

Review of supervisor:

Kamila Utegenova:

The role of work-family reconciliation policies in female employment and fertility recuperation in selected EU member states

The work-life balance has become a key issue in political discussion as regards the recent demographic development of EU members. The extremely low level of fertility in some countries and at the same time the necessity of the higher economic activity of women for further economic growth of EU have brought the issue of reconciliation between work and family to the EU political agenda. The submitted work had several objectives. At first, to look at the EU policies as regards the support for families within the national level. Until recently the European Commission limited its involvement in this sphere to protecting labour rights and creating conditions for advancing the employment of women. The living conditions of families with children only began to receive more attention in connection with the growing need to promote work life balance. Despite the fact that EU countries have been experiencing similar trends as regards population development there are persistent differences in how the political representatives of each state react to ongoing demographic trends. Although the EU has not deemed the creation of a uniform family policy one of its objectives there has been an effort to stimulate all the EU members to improve their support provided to families. As work life balance is the current priority introduction of policies that facilitate greater flexibility and apply an equal approach to men and women has been under process. However, in each EU member state such effort has been reflected with a different intensity based on different approach to family policy. One of the research questions was to document how the recent EU trends have influenced the national development of family policies. Can we register some tendency to convergence of family policy models in this respect? The author has attempted to show that despite some similarities as Germany came near to Sweden or France, apparent distance from the new EU trends can still be found in the Czech Republic and Italy.

The second objective was to explore the possible impact of new work-family reconciliation policies on both the economic activity of women and reproductive behaviour. This is also particularly relevant topic, however very uneasy work as more other factors come into the play. Assessment of family policies is very complicated due to the cultural, social, and economic diversity of EU member states. Nevertheless, some positive developments in female employment as well as in fertility indicators could be understood as indication of improvements in work-life conditions for women. Despite its rather analytical and descriptive character the main goals of the theses were fulfilled.

The submitted work is well structured and includes all requisite parts, i.e. Introduction with goals and methods, Theoretical, and Analytical parts. Besides "Conclusion" the part titled "Convergence of family policy models" could be taken as summary of main findings.

Some comments:

1. Table 1 is not in consistency with Figure 9 particularly as regards France
2. In Figure 14 and 15 should have been specified that it refers to number of hours per a week. Next to that in the axis y should have been "childcare use"
3. In Figure 42-47 in the axis y should have been "TFR"

Kamila Utegenova has proved the sufficient knowledge of demographic issues and ability for research work in this field.

In my view the submitted work meets the criteria for master thesis in demography. I recommend this work to be defended.