

Handbook on Austerity, Populism and the Welfare State

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16. Support to families with children in the Baltic States: pathways of expansion and retrenchment from 2004 to 2019

Jolanta Aidukaite

INTRODUCTION

Family policy has been an important subject of the political and scientific debate in the Baltic States since the 1990s. This is due to demographic pressures imposed by the declining fertility rates, ageing of the population and the population decline caused by emigration (see Ainsaar, 2019; Ainsaar and Rootalu, 2016; Ainsaar and Stankuniene, 2010). Family policy is understood as policies affecting the wellbeing of families. It includes all welfare policies in a broader sense, such as education, health care, social security, services and housing policy (Hobson, 2018). In this chapter, the focus is on the family support system/policies directed to families with small children as they comprise the mostly reformed and debated family policy field over a period of 29 years of democratic development in the Baltics. Family support policies include all financial transfers directed to families with children (parental leave policies, child allowances, tax allowances and tax credits, universal and/or targeted allowances and means-tested benefits) and public childcare services. Family support policies (or systems) affect families directly and have an immediate impact on their abilities to combine work and family obligations, to maintain financial stability and to arrange caring responsibilities (Korpi, 2000; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019). The family policy systems have experienced dramatic reconfigurations since the 1990s in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Numerous studies have documented these reconfigurations (see e.g. Aidukaite, 2006, 2011, 2019; Ainsaar, 2019). Nevertheless, what happened during the most recent period (2004–19) has been researched to a lesser extent. In particular, it is less known whether changes implemented during the recent economic and financial crisis, which was felt in the Baltic States mostly in 2008/10, have left any path-breaking impact on the family support systems of the three countries. The three Baltic States were severely hit by the crisis, especially Latvia and Lithuania, experienced harsh austerity measures and their social security systems have undergone temporal or long-lasting changes (for details see Aidukaite, 2019; Aidukaite et al., 2016; Ainsaar and Kesselmann, 2016; Rajevska and Romanovska, 2016). What has happened to family support systems in the Baltic States is documented to a lesser extent. Ainsaar (2019) demonstrated that economic constraints and demographic considerations were important drivers of family policy reforms in the three Baltic States during the period 2004–14. Previous studies (Aidukaite, 2013; Ainsaar, 2019) have also shown that due to the financial and economic crisis of 2008/10 the Lithuanian government implemented more changes and retrenchments in the family support system than Latvia and Estonia. Specifically, the universal child allowance payable for all children suffered most cutbacks in Lithuania, while means-tested benefits were expanded.

This chapter seeks to contribute to the further debate on the state's family support expansion and/or retrenchment in the Baltics during and after the recent crisis by documenting and uncovering changes in family support systems (namely, maternity/parental/paternity leave policies, childcare and child benefits, and other financial support policies directed to families with children, and childcare services) of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as they developed from 2004 to 2019. This period is marked by significant events affecting the welfare systems of the Baltic States: in 2004, the Baltic States joined the European Union (EU); in 2008–10 they experienced severe financial and economic crises; in 2011–15 they joined the eurozone; the years of 2016–19 are marked by economic stabilisation and expansion.

The analytical framework of this study is based on a familialisation/defamilialisation dichotomy, which is employed to analyse the changes in the family support systems of the Baltic States. The familialisation/defamilialisation typologies provide a useful analytical tool to understand the state's role in supporting families in their caring functions and how it changed over time. The cuts in benefits and/or services mean that the state is withdrawing from family support and leaves responsibilities to the family and/or market. This leads to different forms of the familialisation/defamilialisation dichotomy and consequently impacts families' work and caring responsibilities and their wellbeing.

The empirical analysis of the study is guided by the following questions: What changes were implemented in family support systems in the Baltic States during the period 2004–19? Has the global financial crisis brought any cutbacks/trimming in family support systems and which areas/benefits were mostly affected? The study utilises widely available data of the MISSOC, Social Security World Wide data and other national sources of legislation, a report published by the ministries responsible for the social security of the three countries. EUROSTAT data are utilised to illustrate changes in aggregate expenses.

The analysis begins with an examination of familialism/defamilialism typologies and how to measure them. This is followed by a review of previous studies on family policy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Baltic States. Subsequent sections are devoted to the empirical analysis of the adjustments taken in Baltic States' family support systems from 2004 to 2019. The major argument of this chapter is that family support systems can be vulnerable to retrenchment during a crisis, but only short-lived benefits and programmes suffer most. This is precisely what happened in Lithuania. The relatively short-lived history of universal child benefits (from 2004 to 2008) in Lithuania facilitated their retrenchment as soon as the austerity rhetoric began to dominate the political agenda. However, the universal benefits, once introduced in the early 1990s in Latvia and Estonia, have become impossible to reverse even if the crisis provided opportunities for change.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: FAMILIALISATION/DEFAMILIALISATION DICHOTOMY AND ITS MEASUREMENT

Numerous studies have provided typologies of familialisation/defamilialisation and how to measure them (see e.g. Javornik, 2014; Leitner, 2003; Lohmann and Zagel, 2016; Saraceno, 2016; Yin-Nei Cho, 2014). It is agreed that defamilialisation refers to the individual's (mainly women) liberation from family dependencies (financial and/or caring). At the opposite pole, familialisation refers to the reinforcement of the individual's dependencies in a family relationship. It is assumed that the state plays a crucial role, through public policies, to ensure the

type of familialism/defamilialism in a society. The dependencies between family members can be gender specific or intergenerational. Some authors (Leitner, 2003; Yin-Nei Cho, 2014) focus only on gender-specific dependencies, others address both (Lohmann and Zagel, 2016; Saraceno, 2016). In this study, we focus on gender-specific dependencies as our object is the family support system for families with children.

To show how much the state is willing to support familialisation or defamilialisation within the families, scholars developed defamilialisation/familialisation typologies, and provided various accounts on how to measure it. Leitner (2003) and Lohmann and Zagel (2016) suggest to focus on institutional structures (social policies and regulations) to measure the degree of defamilialisation/familialisation. The widespread and high-quality childcare and elderly services are considered to have strong defamilialising effects; while it is agreed that cash benefits for child and elderly care within the family have strong familialising effects. Authors (Leitner, 2003; Lohmann and Zagel, 2016; Saraceno, 2016) stress that countries can have public policies supporting defamilialism and familialism at the same time. According to Lohmann and Zagel, 'this makes it possible to consider both countries' familialising and defamilialising policies, which often exist alongside each other and develop in different, but not always congruent directions over time' (2016: 62).

Another scholar (Yin-Nei Cho, 2014) has looked not only at the institutional structures (social policies and regulations) to measure familialism/defamilialism, but also relied on the outcomes of social policies. Yin-Nei Cho (2014), focusing mainly on the economic independence of women in welfare states, suggested to measure the degree of defamilialisation by such indicators as gender-employment gap and gender-wage gap, taking into account the duration of the fathers' specific leave and public spending on childcare and elderly care. Yin-Nei Cho (2014) proposed four types/clusters of defamilialisation (strong, moderate, limited and weak) on the basis of which woman's autonomy is facilitated through employment and freedom from care responsibilities. The level of gender-employment or wage gap indicates the lowest to the highest level of facilitation in employment. A high to low level of father-specific leave or public spending on child and/or elder care corresponds to a high to low level of freedom from care responsibilities (Yin-Nei Cho, 2014: 449–50).

Perhaps the best known and widely applied is Leitner's typology of familialism. Leitner (2003: 360) distinguished four types of familialism: (1) optional familialism, with widespread formal childcare and payments for childcare within the family; (2) explicit familialism, with poor rates of formal childcare, but payments for childcare within the family; (3) implicit familialism, with poor rates of formal childcare as well as a lack of cash support for childcare within the family; and (4) defamilialism, with widespread formal childcare but a lack of payments for childcare. Leitner's typology is useful as it allows to capture changes in the family support systems over time and policies supporting familialism and defamilialism at the same time.

Overall, the analysis of the theoretical literature suggests that free public childcare is considered to have a clear defamilising effect as it reduces family dependencies for parents to care for their children (Lohmann and Zagel, 2016). More specifically, it is the percentage of children under 3 years of age who are enrolled in formal childcare that is an important indicator of the dimension of strong and weak defamilialisation (Leitner, 2003). The parental leave policies (including maternity, parental and paternity leaves) also have defamilising effects as they 'reduce family dependencies by allowing employed parents of young children to maintain high labour market attachment, guaranteeing the return to their jobs after a given period of full-time family care' (Lohmann and Zagel, 2016: 53). However, shorter parental leave (no more than

Table 16.1 Theoretical model of measurement of familialism/defamilialism based on a mixture of Leitner's, Yin-Nei Cho's and Lohmann and Zagel's interpretations

	<i>Optional familialism</i>	<i>Explicit familialism</i>	<i>Implicit familialism</i>	<i>Defamilialism</i>
Policies	Cash payments that support family care at home; Free and widely available public childcare; Parental leave policies with high attachment to the labour market.	Cash payments that support family care at home; Tax allowances; means-tested benefits; Child allowances.	No cash payments that support family care at home; No extensive network of public childcare.	Free and widely available public childcare; Parental leave policies with high attachment to the labour market.
Outcome	Medium female labour force participation; Medium % of children under 3 years of age who are enrolled in formal childcare.	Low female labour force participation; Low % of children under 3 years of age who are enrolled in formal childcare.	Low or high female labour force participation; Low or high % of children under 3 years of age who are enrolled in formal childcare.	High female labour force participation; High % of children under 3 years of age who are enrolled in formal childcare.
Yin-Nei Cho outcomes	Medium gender-employment gap; Medium gender-wage gap; Medium duration of the father's specific leave.	High gender-employment gap; High gender-wage gap; Short or no duration of the father's specific leave.	Low or high gender-employment gap; Low or high gender-wage gap; No duration of the father's specific leave.	Low gender-employment gap; Low gender-wage gap; Long duration of the father's specific leave.

a year or two with strong attachment to the labour market) and with a higher replacement rate (no less than 70 per cent) are considered as having defamilialising effects. Longer parental leave, provided at a low replacement rate or long unpaid leave incentivises mothers to stay at home and imposes their dependency on a family. Paid paternity leave, reserved for the exclusive use of fathers, also clearly has defamilialising effects as it promotes gender equality in childcaring responsibilities and equal division of unpaid work at home (Lohmann and Zagel, 2016; Yin-Nei Cho, 2014).

Familialising policies include all cash payments that support family care at home. Among these are child benefits and family allowances, as well as home care allowances that are paid under the condition that mothers (or fathers) stay at home to care for a dependent child or elderly person. Tax deduction or tax credits for children are also considered to have a familialising effect (Lohmann and Zagel, 2016).

To sum up, for the purpose of this chapter, the family support systems of the three Baltic States are discussed by adjusting them to Leitner's proposed familialisation/defamilialisation typology. The adjustments are made relying on policies and outcomes as discussed above. Table 16.1 illustrates how adjustments are operationalised based on a mixture of Leitner's, Yin-Nei Cho's and Lohmann and Zagel's selected policies and outcome indicators.

The selected policies (maternity, parental and paternity insurance benefits, childcare benefits, child allowances, as means-tested benefits) are examined by the changes in financing, duration, entitlements and replacement rates. The data on the percentage of children under 3 years of age who are in formal childcare are also taken into account. Other data on female labour force participation rates, gender-employment gap and gender-wage gap are used to indicate possible outcomes of the states' public policies.

FAMILY POLICY IN CEE AND THE BALTIC STATES

Family policy reforms in CEE countries have attracted the attention of social scientists since the 1990s. Numerous studies (see e.g. Aidukaite, 2006; Bluma et al., 2014; Fodor et al., 2002; Javornik, 2014; Pascall and Manning, 2000; Saxonberg and Sirovátka, 2014; Szirka and Tomka, 2009) sought to explain changes, outcomes and future development pathways of family policy in the CEE region. The collapse of the communist regimes across CEE dramatically impacted children's wellbeing, women's labour market participation and family formation patterns. Among the most debated outcomes of the post-communist transformation were the declining fertility rates, which, over a period of more than 25 years, never recovered to the pre-transformation period (see Eurostat, 2020). Therefore, the ageing of the population has become among one of the most important reasons for social policy reforms (especially family policies and pensions) throughout the CEE region.

Social policy development has been driven by many factors including structural (demographic, economic, technological), institutions (veto points, the impact of the World Bank and the EU) and power resources (unionisation, Left parties) (Brady and Young Lee, 2014; Deacon, 2000; Korpi and Palme, 2003). Family policy, which is an integral part of social policy, has been influenced by similar forces. However, it has been widely agreed that family policy, unlike other fields of social policy such as pensions or unemployment, is largely defined by cultural factors – predominant ideals and attitudes towards gender roles in society and family (Lohmann and Zagel, 2016; Sainsbury, 1996). Countries that hold more egalitarian views on gender roles have developed welfare and family policy systems involving support for female labour force participation and the redistribution of caring work within the family. Countries with more traditional views on women's roles in the family and society have developed systems that encourage homemaking. Nordic countries usually fall within the former category, while South European countries and Continental Europe, with some variation within, fall into the latter cluster. CEE countries inherited high female labour market participation rates since the fall of the communist regimes. Under the communist regime, women's paid work was supported and encouraged by the government through a well-developed and extensive network of childcare facilities. However, unpaid work at home was not monetised and equally divided between the sexes, resulting in a double burden for women. They actively participated in the labour market on equal terms with men, but the unpaid household work and caring responsibilities were left to women only. After the fall of the communist regimes, during the earliest years of transition, women became even more familialised due to a collapse in social services (childcare and elderly care), a decline in wages and an increase in unemployment (Pascall and Manning, 2000; Stankuniene, 2001). Nevertheless, this situation in the Baltic States has been rapidly replaced by the necessity of the dual-earner family, not only due to low wages in many post-communist societies, but also to high female job aspirations and increasing gender equality values coming from the 'West' and emphasised by the European Commission. Gender equality has been increasingly taken into account in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and has been addressed to varying extents in the systems of support to families with children. This situation has been, however, different in various CEE countries. In recent years, in such countries as Poland and Hungary, we can witness an increasing trend of familialisation and turning back to the traditional gender views (Szelewa, 2020). In Poland, for instance, one can find a stronger maternalist direction in public discourse on childbearing which emerged especially during the right-wing coalition in office since November 2015 (Szelewa, 2016).

In the three Baltic States the traditional gender views, at least at the policy level, have never dominated the societal and political discourse since 2004.

However, when it comes to the familialisation/defamiliarisation dichotomy, the three Baltic States are not uniform. A comparative study by Javornik (2014) focusing on parental leave and childcare policies (from birth to mandatory schooling age) shows huge variations in the degree of familialisation/defamiliarisation among eight CEE countries of the EU (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). Grounded in Leitner's (2003) familialism typology, Javornik distinguished three policy types: (1) Slovenian and Lithuanian systems were assigned as supporting defamilialism since states seek to incentivise women's continuous employment and active fatherhood through parental and paternity leave policies and available public childcare; (2) while support to families systems in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia appeared to support explicit familialism with emphasis on familial childcare and gendered parenting; and (3) the state in Poland, Slovakia and Latvia leaves parents without public support, hence maintaining implicit familialism. Thus, Javornik has assigned the three Baltic States to the different types of familialism/defamilialism. Javornik based her conclusions on legislation fixed on the year 2008. In this chapter, we review the data and legislation on family support systems from 2004 to 2019. This allows us to capture the historical dynamic of variation in familialism/defamilialism, since, as stated by Leitner (2003), countries cluster differently at different points in time. Moreover, it enables us to observe whether the reforms implemented during the crisis have made any path-breaking¹ changes in the family policy systems in the Baltics.

DESIGN OF FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN THE BALTIC STATES

The three Baltic States were and still are often blamed for being neoliberal economies and neoliberal welfare states, based on their low public spending on social protection, high income inequality and low social dialogue (see Bohle and Greskovits, 2007; Sommers et al., 2014). However, when it comes to the support to families and children, they have been relatively generous, especially Estonia. Family support systems in the Baltic States consist mainly of transfer benefits to families and children. After almost 30 years of transition, family benefits are still the most developed part of family policy in the Baltic States; while services are less developed (Kuitto, 2016). Childcare facilities for preschool children are provided by public and private bodies in the Baltic States. Access to affordable and high-quality childcare is the highest priority on the political agenda of the Baltic States. However, access is compromised especially in the rural areas (Aidukaite and Senkuvienė, 2019; Ainsaar, 2019).

Since the 1990s, family support systems in the Baltic States went through various reforms until they developed into today's support systems (for details see Aidukaite, 2006; Ainsaar, 2019; Stankuniene, 2001). At present, the same schemes found to exist in many Western European countries can be found in the Baltic countries. For instance, employment support schemes like maternity and parental leave, transfer support schemes like childcare benefits and child allowances, some schemes for single parents and large families, as well as other benefits (for orphans, disabled children, legal guardian benefits, adopted children and so on) can also be found. All three countries have generous birth grants paid for each child born.² However, differences can be uncovered among the three countries. One of the remarkable features of

the Lithuania family policy was and still is to some extent a reliance on means-tested support to families, which is less present in the Latvian and non-existent in Estonian family support system. Figure 16.1 illustrates trends in the expenditure on means-tested benefits.

Lithuania has always spent much more PPS per inhabitant (as a percentage of all benefits) on means-tested benefits than Latvia. Spending on means-tested benefits in Lithuania reached a peak in 2010 (43.70 PPS), during the crisis, and then went down in 2016 (22.53 PPS) in the years of economic recovery but increased again in 2017. It is more than in Latvia, where the peak was in 2009, during the year in which the crisis was felt most, and it amounted to 4.47 PPS per inhabitant. It went down in 2016 amounting only to 1.26 PPS and continued to decrease in 2017.

Estonia has no spending on means-tested benefits at all. The bulk of its support for families is centred on non-means tested benefits and this is illustrated in Figure 16.2.

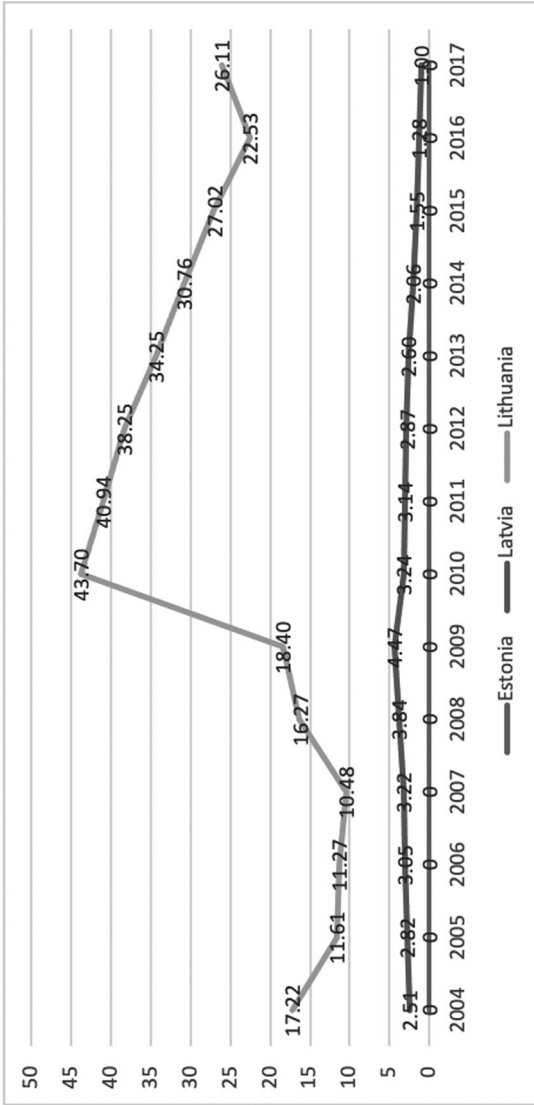
Estonia has always spent more on non-means-tested benefits for families than Latvia and Lithuania. Yet, spending on non-means-tested support has tended to gradually increase, especially during recent years since 2014 when a recovery and rapid economic growth started in Estonia and the other Baltic States. The trend in spending on non-means-tested benefits in Lithuania since 2004 has shown a high fluctuation (see also Ainsaar, 2019). This is due to changes in legislation which is examined in subsequent chapters.

Thus, obviously the universalism has been a more distinguished feature in family support in Latvia and especially in Estonia than in Lithuania. Previous studies (Aidukaite, 2011, 2013; Ainsaar, 2019) have also emphasised that in Lithuania one can find much stronger elements of the targeted model in the social security system than in Latvia and Estonia. Indeed, all three countries currently have means-tested benefits for low-income families, but in Lithuania they are more wide-ranging, including social benefit, compensation for heating, cold and hot water, free school meals, a lump sum benefit and a benefit for families with children. In Latvia, some means-tested benefits are also quite extensive, for example, social assistance benefits for low-income families, housing benefit, a benefit for food, meals, a benefit for purposes related to the education and upbringing of children (Rajevska, 2009). Estonia, however, has one means-tested benefit, the so-called subsistence benefit (Trumm and Ainsaar, 2009). In Lithuania, the qualifying conditions for the means-tested benefits are much stricter than in Latvia and Estonia. To qualify for means-tested benefits the claimant has to not only pass an income test, but also property and assets tests, while in Estonia and Latvia, it is enough to pass the income test to qualify for these benefits.

The family support system is financed from the social insurance fund (State Insurance Fund), the state and the municipal budgets in Lithuania; from the social insurance fund (Social Insurance Budget), the state's budget and the local municipal budgets in Latvia; in Estonia, the financial family support system is mainly financed by the state budget and additionally from the social insurance fund (Health Insurance Fund). All residents (including also aliens residing with a temporary resident permit) are entitled to family benefits in the Baltic States.

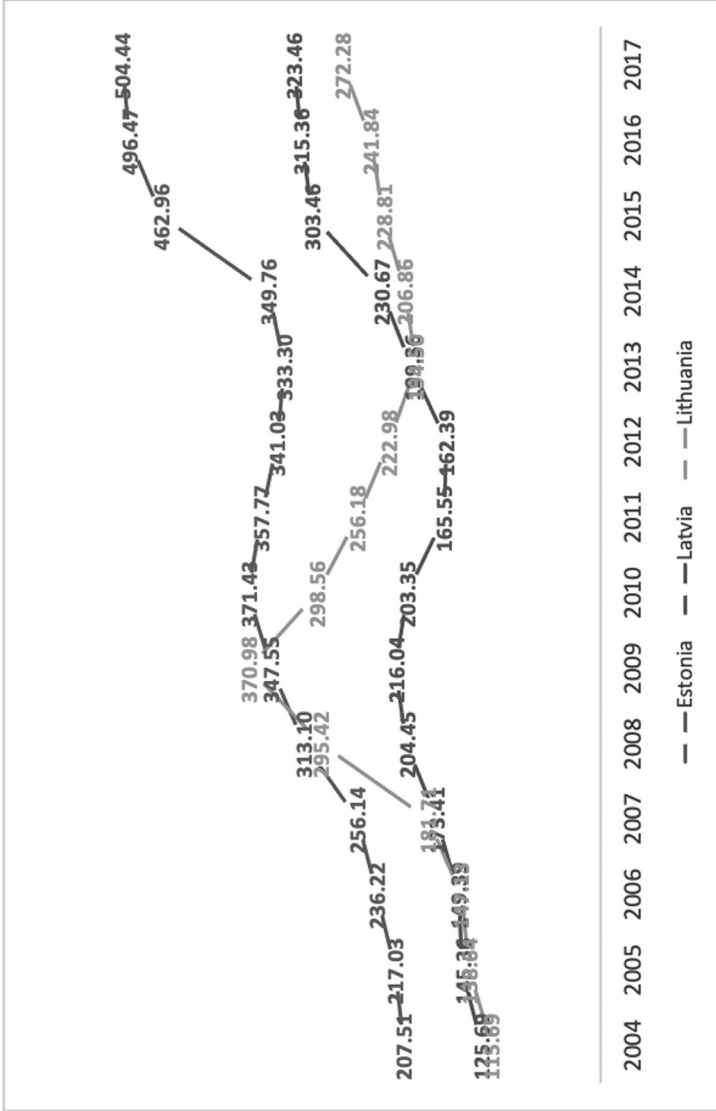
To sum up, the family and child support system is more generous in Estonia than in Latvia and Lithuania. All three countries give support based on previous contributions and citizenship (residency). In addition, means-tested benefits are also available to poor families and individuals.

In the following discussion, we review changes in family support systems from 2004 to 2019 in detail.



Source: Eurostat (2019).

Figure 16.1 Means-tested benefits, purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant, percentage of all family support



Source: Eurostat (2019).

Figure 16.2 Non-means-tested benefits, purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant, percentage of all family support

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEM IN ESTONIA

The analysis of data of the MISSOC (2004–19) and the International Social Security Association (2004–18) allows us to examine changes in the family support system in Estonia from 2004 to 2019 (Table 16.2).

It is remarkable that since 2004, Estonia has consistently developed a universal system of support for families. From its implementation, the universal system has not seen any shift through a period of more than ten years. Contrarily, the benefit levels have been gradually increased as well as new benefits implemented such as disabled child's study allowance (introduced in 2006) and disabled child supplementary allowance (available since 2006) as a supplement to the child allowance. The only benefit that was retrenched is the child school allowance, which was paid annually until 2012 to each child residing in the country at the beginning of a school year. Other benefits such as childcare allowance (up to three years; from 3 to 8 years of age), universal child allowance, single parent's allowance, and other category-targeted benefits (to orphans, legal guardian benefits, adopted children and disabled children) have not seen any significant change, even during the crisis period (2008–10). Yet, the benefit levels for some (e.g. child allowance) have been increased gradually. For instance, the universal child allowance payable up to a child's 16th birthday (or 19th if studying) has been raised gradually since 2011, and currently amounts to €60 for each of the first two children and €100 for each additional child.

The maternity benefit has not seen any changes during the period 2004–19. The parental benefit was introduced in Estonia in 2006. It started as a lump sum benefit (100 per cent of the reference wage) payable for 455 days including the maternity period. Since 2006, the benefit minimum and maximum ceilings have been increased gradually, as well as payment duration. From 2014 until 2019, it has been paid for 435 days after the maternity benefit period ends (Table 16.2). It is enough to be affiliated with the Health Insurance Fund (HIF) regardless of length of service in order to be entitled to maternity and parental benefits in Estonia. The entitlement conditions have not changed since 2004. Paternity benefit has not seen any changes, it is paid for ten days and amounts to 100 per cent of the previous reference wage. It is important to mention that for those who are not entitled to receive parental benefits, the state grants childcare allowance which currently amounts to €500 per month.

CHANGES IN FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEM IN LATVIA

Latvia has consistently maintained a universal family support system since 2004. However, we can find more changes than in Estonia during the period 2004–19. They are mainly related to changes in the benefits structure and payment levels. The amount of universal child allowance payable up to the child's 15th birthday (or 20th if studying) was dependent on the number of children until 2012; the second and subsequent child received a higher benefit. From 2012 until the most recent changes adopted in 2015, the amount of child allowance (8 lats) was paid at a flat rate and was the same for every child and did not depend on the number of children in a family. The eligibility conditions have also been tightened: the child must be 1 year old; if receiving the benefit at the age of 19 (if studying) they must be unmarried. Nevertheless, in 2015, the child allowance returned to the pre-crisis period and even expanded. It again depends on the number of children in a family. For the first child it amounts to €11.38, twice for the

Table 16.2 Trends in family support systems of the Baltic States from 2004 to 2019

Family support scheme	Estonia			Latvia			Lithuania			
	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2017/19
Maternity										
Qualifying conditions/duration	Belongs HFI/140 days	-	-	6 months insurance, 112 days	-	12 months insurance	-	126 days, 3 months of contributions in the last 12 months	Must have at least 12 months of contributions in the last 24 months	-
Replacement rate/amount	100%	-	-	100%	-	80%	-	100%	-	77.58%
Financing	HFI	-	-	SIB	-	-	-	SIF	-	-
Parental										
Qualifying conditions/duration	Belongs HFI/435 days	-	-	x	Belongs to SIB	-	-	3 months of contributions in the last 12 months	7 months of contributions in the last 24 months	-
Replacement rates/amount	100%	-	-	x	70%, 1 year paid	60% if 1 year; if 1.5 years, 43.75%; if work, 30%	-	70% up to 1 year	100% up to child's first year, 85% up to second year	77.58% if 1 year; if 2 years, 54.31% up to 1 year, 31.03% from 1 to 2 years
Financing	HFI	-	-	x	SIB	-	-	SIF	-	-
Paternity										
Qualifying conditions	Belongs HFI/10 days	-	-	x	6 months insurance	12 months insurance	-	x	-	-
Replacement rate/amount	100%	-	-	x	80%, 10 days	-	-	x	-	77.58%
Financing	HFI	-	-	x	SIB	-	-	x	-	-

Family support scheme	Estonia			Latvia			Lithuania			
	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2017/19
Childcare allowance	Residency, up to 3 years, between 3 and 8 years old	-	-	Residency, up to 2 years, not employed	-	-	Residency, no right to maternity/paternity benefit, paid up to 3 years	-	Residency, no right to maternity/paternity benefit, paid up to 2 years	Residency, in training/education
Qualifying conditions	EEK 600 up to 3 years; EEK 300 – from 3 until 8 years (each child)	€38.35 each child up to age 3; €19,175 for each child between ages 3 and 8	-	50 lats up to age 1; 30 lats from ages 1 to 2	-	€171 up to 18 months; €42.69 from 18 months to 2 years	LTL 137	LTL 97.5	Means-tested	€228 after the birth up to 12 months
Replacement rate/amount	SB	SB	SB	SB	-	-	SB	SB	SB	SB
Financing	SB	SB	SB	SB	-	-	SB	SB	SB	SB
Supplementary childcare allowance	Residency, up to 1 year for child at home	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Qualifying conditions/duration	EEK 100	€6.40	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Replacement rate/amount	SB	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Financing	SB	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Family benefits for large families	3 or more children	-	-	x	x	x	3 or more children, residency	Income test	-	Residency, 3 or more children
Qualifying conditions/duration	-	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	-

Family support scheme	Estonia			Latvia			Lithuania		
	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16	2004/7	2008/10	2011/16
Replacement rates	EEK 5 000	€320	-	296 lats	-	€421.17	1000 LTL	LTL 1430	€418
Financing	SB	-	-	SB	-	-	SB	-	-

Notes: - indicates no changes; x indicated scheme does not exist. Abbreviations: HIF (Health Insurance Fund); SB (state budget); SIB (Social Insurance Budget); SIF (State Insurance Fund).

Sources: MISSOC (2004–19); ISSA (2004–18); Eurostat (2019).

second; three times as much for the third; 4.4 times as much for fourth and the following children. Additional to the child allowance a supplement is paid to families with two and more children and for each child with a disability. Since 2008, the Latvian government has committed to expanding category-targeted benefits for disabled children, adopted children and legal guardian benefits. The paternity leave was introduced in 2006 together with parental leave. In Latvia, one of the parents taking parental leave is allowed to work and simultaneously receive the parental benefit. For those who cannot receive the insurance-based parental benefit or have no work record, the state provides a childcare allowance, €171 is payable for up to 18 months and €42.69 from 18 months to two years. The maternity benefits have not seen significant changes, however, from 2012 the benefit level was tightened and dropped from 100 per cent of the insured's average earnings in the last six months to 80 per cent of the insured's average earnings in the last 12 months.

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEM IN LITHUANIA

Lithuania has seen the most pronounced changes in the financial family support system since 2004 compared to Latvia and Estonia. From 2004 to 2008, it has seen an expansion of universal benefits for families and children. In 2004, Lithuania already had a universal system of support to families up to the child's third birthday. In 2006, universal benefits payable up to each child's seventh birthday were introduced. By 2008, each child residing in Lithuania was entitled to the universal child allowance up to the child's 18th birthday. Thus, for about three years Lithuania has seen an expansion of universal benefits, which were enjoyed by all children residing in the country. However, during the period 2008–12, the Lithuanian government retrenched the universal child allowance, it became means-tested. In 2016, Lithuania had employment-related benefits (maternity, parental and paternity). For those who did not qualify for maternity and parental benefits, the state gave support on a means-tested basis.

Nevertheless, Lithuania has reintroduced the universal child benefit payable to each child irrespective of the family's income since 2018. Currently, it is paid monthly to every child from birth to 18 years of age (to 21 years if a person studies according to the general education curriculum) and amounts to €50.16 (€69.92 for a disabled child). Children from large families (raising three and more children) and poor families get an additional €20.14 (MSSL, 2019). It is important to mention that by reintroducing the universal benefit, the government of Lithuania has abolished the tax allowances for families with children.

The maternity, parental and paternity benefits have not seen essential change. However, there were changes in eligibility conditions and payment duration, especially for the parental benefit. Lithuania has the longest history of paying the parental (since 1996) and paternity (since 2004) benefits compared to the other two Baltic States. From 2004 to 2010, the parental benefit has seen an increase in the replacement level, from 70 per cent of the insured's average earnings during the last three months to 100 per cent of the insured's average earnings during the last 12 months. During 2008 and 2010, it was paid up to two years: 100 per cent of the insured's average earnings if the child is younger than 1 year or 85 per cent if the child is younger than 2 years. In 2011, the replacement rate was reduced if taken for two years: 70 per cent of the insured's average earnings until the child's first birthday and 40 per cent until the child's second birthday. Since 2019, the changes in the replacement rate were made again:

parental benefit was reformed, and it is in place as described in the previous section and Table 16.2.

WHAT TYPE OF FAMILIALISM IS IN THE BALTIC STATES?

The Baltic States' financial family support systems up to the child's first and/or second birthday are designed to resemble the Nordic family support system. There are relatively generous maternity, paternity and parental benefits. These benefits are based on previous salary and employment with some minimum and maximum ceilings implemented. They are designed to replace lost income during childbirth and also to create incentives for parents to come back to employment as soon as possible. It may be claimed that the Lithuanian family support system in its institutional design up to the child's first birthday is most defamilialising. It offers generous parental leave (100 per cent of insured averaged earnings) for one year. It also provides the most generous paternity leave (100 per cent of insured averaged earnings) payable for one month. The Lithuanian government is also committed to expanding childcare facilities, which have the most defamilialising effects. However, if we examine the number of children up to 3 years old in the childcare facilities in Lithuania from 2007 to 2019, the figures have been on average lower than in Estonia and Latvia (see Table 16.2). For instance, in 2018, there were about 21 per cent of children up to 3 years of age attending childcare facilities in Lithuania, while figures for Estonia (28 per cent) and Latvia (27 per cent) were higher. As noted by Leira (2002), the availability of childcare services for the age group up to 3 years is the most important indicator defining whether the state has taken responsibility in supporting female employment and gender equality. It has to be kept in mind that the kinship network is very well developed in Lithuania, and possibly in the other Baltic States. It is a common practice (entrenched culture and practical tradition) that grandparents provide baby-sitting up to the child's third birthday, allowing parents (usually the mother) to stay in full-time employment. This leaves opportunities for hidden familialism to be present in childcare practice.

The family support systems in Latvia show even more signs of familialism. In Latvia, parental leave is payable at too low a replacement rate to qualify as having defamilialising effects. It replaces only 60 per cent of the social insurance contribution wage (if on parental leave no longer than a year), or up to 1.5 years (43.75 per cent of the social insurance contribution wage). In Latvia, we see a combination of universal, means-tested and earnings-related benefits, which can be received simultaneously. The availability of paternity leave (although a short ten days) shows the state's commitments to increasing equality in childcare between genders. However, parental leave is given at a low replacement rate, and together with other universal benefits can reinforce familialism. As discussed in previous sections, the financial generosity of family/children policies are lower in Latvia, which can also reinforce dependencies within a family. Thus, the Latvian public support system for families and children can be attributed to implicit familialism as the state has supported working parents during the period 2004–19, however, the support is provided at a relatively low replacement rate and flat-rate childcare benefits at the same time cannot ensure adequate wellbeing, which has to be sought through either the family or market.

The family support system in Estonia is more difficult to judge. On the one hand, many benefits are given at a flat rate for every child and paid simultaneously with other universal and earning-related benefits. The childcare benefits, a large family supplement, a supplementary

Table 16.3 *Formal childcare by age groups (percentage of population of each age group, duration 30 hours or over)*

Country/Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Less than three years												
Estonia	14	16	21	19	15	14	18	19.4	21.4	30.2	27.1	28.3
Latvia	15	11	13	16	15	19	22	21.6	22.9	28.3	28.4	27.4
Lithuania	18	8	10	12	8	5	10	22.9	9.7	15.2	20.3	20.8
From three years to minimum compulsory school years												
Estonia	81	84	84	86	83	83	82	84.2	86.1	84.1	87.9	84.8
Latvia	51	65	65	60	65	72	70	74.3	79.2	80.3	85.1	84.8
Lithuania	52	55	51	59	60	68	68	72.1	68.8	70.8	74.3	74.4

Source: Eurostat (2019).

Table 16.4 *Gender equality indicators in the Baltic States*

Country/Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Gender pay gap %												
Estonia	30.9	27.6	26.6	27.7	27.3	29.9	29.8	28.1	26.9	25.3	25.6	-
Latvia	13.6	11.8	13.1	15.5	14.1	14.9	16.0	17.3	17	17	16.7	-
Lithuania	22.6	21.6	15.3	14.6	11.5	11.9	12.2	13.3	14.2	14.4	15.2	-
EU-27		17.3	17.2 ^a	16.5	16.9	17.3	16.8	16.7	16.6	16.3	16.1	-
Gender-employment gap %												
Estonia	8.8	8.6	2.0	1.9	5.7	5.7	6.6	7.7	7.9	8.2	7.3	7.8
Latvia	10.2	7.4	0.3	-0.5	2.2	3.6	4.2	4.6	4.1	2.9	4.3	4.2
Lithuania	7.5	6.9	-0.4	-1.5	0.6	1.2	2.6	2.5	2.4	1.9	1	2.3
EU-27	15.6	15.1	13.5	13.0	12.7	12.2	11.7	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.6
Employment rate females 18–64, %												
Estonia	72.6	72.9	69.0	65.9	67.8	69.4	70.1	70.6	72.6	72.6	75.1	75.6
Latvia	70.3	71.9	66.5	64.5	65.3	66.4	67.7	68.5	70.5	71.8	72.7	74.8
Lithuania	69.1	68.7	67.2	65.0	66.6	67.9	68.6	70.6	72.2	74.3	75.5	75.7
EU-27	62.1	62.8	62.3	62.1	62.3	62.5	62.7	63.5	64.4	65.3	65.4	67.4

Source: Eurostat (2019).

childcare allowance, single parent allowance – these are benefits having clear familialising effects (see Table 16.1). Nevertheless, there is quite generous parental leave which incentivises parents' employment. The state seems to give options to parents either to return to paid employment after 1.5 years or to choose to stay longer (up to three years or up to eight years). In Estonia, the numbers of children up to 3 years of age in kindergartens have been on average (from 2007 to 2018) higher than in Lithuania, and almost the same as in Latvia, as noted (Table 16.3).

A detailed examination of the Estonian system allows us to claim that the state's support to families with children evolved over time (2004–18) from explicit familialism to optional familialism with the introduction of generous parental leave benefit in 2006.

If we examine socioeconomic indicators, the most defamilialising effects can be found for Lithuania. The gender-employment gap has always been lower in Lithuania than in Estonia and Latvia (Table 16.4).

In 2015, the gender-employment gap was only 2.4 per cent in Lithuania, while in Estonia, it was 7.9 per cent and in Latvia, 4.1 per cent. It has to be mentioned that the three Baltic

countries have a much lower gender-employment gap than the EU-27 average (11.5 per cent in 2015), reflecting the high female labour force participation, which is also higher than the EU-27 average. In the Baltic States, slightly more than 70 per cent of females are in paid employment, while the latest figure for the EU-27 is about 64 per cent. The other important socioeconomic indicator, which, according to Yin-Nei Cho (2014) shows defamilialising effects, is the gender pay gap, which is also much lower in Lithuania than in Latvia and especially Estonia. The gender pay gap in Lithuania, in 2014, was 13 per cent, while in Latvia, it was 17 per cent and in Estonia, 28 per cent.

It has to be mentioned that all three Baltic States have similar female labour force participation rates; the majority of women work full-time, despite the fact that the state supports different familialisation/defamilialisation models. Hence, it is possible to claim that female labour force participation is not the best measure of the degree of familialism/defamilialism. The dual-earner family model is a norm in the Baltic States, and many other factors influence the real (not theoretical) familial care practices, including real wages, employment policy, gender role attitudes and cultural tradition.

DISCUSSION: WHAT AND WHY RETRENCHMENT?

According to Pierson (1996), there are three conditions that indicate structural shifts have taken place in the welfare state, allowing us to say that the welfare state has undergone retrenchment. These include '(1) significant increases in reliance on means-tested benefits; (2) major transfers of responsibility to the private sector and (3) dramatic changes in benefits and eligibility rules that signal a quantitative reform of a particular program' (p. 7). An examination of the family support systems in the three Baltic States revealed that a structural shift has taken place only in Lithuania, but only for a short time. The universal system (shortly developed during the period 2004–08) has been completely abandoned and reliance on means-tested benefits significantly increased. However, since 2018, Lithuania again engaged in the universal path of family support policies by reintroducing the universal child allowance again. While family support systems in Latvia and Estonia have not experienced any structural shifts, the systems have shown considerable resistance to change despite the austerity measures taken in Latvia, and to some extent in Estonia. Yet, benefit levels have seen increases in the post-crisis period (2015) for some universal benefits.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has reviewed changes in the family support system in the three Baltic States from 2004 to 2019. The family support systems of the Baltic States have experienced significant transformations, namely, the rapid expansion (new benefits and programmes have been introduced and benefit levels gradually increased), and convergence with the other advanced countries of the EU before the crisis of 2008. Following the crisis, Lithuania took a divergent approach towards support to families with children and retrenched all universal benefits, while relying mainly on means-testing for poor families and earnings-related benefits for middle and upper classes. Despite being severely hit by the crisis, Estonia and Latvia have kept universal family support systems, providing benefits to every child irrespective of their social

background, while at the same time supporting those active on the labour market by providing earnings-related benefits.

The analyses show that crisis offers an opportunity for social policy retrenchment, but only ‘new’ programmes, which have not yet managed to generate long-term supporters and interest groups, were most vulnerable. The relatively short-lived history of the universal child benefits in Lithuania facilitated their retrenchment as soon as the austerity rhetoric began to dominate the political agenda. However, the crisis has left universal support to family systems in Estonia and Latvia almost intact, and yet earnings-related benefits were expanded. The universal benefits once introduced in the early 1990s in Latvia and Estonia became impossible to reverse even if the crisis provided opportunities for change.

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NOTES

1. According to Cerami and Vanhuyse (2009), the path-breaking change in the welfare state means ‘the intervention that ends the self-reinforcement of an established institution and may give way to a new one’ (p. 4).
2. The birth grant amounts to €429 in Lithuania, €421 in Latvia and €320 in Estonia, payable to each child born irrespective of family income. If twins or triplets, the amount paid increases considerably.

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