



Expertise of the Expert Commission
of the Second Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government:
New ways of restructuring paid work and (unpaid) care work

Factsheet 1:

Paid work and (unpaid) care work

Gender equality - an objective not achieved

The objective of gender equality has not yet been achieved in Germany. This can be observed in various areas of life - for instance in employment/work life, in the distribution of unpaid care work and in pension payments in old age.

- » The First Gender Equality Report from 2011 already contained a wide range of data and facts, developed concepts for consistent policymaking towards more gender equality, and recommended implementation measures. The expertise of the Second Gender Equality Report builds upon this.

The recommendations of the Expert Commission are based on a guiding principle: "We aim to create a society in which there are equal capabilities for women and men; lifetime opportunities and risks are equally apportioned."

- » Equal capabilities are more than abstract freedom of choice. "Equal capabilities" means that all persons must have the capabilities to realise their decisions and wishes originating from different, sound reasons.
- » Such capabilities are being limited by discrimination, violence, structural disadvantages and stereotypes. In order to achieve the objective of gender equality, these limitations must be eradicated.

Life course approach

Life situations change in the life course. Therefore, gender equality policy should offer concrete support for women and men in their respective life situations - especially with regard to transition phases having effects on the equal capabilities of women and men in their further life course.

A major issue in gender equality is the birth, adoption or guardianship of a child. Many problems that parents encounter in their vocational career during their life course are connected to the fact that they have to tediously balance parenthood, paid work, care work as well as self-care during important life phases. In these phases, they take decisions that are not only guided by their personal preferences and the availability of resources, but that are also contingent on numerous other factors.

The result are risks in the life course like fewer promotion opportunities, lower incomes and lower pension payments for those who accept the main responsibility in unpaid care work. Most persons affected by these disadvantages are still women. However, the gender-stereotyped division of labour also leads to restrictions on men's capabilities to realise their wishes.

New ways of restructuring paid work and (unpaid) care work

The joint organisation of paid work and (unpaid) care work serves as a guiding thread within the Second Gender Equality Report. The expertise considers the organisation of paid work and care work in society - including both private and unpaid care work as well as professional/paid care

work. One core question of the expertise is: How can care work be organised in terms of promoting gender equality?

- » The term care work includes all types of work in terms of care, attention and provisions for oneself and for others.
- » All societies and all national economies rely on such essential work. Despite this, such work has historically been devalued and made invisible.
- » Care work has been - and is still today - in many instances not seen as a field of the economy. As women perform about 52% more care work than men ("Gender Care Gap"), a substantial part of the work performed by women is blanked out in an economic sense.

Different models and their effects on equal capabilities

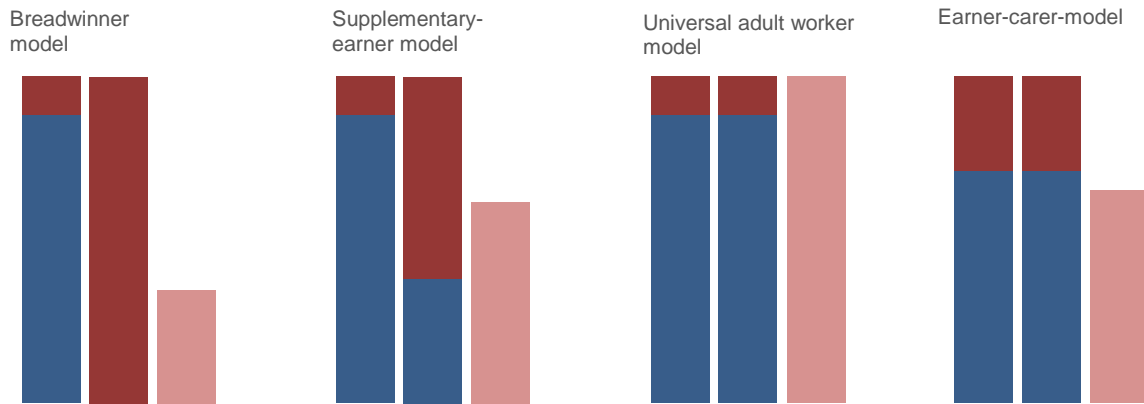
State regulations, policymaking, law and social norms mostly follow - implicitly or explicitly - concepts of gender and labour division.

- » In Germany, state regulations, institutions and culture for a long time were based on the **breadwinner model**. According to this concept, care work is mostly privately organised, i.e. within couple or family relationships: a sole 'breadwinner' earns the money to support the family and lives with a 'housewife', who provides private care work.
- » With the increasing equal integration of women into the workforce in recent decades, a change in favour of the **supplementary-earner model** has set in. From a gender equality perspective, however, this is just a variation of the breadwinner model. The role of the - usually male - family breadwinner remains almost unchanged; he still has little time for the family. The - usually female - supplementary earner, on the other hand, has to reconcile the double burden of part-time employment and family care work. Part-time employment also makes it harder to secure one's livelihood and to build a career.
- » Other regulations are geared towards a **universal adult worker model**. This model provides for full lifetime employment for everyone and does not take into consideration desire for privately or informally contributed care work - meaning caring for own children or dependent relatives, or performing household work.

These models all facilitate merely one form of paid work and care work organisation - which entails several disadvantages. They hamper all other arrangements. Therefore, these models limit the capabilities of many people.

The Expert Commission on the Second Gender Equality Report thus proposes a new model: The earner-carer-model.

Different arrangements in paid work and care work in partnership relations



Key: Paid work, private care work, external care work (paid care work and private care work for other persons, e.g. grandparents)

Source: Own graphic.

The earner-carer-model

Gender-equal organisation of paid work and (unpaid) care work must provide everyone irrespective of gender with the ability to combine employment and care work in equal measures during the life course. The Expert Commission uses the term “earner-carer-model” for this new concept.

- » Many people prefer to take on a certain amount of informal care work themselves. This is part of life itself.
- » Today’s young generation does not only expect to enter working life on an equal footing, they also have no intention of letting a career dominate their private lives.
- » Women want to be able to pursue careers and work in all types of economic sectors and on all professional levels. Men want to contribute to informal care work without having to deal with preconceptions of stereotypes. And both want to avoid reaching an economic dead-end.
- » It must thus be possible to live the earner-carer-model irrespective of gender.

To achieve this, conditions have to be established which allow people to take up employment/paid work on an equal footing, without having to forego private care work.

- » Such conditions must provide everyone with the ability to combine paid work and care work during their respective life course and in different life phases.
- » At the same time, it should also always be possible for informal care work to coexist alongside paid work.

The earner-carer-model also means: The existing challenges in the organisation of paid work and care work should not have to be dealt with by the individuals in their private lives. Policymakers must establish conditions that enable the coexistence of paid work AND informal care work for everyone wishing for this.

The recommendations in the expertise of the Second Gender Equality Report thus contribute to an earner-carer-model which people in partnerships and families can live without being overstretched.

Further reading:

Expert Commission on the Second Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government (2017): New ways of restructuring paid work and (unpaid) care work. Expertise of the Second Gender Equality Report of the German Government. Available online at www.gleichstellungsbericht.de/gutachten2gleichstellungsbericht.pdf

- With regards to this factsheet, see in particular chapters A and B

**Factsheet created by the
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