustainability while making the field more coherent across disciplines and beyond academia. The main challenges are to build the network, identify and fill gaps in PPL research, develop a future-oriented and cross-disciplinary PPL terminology, and facilitate future research by closing the PPL data gap.
- https://www.sustainability-at-leave.uni-hamburg.de/about.html