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# **Flexicurity and Gender Equality: advancing flexicarity policies in Denmark and Spain**

**Óscar García Agustín y Lise Rolandsen Agustín**

  
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### **Óscar García Agustín**

PhD in Spanish Philology from the University of La Rioja. He holds a master's degree in Political Sciences from UNED. He worked as an associated teacher at the University of La Rioja and at the University of Copenhagen. Currently he is working as a post doctoral researcher at Aalborg University in the collective project "Talking Culture" on the discursive construction of culture. Within this frame, he is developing the project "Immigration and Integration in the EU. A comparative analysis of intercultural politics in Denmark and Spain". His main research fields are discourse analysis and the study of political identities.

### **Lise Rolandsen Agustín**

PhD fellow at Aalborg University. She holds a master's degree in Spanish and International Studies from Aalborg University. She has previously participated in the QUING project (Quality in Gender + Equality Policies), working on policies regarding gender-based violence in the European Union. Currently she is participating in the EUROSHERE project (Diversity and the European Public Sphere. Towards a Citizen's Europe) in the field of political parties and social movements. Her main research fields include transnational women's activism and gender equality policies in the European Union.

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## Resumen ejecutivo

La lucha por la igualdad de género afecta a diferentes ámbitos. El debate actual en la Unión Europea sobre cómo lograr una mayor integración de las mujeres en el mercado laboral tiene consecuencias, por un lado, en los Estados miembros, que aspiran a una mayor competitividad y a un mayor crecimiento económico, y, por otro lado, a la autonomía y a los derechos sociales y económicos de las mujeres, tanto en la esfera pública como privada.

Una de las maneras de avanzar en la elaboración de políticas de igualdad de género es observar las buenas prácticas desarrolladas en otros países europeos y valorar la posibilidad de asumir e implementar políticas similares con el fin de intentar corregir las desigualdades de género. En los últimos años, el modelo de igualdad español ha ido avanzando de manera positiva en el ámbito de la representación, política y empresarial, y en la corrección de desigualdades sociales estructurales, como la violencia machista o, de forma más general, la dominación sobre las mujeres. Sin embargo, y a pesar de algunas reformas recientes, creemos que se pueden introducir mejoras en relación con el mercado laboral que contribuyan a fomentar la igualdad. Las tasas de desempleo entre las mujeres son más altas en España que en Dinamarca y la fertilidad es más baja. En Dinamarca, la integración de las mujeres en el mercado laboral a tiempo completo y los altos porcentajes de madres trabajadoras con hijos pequeños se han conseguido, sobre todo, a través de un sistema universal de cuidado.

En este sentido, presentamos una serie de buenas prácticas, incluyendo algunas correcciones, del modelo danés, conocido como *flexiseguridad* por combinar la flexibilidad y competitividad en el mercado laboral con un generoso sistema de prestaciones sociales. Creemos que es importante resaltar que la *flexiseguridad* no debe interpretarse como una herramienta para flexibilizar el mercado laboral, sino que debe ir acompañada por unas políticas sociales efectivas (*flexinsurance*) destinadas a compensar la creciente incertidumbre laboral. Por eso, la dimensión de género debe ser también parte del modelo y debe facilitar la integración a tiempo completo y en igualdad de condiciones de las mujeres, incluyendo políticas de cuidado (*flexicarity*) que ayuden a realizar este proceso.

Tomando en cuenta estos factores y la situación comparativa entre España y Dinamarca, ofrecemos una serie de recomendaciones para implementar un modelo de flexiseguridad que incluya la dimensión de género en el caso español:

- **Estrategia de flexibilidad y políticas de cuidado:** es necesaria una estrategia integral que combine la flexibilidad en el mercado laboral, la seguridad social y la necesidad de cobertura del cuidado de niños para fomentar la igualdad de género en el mercado laboral. Las medidas para conseguir la reconciliación de la vida laboral y familiar deberían centrarse no sólo en el derecho de la madre a trabajar, sino también en el derecho de la mujer a disponer de su propio tiempo y de autonomía económica. Asimismo, son fundamentales las campañas y las medidas para incluir la responsabilidad del padre en relación con el cuidado y con los permisos de paternidad. La mejora del sistema de cuidado debería posibilitar la reconciliación de la vida laboral y familiar de las parejas. En el ámbito laboral, se debe aumentar la seguridad en el trabajo y las oportunidades de formación continua. De este modo, se incrementarían la igualdad de género, la seguridad individual (dado que el impacto de los períodos breves de desempleo sería menor) y la flexibilidad de las empresas para adaptarse a los cambios en el mercado (al igual que la adaptación de una mano de obra más cualificada a los nuevos trabajos y tareas).
- **Permisos de paternidad:** las bajas de paternidad deberían considerarse un derecho de los padres para participar en el cuidado y en la educación de sus hijos. La financiación de la maternidad y la paternidad deberían repartirse entre empresas e instituciones –con todo, el coste no debe ser excesivo para los empleadores–.
- **Esquemas de cuidado universal:** se deben extender los sistemas de cuidado, financiados, en parte, por ayuntamientos y comunidades autónomas, que, a su vez, se aplicarían el marco general establecido en el nivel estatal. Siguiendo este esquema, sería recomendable promover el sistema de cuidado por el cual los cuidadores cuiden a un número reducido de niños en sus propias casas. Este modelo ha sido económicamente exitoso y ha cubierto el cuidado diario de niños entre 0 y 2 años en Dinamarca. Además de las ventajas económicas, es útil para regular y asegurar la calidad del cuidado. El sistema contribuiría igualmente a la creación de trabajos y serviría para frenar la tendencia en España, por parte de pequeñas empresas, a ejercer el cuidado sin ningún tipo de regulación ni de la calidad ni de los lugares en los que se realiza el servicio. Por otra parte, serviría para regular la situación irregular de inmigrantes que trabajan en este campo. Finalmente, sería altamente recomendable que los cuidadores fueran formados para atender a las necesidades pedagógicas de los niños y que las instituciones de cuidado se adaptaran a la flexibilidad del mercado laboral y ofrecieran horarios de apertura más flexibles.

## Introduction

Achieving gender equality is a continuous political struggle. It is simultaneously related to several political fields and sectors and innovative solutions may be necessary to develop efficient policies. One of the most important issues currently discussed at the European Union (EU) level in relation to gender equality, is how to achieve a higher degree of women's labour market integration. On one hand, this is linked to member states' competitiveness and economic growth, by strengthening the work force. On the other hand, it is linked to women's independence and social and economic rights as well as overall gender equality, both in private and in public spheres. Gender equality, understood as women's integration into the labour market, can, thus, be seen both as a means and as an end in member state policies. Gender equality should, however, also be considered a democratic value in itself. Beyond that, it may serve other purposes, such as labour market efficiency and the protection of children's rights but the equal sharing of duties and responsibilities between men and women is a fundamental value in itself.

However, the EU is a very diverse entity and member states differ substantially in their policies and achievements when it comes to gender equality. Member states have adopted or failed to adopt policies on women's labour market integration and they have done so in diverse ways. The Danish gender equality policies have developed within the context of the Nordic welfare state model and a high percentage of female labour market participation has been achieved. Denmark can, in this sense, be considered a forerunner on the European level in terms of women's labour market participation. One of the main challenges faced by the Danish gender equality policies is the development of a flexicurity model in relation to labour market policies and its consequences for women. Spanish gender equality policies, on the other hand, have experienced important reforms since the Socialist government took office in 2004. The country can now be considered a European forerunner in another area, namely the introduction of gender quotas in political representation. In relation to employment, several measures have been introduced, for instance regarding leave arrangements. Gender equality in the employment area, however, continues to be one of the challenges to which the Spanish policies will have to find responses in the years to come.



In order to create innovative responses to this policy issue, it seems pertinent to engage in mutual learning between different members states' best practices in terms of promoting gender equality. The aim of this study is precisely to assess what member states may learn from each other when it comes to achieving results and applying coherent responses to the issue of gender equality in the employment field. We do so from a limited perspective in the sense that the aim is to critically revise the positive and negative experiences emerging from the Danish gender policies with the view of making policy proposals for the Spanish gender equality policies on the basis of the Danish best practices. The main argument that will be developed here is that a flexicurity model can be considered a response to the current socioeconomic challenges in the Spanish society as well as the gender inequality in the labour market if and when it includes a gender dimension as well as a strengthened focus on the social security dimension. Gender equality policies in terms of women's access to the labour market and reconciliation measures are necessary alongside social protection. The Danish case serves, to a certain extent, as an example of how to develop high full-time female labour market participation as well as care policies. On the basis of this, we will suggest specific recommendations on the implementation of flexicurity policies in Spain with a focus on the gender dimensions such as leave arrangements and universal day care systems. We will argue that this is a potential way to enhance social protection, gender equality and economic growth simultaneously. The study is structured around 5 sections. First the methodology is introduced and, secondly, the basic facts and figures concerning gender equality in Denmark and Spain are presented in order to provide background knowledge for the analysis. Then the concept of flexicurity is explained and the Danish model and its potential for an adaptation to the Spanish context are analysed. Subsequently the gender equality policies currently in place in both member states are introduced and the specific best practices from the Danish policies are identified. Recommendations directed at the Spanish context are drawn from the examples of best practice. Finally, the conclusion sums up the most important policy recommendations extracted from the analysis.

## Methodological considerations: an asymmetrical case study

The methodology used in this study is both quantitative and qualitative. The analytical groundwork, upon which the assessment and the analysis will be made, consists of statistical analysis, used to illustrate the current situation of gender equality in Denmark and Spain, and the study of legislation and political measures. Policy proposals for improvement will be based on an analysis of these two kinds of sources. The source of the statistical material is mainly EUROSTAT. Legislative and policy texts will be official documents from the Spanish and Danish governments and parliaments.

The methodology applied can be characterized as asymmetrical since it focuses on policy implementation in one country solely and it is based on a most-different analysis as regards the gender equality status and the labour market models of the two countries selected. However, the general context of both countries is similar as it is related to the EU and the European labour market and its objectives. Most lessons are expected to be learned from the most-different type of case study, though with the basic condition that the two cases share enough similarities and objectives not to be completely disconnected in which case learning from best practice would be impaired. This requires, however, a rigorous contextualization where specific policy measures are assessed within the particular setting where they may be implemented. With a critical glance at the measures adopted and the development achieved in the Danish case, we furthermore aim to go beyond this while making suggestions for an efficient Spanish gender equality policy.

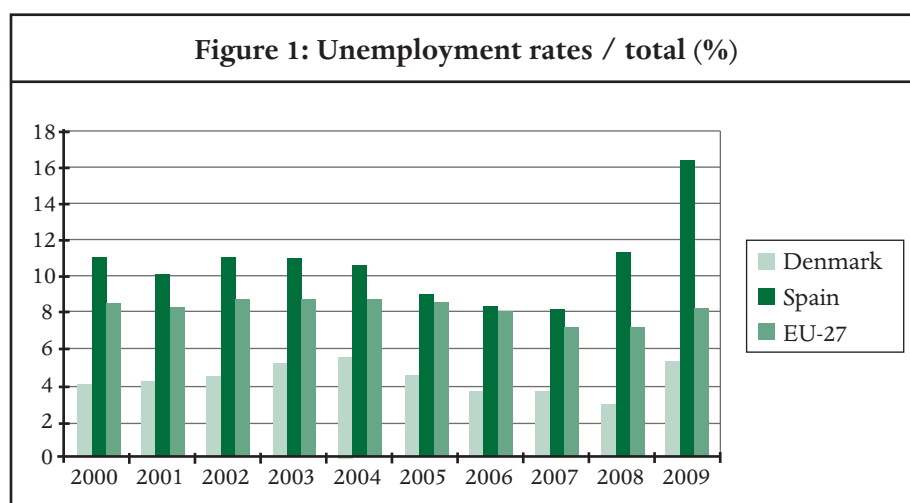
The fact that the focus of the best practice will be on the potential improvements of the Spanish gender equality policies does, by no means, imply that the possibilities of influence are unidirectional. The Danish gender equality would be able to substantially benefit from a similar exchange of best practice and inspiration from the Spanish measures. Both policy frameworks have advantages and deficiencies, and the Danish policies could be considerably altered by introducing measures such as gender quotas in political representation or earmarked paternity leave measures. However, the focus here will be on the possibilities of advancing and further reforming the Spanish gender

equality policies, taking inspiration from the Danish best practice. This methodological choice, regarding the study object, has been made as a consequence of the limited scope of the study, which would not allow for paying detailed attention to both frameworks and directions of influence, as well as an evaluation of the target audience of the study, which is in this case situated within a Spanish framework mainly. Furthermore, the choice is justified by the study's focus on employment policies as the Danish policies have achieved the greatest results in relation to gender equality in this area. This is reflected in the elevated percentage of women on the labour market. The Danish model is also characterised by the advanced implementation of a flexicurity model. It is a stated aim of the EU to work towards a flexicurity model in the European labour market and, thus, it seems pertinent to consider the effects that this model has on gender equality policies as well as the potential pitfalls it may have.

## Facts and figures: gender equality in Spain and Denmark

In order to evaluate gender equality policies and best practices, it is necessary to look at the actual state of gender equality through facts and figures to know the exact point of departure. In accordance with the overall aim of the study, the focus of this section will mainly be on employment rates among women and men and the (in)existence of child care services.

In some ways, Denmark and Spain represent two national extremes regarding some of the key labour market targets of the EU. This is especially true for employment rates where Denmark has a relatively low total unemployment rate whereas the numbers are quite high in the Spanish case. The Spanish unemployment rates are above the EU-27 average which makes targeted action even more pertinent. Furthermore, the rates, and not least the Spanish ones, have strongly increased in 2009. The following figure illustrates this point<sup>1</sup>.

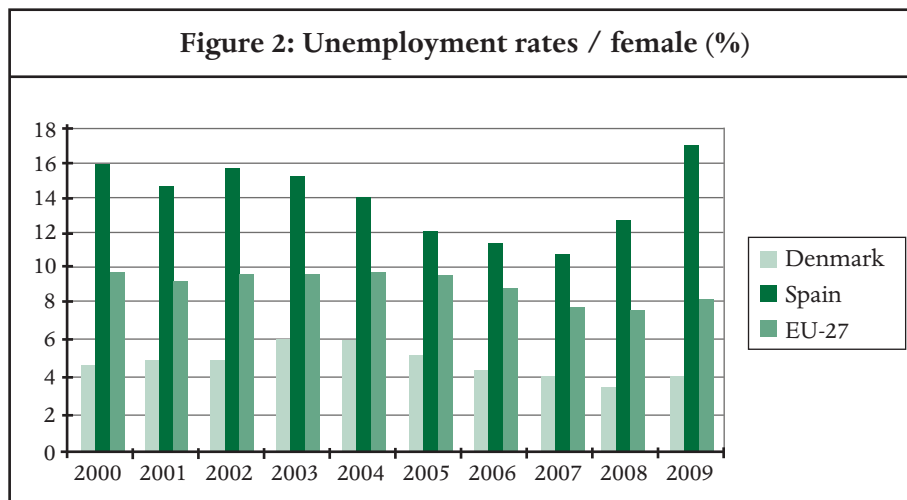


Source: EUROSTAT

<sup>1</sup> The figures show percentages of the active population/labour force aged 15-74.

Even though there has been a decline of the unemployment rates for both countries until 2007, the Danish figure is much lower (3.8% in 2007). On the other hand, the Spanish unemployment rate decreases to a much larger extent than the Danish one (from 11.1% to 8.3% from 2000 to 2007). However, unemployment has increased a lot in both countries in the beginning of 2009 (to 5.2% in Denmark and 16.5% in Spain).

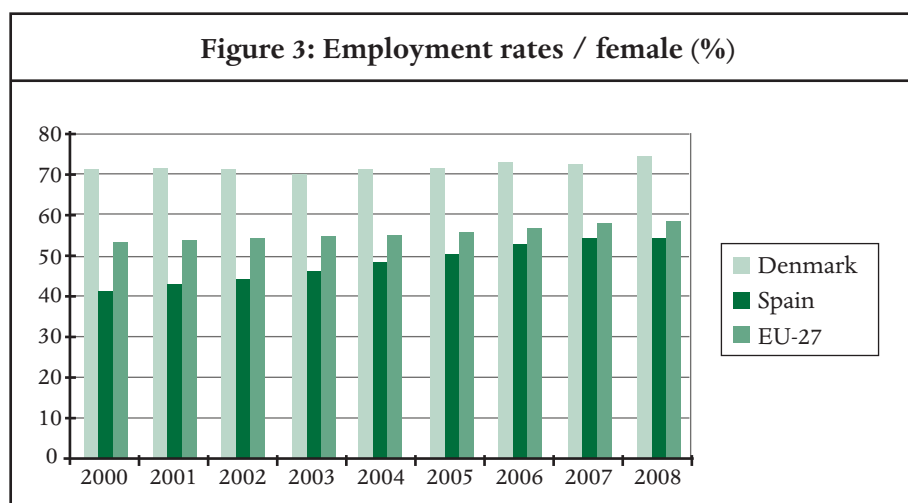
Regarding gender differences, both countries have higher female than male unemployment rates. Yet again the Spanish case shows to be aggravated by the high rates and the higher relative difference between women's and men's unemployment rates. Thus, while the female unemployment rate in the Danish case was 3.7% in 2008 (compared to the total unemployment rate of 3.3), the Spanish figure was 13.0% for female unemployment (11.3% total). The EU-27 average for female unemployment in 2008 was 7.5%. In 2009, female unemployment has increased in general. The Spanish rates began to increase already in 2008, reaching a total of 17.1% in 2009. These figures show a higher impact than in Denmark (4.3%) and the EU-27 (8.2%).



Source: EUROSTAT

In brief, Spain has a higher unemployment rate, total and female, than the EU-27 average and considerably higher than Denmark. The difference between the total unemployment and the unemployment suffered by women was also relatively higher in the Spanish case. Nevertheless, the decline in the Spanish figures has been more significant than the Danish and the EU-27 numbers since the turn of the century, both regarding total and female unemployment.

Considering the common EU targets in relation to employment and labour market participation, Denmark complies with the EU Lisbon target goals for female employment rates. Spain is still below the targets of 57% female employment by 2005 and 70% by 2010. The following figure shows the employment rate among women, as the rate of women aged 15-64 in employment compared to the total female population in the same age groups.



Source: EUROSTAT

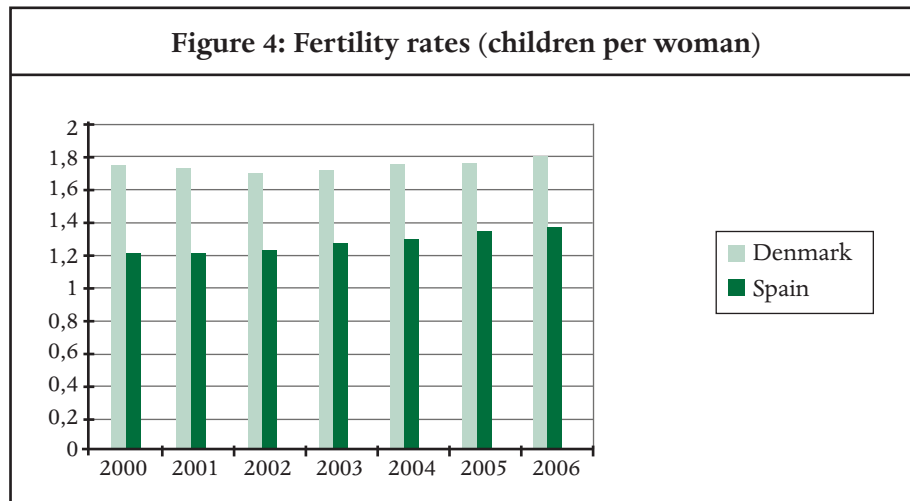
Again a steeper development curve is perceived in the Spanish case (from 41.3% to 54.9% in 8 years). However, employment rates are significantly lower than the Danish ones (74.3% in 2008) and slightly below the EU-27 average (51.1%). Furthermore, for Spain most of the female employment is part-time work. According to the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the Women's Institute (IM), this share is approximately 60% and almost all of it is due to family obligations, i.e. women choosing to work part-time because of the work load carried at home, taking care of minors or elderly. Statistics from the 80's to 2000 show that part-time work (defined as less than 30 hours per week) for women has been declining in Denmark, especially in the age groups where women typically have children. The bulk of the part-time work is done by the younger age groups, which marks a trend for part-time work as compatible with studying (Goul Andersen, 2002). The declining trend is not the case for many other countries, rather it is an exception. Between 1992 and 2002, female part-time employment increased in the EU as a whole from 28.8% to 33.5% of total employment. Even though the figures were higher in Denmark than in Spain, the trends were reversed: from 37.1% to 31.4% in the Danish case and from 13.8% to 17.0% in the Spanish one (EUROSTAT Labour Force Survey, 2002)<sup>2</sup>.

These gender differences are also reflected in the (un)employment gender gap for both countries. The (un)employment gender gap reflects the difference in (un)employment rates between women and men. The employment gender gap was 9.1% in Denmark and 27.2% in Spain in 2003, for example, whereas the unemployment gender gap was 0.6% in Denmark and 7.7% in Spain in 2003. Again, these figures are among the highest and the lowest, respectively, in the EU, where the average is 15.7% for employment gender gap and 1.7% for unemployment gender gap (EUROSTAT).

Much attention is being paid in the EU to the demographic developments and the fear of declining fertility rates which would lead to an ageing society in which the elderly would outnumber the young and labour market active segments in relative terms. This would, potentially, make the financing of public services, for instance, and the competitiveness of the economy difficult. The demographic trends vary across member states and there are different ways to approach these potential developments, for example through immigrant workers.

<sup>2</sup> In general, it is difficult to get accurate and comparable statistical data on part-time work. The hours worked as part of a full-time and a part-time contract vary from country to country and between sectors. In general people work more in Spain and therefore a low threshold in terms of hours for defining part-time work results in lower numbers in the Spanish case and vice versa in Denmark.

Nevertheless fertility rates are also important. If we look at the situation in Denmark and Spain, we perceive a clear difference:



Source: EUROSTAT

We see a similar pattern to the one we have been observing so far in relation to the labour market: Denmark is well above, and Spain well below, the EU average. Again Spain has a steeper development curve. Interestingly, Denmark continues to have higher fertility rates even though more women are on the labour market. High female labour market participation is compatible with high fertility rates; participating actively on the labour market does not hinder having children. In comparison, fewer women are on the labour market and fewer children are born per woman in Spain. Measures to reconcile employment and family life are an important explanatory factor here.

Parenthood affects the employment patterns; the amount of time worked for individuals between 20 and 49 years is linked to the number and age of children. This is especially the case for women; the higher the number of children and the younger they are, the lower their frequency of involvement on the labour market. This also affects the number of hours worked, i.e. more women work part-time when they have children and the part-time rates increase with the number of children. However, the Danish employment rates for women with children are among the highest in the EU whereas the Spanish ones are among the lowest. It is especially significant that the employment rates in Denmark for women with children between 0 and 2 are among the highest. Women with children under the age of 12 work more in Denmark than in Spain where women with children work less than women without children. For men, these figures are more even between the ones that have children and the ones that do not (EUROSTAT Labour Force Survey, 2003; EUROSTAT, 2005).

The EU considers the lack of childcare services as a disincentive to women's labour market participation and therefore some target goals have been set by the member states for 2010. These goals are known as the Barcelona targets. By 2010 there should be a minimum of 90% coverage for children over 3 years and of 33% for children younger than 3 years. If we look at the oldest age groups, this goal is already achieved in both countries: Denmark has a coverage of 94% and Spain reaches 99%<sup>3</sup>. The kind of childcare facility varies where the coverage is typically reached in Spain through public and private schools where children enrol as early as 3 years old. In the Danish case,

<sup>3</sup> The numbers are from 2002 (EUROSTAT), and coverage should be understood as care facilities other than family.

several other public care arrangements exist (such as kindergarten and preschool) since the school age is set at 6 years. However, additional problems regarding the EU goals emerge when we turn to the youngest age group (0-3 years). Here, Denmark had a coverage of 68% in 2002 whereas Spain was down to 12%<sup>4</sup>. A more recent Spanish study (Balaguer & Arderiu, 2007) shows that the coverage in 2005, according to the local authorities themselves, was 27.1%. However, these figures cover great regional differences<sup>5</sup> and when looking at the specific age groups. Thus, for children between 2 and 3 years old, the coverage is 54.7%, 26.7% for children 1-2 years old, and only 11.7% for children 0-1 years old. According to the data available, the public share of the care facility seats is 47% and the private 53%<sup>6</sup>. There has been an increase in the number of seats during the last years and this is mainly due to a higher private supply.<sup>7</sup> However, according to the survey the increase still does not satisfy the social demand; the current supply would have to be doubled to satisfy the estimated demand. In other words, only 49% of the estimated demand is covered (Ibid.).<sup>8</sup> The lack of care facilities often translate into children being cared for by family or private carers.<sup>9</sup> The public expenditures on care facilities are 1.7% of GDP in Denmark and 0.1% of GDP in Spain.

Some differences between the two countries can also be detected in the parental leave arrangements. In both countries, women take up the majority of the leave. In the Spanish case, we see an increasing percentage though men still account for less than 2% of the leave permissions (from 0.97% in 2000 to 1.57% in 2007). In Denmark approximately 6% of the total leave time is taken up by men (2006). Of the total number of m/paternity leaves (of persons related to the labour market), 61% were shared between the parents (mothers taking up to 93% of the leave time of the average 297 days, fathers 7%), 30% were taken up only by the mother, and 9% only by the father.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, women are more often unemployed or employed on part-time contracts in Spain compared to Denmark where the female part-time work rates have been decreasing. There is a large gender gap in relation to labour market participation in the Spanish case. In most of the employment related data, Denmark and Spain are encountered on each side of the EU-27 average. This is also the case for fertility rates where Denmark has relatively high rates, compared to Spain, and this is compatible with having a large share of women on the labour market. It is facilitated through high child care coverage and higher public expenditure on child care services. This is, furthermore, reflected in the high Danish employment rates for women with young children.

4 The estimates of the EGGSIE group, in the report on "Reconciliation of work and private life" (2005), are a bit lower (10% for Spain and 56% for Denmark). This is due to different methods of measurement (harmonised rates).

5 The Basque Country has the highest coverage rate with 52.3% whereas Andalucía, for example, is down to 17.3%.

6 There is a general lack of information regarding the private care facilities available (especially the non-authorized ones).

7 Balaguer & Arderiu (2007) argue that the recent increase in care facilities has been focused primarily on quantity and not quality, thus creating further need for quality control with the care institutions.

8 A more recent study from the Spanish Ministry of Education shows the previsions for 2008/09. The data is divided into educational phases and, thus, the numbers for young children cover the whole age group from 0 to 5 years.

There is a general increase in the number of children in this age group as well as an increase in the number of authorised centres (Ministerio de Educación, Política Social y Deporte, 2008).

9 According to Balaguer & Arderiu (2007), 40-45% of the children aged 0-3 are attended in care facilities, 31-35% by their parents, 16% by non-paid family members and 9% by paid care takers outside care facilities.

10 The sources of the data are Statistics Denmark and the Women's Institute (Spain).



## Flexicurity

In this chapter we present the policies and the context that characterise the Danish labour market model. As explained in the methodology section, the reason why we have decided to analyse this country is its potential to offer a solid response to the challenges of a socioeconomic situation with a lack of gender equality in the labour market. However, when highlighting the advantages and effectiveness of the flexicurity model, the gender dimensions are sometimes forgotten. As the statistical data show, gender equality related to the labour market differs greatly from one country to another. The general success of the model may hide the consequences of a lack of gender policies that need to be implemented simultaneously in order to increase and ensure women's access to and participation in the labour market. In our opinion, the determined will of the state to promote new gender opportunities along with the flexicurity model could correct this situation.

### 4.1 The Lisbon Strategy

The renewed 2005 Lisbon Strategy aims to develop a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in order to set new strategies, adapted to meeting the challenges of globalization and the latest social and economic changes. The Lisbon Strategy focuses on growth and jobs as the best way to improve EU's position in the world (EC, 2005). This target entails two dimensions: on one hand, it should ensure productivity and economic growth (market competitiveness) and, on the other, it should be compatible with a higher adaptability of workers to these changes (social orientation).

The combination of a flexible market model and a social model guaranteeing worker security has derived in the term *flexicurity* as the synthesis of flexibility and security. It can be defined as: "... a policy strategy to enhance, at the same time and in a deliberate way, the flexibility of labour markets, work organisations and labour relations on the one

hand, and security –employment security and social security– on the other” (European Expert Group on Flexicurity, 2007:11). Flexibility is not only referring to market economy, it “... is about progress of workers into better jobs, ‘upward mobility’ and optimal development of talent. Flexibility is also about flexible work organisations, capable of quickly and effectively mastering new productive needs and skills, and about facilitating the combination of work and private responsibilities” (EC, 2007b:10). In this sense, flexibility is presented as an advantage both for employers, who are capable of adapting their workforce needs to the changes of the market, and for employees, who have more freedom to organise their own lives. The aim is to reach a more dynamic and flexible labour market according to the constant changes in the fields of innovation and technologies – as part of the knowledge-based economy. Security “... is about equipping people with the skills that enable them to progress in their working lives, and helping them find new employment. It is also about adequate unemployment benefits to facilitate transitions” (EC, 2007b:10). Thus, security is understood as a permanent educational process, so that workers can be sure that they can get a new job, and as a temporary unemployment situation in which the unemployed must continue their training to increase their possibilities to come back to the labour market. The objectives of flexicurity are high-quality workplaces with ongoing upgrading of skills, and the role of social protection is to promote mobility.

The flexicurity policies are applied on the basis of four components: flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, comprehensive lifelong learning (LLL), effective active labour market policies (ALMP) and modern social security systems (EC, 2007b:12). The first component is especially related to the competitiveness of enterprises, so that they can include outsiders (short-term employed or unemployed people) and prepare insiders (employees with temporarily undetermined contracts) in case they have to change job. In order to entitle workers to change or find jobs, learning ensures the adaptability of workers, so that the possibilities of being employed by a new organisation are higher. Active labour market policies prevent long-term unemployment periods and contribute to fast reincorporation into the labour market. Finally, social security contributes to social protection and facilitates mobility.

This balance between the competitiveness of economy, promoting productivity and deregulating labour markets, and the provision of social security, ensuring social cohesion, is obtained through a shift in the conception of workers’ security: it is not about how long a person stays or preserves the same job in the same place (job security) but about staying in employment within the same or in new enterprises (employment security) (EC, 2007b:7). Security is related to the employees’ capacity to change job.

In their communication, the European Commission (EC) proposes a set of common principles of flexicurity as a guideline to adapting to globalization and orientating the national debates to reach a more open labour market. Among the general principles are the following (2007:20):

- Job creation and strengthened social models (social cohesion and market adaptability);
- Balance between rights and responsibilities for employers, worker, jobseekers and public authorities;

- Adaptation to the markets and industrial relations of every Member State;
- Reduction of the divide between insiders and outsiders on the labour market.
- Promotion of internal and external flexicurity;
- Access to quality employment for both genders and possibilities to reconcile work and family life;
- Trust and dialogue between authorities and social partners.

The EC report has been criticized because of the vagueness of the term ‘flexicurity’ and for assuming a general validity of some aspects emerging from the Danish model, mainly that “generous unemployment benefits are not an obstacle to high employment” (Calmfors, 2007:3). In any case, if it is recognised that it is necessary to adapt to market flexibility and that lack of employment protection is not the path to high employment levels, it would be clear that some kind of security is required to preserve the European social model – in the form of employment security. Nevertheless, the Danish model needs to be contextualised into the experiences of other European countries.

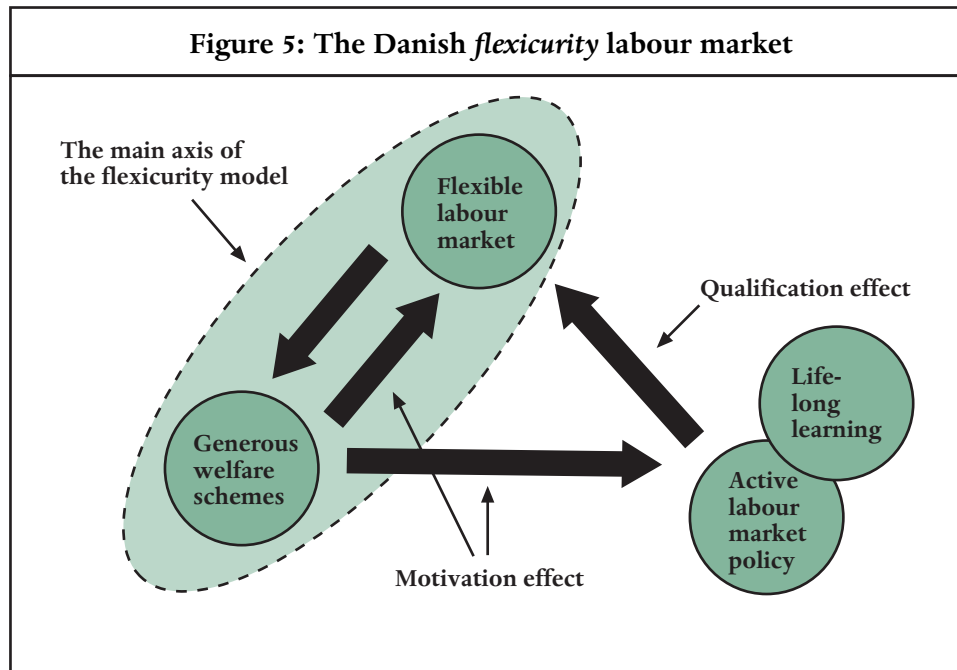
## 4.2 The Danish model

The main reasons for a successful application of flexicurity in the Danish labour market can be found in the confluence of three elements: corporation, state financed system and universalistic welfare state. The welfare state is characterised by universalism, equality and solidarity. Universalism ensures social security to all citizens with independence of family relations (Hansen, 2007a:90), and high minimum wages are guaranteed. The welfare state not only promotes social justice and equality but also maintains macro-economic stability. With this purpose, the state implements an efficient active labour market policy together with paid unemployment benefits. This combination creates a way of acting socially, with the acceptance of the social cost of mobility and competitiveness, where the stimulation of workers’ mobility allows employers to adjust their actions to market demands (Andersen & Etherington, 2005:22).

The labour market flexibility is financed by the state. High tax rates are necessary to preserve social benefits in terms of social security and learning programmes. High expenses are justified in order to maintain low unemployment and high social standards but the focus on decreasing unemployment is underlined in an effort to reduce the state’s economic costs.

Historically there has been a division of the tasks between the state and the social partners. As a result, collective agreements and self regulation became the two main axis of the labour market (Jørgensen, 2006:34). The labour unions, which are relatively strong and have high membership rates, negotiate labour market policies with the federation of the employer’s organizations and both parties aim to reach an agreement. The motivation is strengthened by the fact that the state will intervene in case a consensus is not possible. The collective bargaining has gradually been decentralised, according to the administrative division in state, regions and municipalities (i.e. the minimum pay is fixed by the collective agreement and later it is followed up by bargaining at the local level) (Hansen, 2007a:90). Thus, flexicurity requires the approval of the three parties: the state, the employers and the wage earners (Emerek, 2008:1).

According to these conditions, the Danish model, defined by the Minister of Employment as the 'Golden Triangle', is conformed by three elements, as represented in the following figure:



Source: Kongshøj Madsen, 2006

As the name indicates, flexicurity is constituted upon a discontinuous sphere, which includes the combination of flexicurity and security.

*The flexible labour market* affects employees and employers. The latter enjoy the rules that make hiring and firing easy and therefore they are able to adapt their necessities to market changes. The employees draw from flexibility too and move from one job to another more often or leave employment and return to the labour market with more frequency. There are high levels of worker flows in and out of employment and unemployment.

*The generous welfare schemes* provide security. Despite of the ease of firing, Danish workers do not seem to be too concerned about that. The scheme ensures the assumption of employment security in stead of thinking about job security. The Danish system makes up for uncertainty, derived from flexibility, and guarantees high level of payments in the case of being unemployed.

*The active labour market and lifelong learning* remind us that flexicurity cannot only lean on the sum of flexibility and social security. First of all, the challenges of a knowledge-based economy demand well-prepared workers who have the capacities needed in the changing labour market. For this reason lifelong learning has become an essential element of flexicurity. The successful internal and external mobility is achieved because workers acquire proper skills. Besides, unemployed people improve their possibilities of getting a job according to their education. In this sense, activation policies play a fundamental role,

given that they aim to avoid long periods of unemployment and ensure a fast return to the labour market. Otherwise it would be very expensive for the state to maintain long-term unemployed financially and it could be more difficult for them to find a job after long time.

The arrows reflect the dynamism of the model. The arrows outside the main axis represent the flows between employment and unemployment. The average of unemployment is quite low (3.8% in 2006, see Figure 1), although about 20% of the workforce is affected by unemployment every year and receive some kind of social benefit or assistance (Kongshøj Madsen, 2006). This means that a high number of unemployed people succeed in finding a new job and re-entering the labour market.

High unemployment subsidies are very costly and long term unemployment risks producing a lack of incentives or motivation to seek a job. For this reason, there must be “a balance between a decent compensation level and the motivation for the recipient to improve his or her situation” (Hansen, 1998:8). The reforms initiated in the 1990s aim to make activation policies more efficient. The most significant reform concerns the relation between motivation and activation with the intention of not reducing unemployment benefits but promoting incentives to seek an acceptable job (Andersen & Svarer, 2006:5). Under the slogan ‘rights and duties’, “the unemployed had the right to receive an activation offer, but at the same time they had the duty to accept the offer” (Bogedan, 2005:14).

Now most efforts are oriented towards active labour market policies and reducing social costs through better education and higher employability of groups like young and old people as well as migrants. The governmentally appointed Welfare Commission, whose task consisted in suggesting new measures, points out five steps (Bosse et al. 2006:144-147):

- Education: the target is to increase the motivation to work and avoid young people preferring public subsidies in stead of working or studying;
- Shorter unemployment periods: unemployment benefits are reduced from 4 years to 2 ½ years. At the same time education and activation programs try to reduce the unemployment period;
- Incentives to work: unemployment benefits are calculated on the basis of family income and not the individual's. Benefits must be individual and combined with activation programs. This measure is especially addressed to migrants from developing countries;
- Employment benefits: the advantages of working are increased by reducing the unemployment benefits;
- Later retirement: early retirement becomes economically less attractive and people are required to stay active longer. Age of retirement shifts from 65 to 67.

It is still uncertain whether these cuts in the social benefits will influence the functioning of the labour market and, most of all, how the balance between competitiveness and social security will be affected.

### 4.3 Flexinsurance

One of the risks of the flexicurity model is that it becomes too one-sidedly market oriented in the sense that flexibility, in the labour market and for the employers, is given prevalence above security, for the general society and the employees. We will therefore argue that there is a special need to be aware of the security dimension (social protection) if the flexicurity model is to work in practice.

*The flexicurity way* indicated by EU has generally been well-accepted but not all the groups are satisfied with this tendency. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) responds to the EC communication on flexicurity and is quite sceptical about the advantages of flexicurity, since they consider the measures to be detrimental to workers. ETUC contemplates this process as an attack against the right to a stable job. Job protection is radically reduced. This threat is easy to understand if we think about the fact that Denmark, where it is relatively easy to hire and fire, is the best model of flexicurity. The unions reject the shift from job security to employment security, insisting also on the substantial differences between the national job markets.

The underlying idea, as interpreted by the unions, is that the ones, who have protected jobs (the insiders), are given the responsibility of pushing jobseekers (outsiders) into precarious jobs or even unemployment. The segmented labour market is a consequence of this, and social security for everybody is at risk (ETUC, 2007:2). Although flexicurity should promote win-win situations, where all the players benefit positively (Whiltagen, 2007:4), the negative perspective on protected jobs – and more generally on protection and regulation – suggests that the new panorama would favour the needs of the market. ETUC denounces that the focus is only on the Danish level of low protection and unemployment benefits, and education programmes are not properly taken into account.

In order to avoid the risk of high labour market flexibility and low social protection, Andranik Tangian introduces the concept of 'flexinsurance'. This implies that: "the employer's contribution to social security should be proportional to the flexibility of the contract / risk of becoming unemployed" (2007:3). This proposal aims at creating a real win-win situation, where both employers and employees share the risks and advantages of employment security. Flexinsurance does not require legislative changes but administrative decisions about issues such as contribution to social security in relation to the type of contract, quotas, unemployment benefits, etc. (Tangian, 2007:16).

Flexinsurance should supplement the basic minimum income model, that is, a universal income paid by the state to all residents. The additional costs caused by the minimum wage could be covered by taxes of high-earners and reduction of civil servants in social security since the system becomes more effective and simple (Tangian, 2007:16). In sum, flexinsurance guarantees that flexibility is accompanied by security, entails a (soft) regulation and defends job quality – because of the minimum income unemployed people do not need to accept any job offer.

The unions' concerns about flexicurity implementation are justified when the model does not evolve from a solid social security system. In Spain, it can be argued that labour market flexibility has been achieved at the expense of social security and the Spanish system is one of the most precarious and insecure in Europe (Navarro, 2002:113). Therefore it is important to underline that it is necessary to pay attention to the security dimension (flexinsurance) and create a strong social security system if flexicurity should not become just an excuse to dismantle labour market protection.

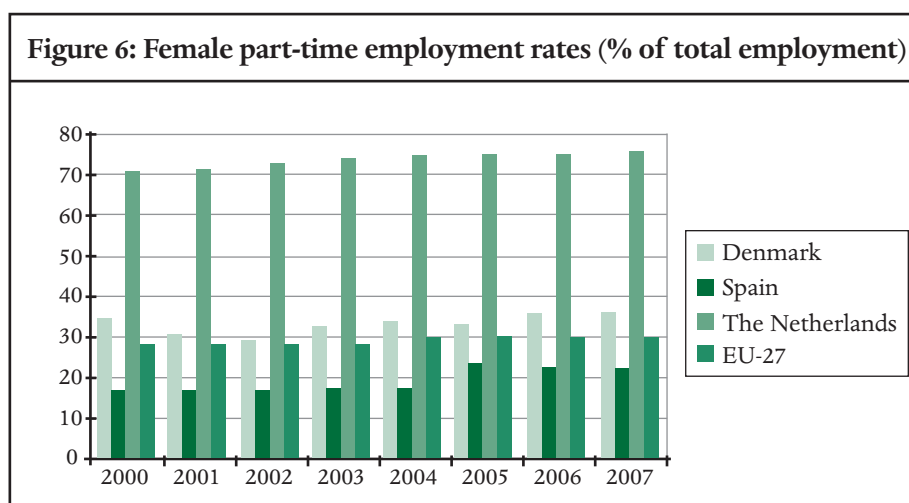
#### **4.4 Flexicarity**

The gender dimensions are at times overlooked in the debate concerning flexicurity and also in the concrete implementation of policies. We will argue that this is a key dimension in terms of advancing the equality between men and women but also with a view to strengthening the labour force, its flexibility and the security dimension.

The flexicurity model presents a set of advantages in terms of gender. One of the main principles of flexicurity is supporting “gender equality employment for women and men, and [...] offering possibilities to reconcile work and family life” (EC, 2007b:20). However, Lise Lotte Hansen (2007a, 2007b) points out that flexicurity is gender-blind and does not attend directly to several inequality problems. A focus on flexicarity in stead of flexicurity would underline a new model based on gender. The gender consequences of the labour market model are related to part-time jobs and the care system. Only combining both sides – the economic and the social – is it possible to achieve gender equality, understood as “both equality in pay and in opportunities” (EC, 2007a:11).

##### **4.4.1 Female labour market participation: part-time / full-time**

Women are supposed to benefit from the combination of flexibility in the labour market and security in the social system. Since the 1870's women's integration in the Danish labour market have been growing and the percentage of female population in employment is now well above 70% (see Figure 3). Unlike the tendencies in other countries, the growth in the female labour market participation has never been based on the creation of part-time jobs, which hinder women's possibilities of economic independence. As the following figure shows, the Danish model of flexicurity is characterised by a rather low level of part-time jobs.



Source: EUROSTAT

Comparing with the Netherlands<sup>11</sup>, where flexicurity is applied through low protection and the maintenance of a high level of part-time jobs, the Danish model combines full-time employment with a very strong security system. This evolution shows that it is possible to reconcile labour and personal life and to achieve a high average of full-time jobs. Women's labour market participation has increased but this has not meant more part-time jobs. On the contrary, part-time work decreases and full-time work increases considerably. This underlines that flexicurity should not only be considered in terms of flexibility but rather as a balance between flexibility and social security.

Although it seems to be easier to reduce unemployment through part-time work, the truth is that gender inequality is maintained in this way. It is without a doubt a considerable achievement that the women labour force is growing but part-time work is also a barrier, since it is insufficient for a person, or a single-parent family, to live on (Nectoux & van der Maesen, 2003:14). It is not only necessary to create more full-time jobs but also to ensure care policies that allow women to develop a 'normal' career.

**Figure 7: Full- and part-time work**  
In relation with gender and age

		15-29 years	30-54 years	55-66 years	In total
Men	Full-time	71,6	96,0	88,7	88,8
	Part-time	28,4	3,9	11,2	11,1
Women	Full-time	53,4	73,7	65,9	67,6
	Part-time	46,5	26,2	33,8	32,3

Source: Andersen, Pedersen & Skov, 2004

<sup>11</sup> The Spanish rates are quite low in this figure. This is due to the fact that the female part-time employment is calculated as a percentage of the total employment. If calculated as a percentage of the total female employment, the rates are rather high (almost 60% according to the Women's Institute, see chapter 3) because of women's low labour market participation in general.



As Figure 7 shows, part-time jobs are not only dependant on gender but also on age. That is the reason why the part-time share is higher both for men and women between 15 and 29 years. On the other hand, some of these groups – such as young women – have more difficulties to be hired or move from unemployment to employment (Westergaard, 2001:18). The reasons why women prefer part-time work are personal and related to care of children or other members of the family (Andersen, Pedersen & Skov, 2004:17). Thus women choose or need to combine part-time works with non remunerated care activities and depend, consequently, on social policies. However, part-time jobs do not involve a better reconciliation of labour and personal life. In fact, it is rather care policies, and not part-time jobs, that reconcile work and personal life since women work more hours in total (Stadelmann-Steffen, 2008:393).

This structural inequality, which allows men to have a family without it disturbing their professional lives, opposite to what happens with women, is a challenge that the European social model has to face (Nectoux & van der Maesen, 2003:14). Moving to full-time jobs could be a solution but it cannot solve all the problems. Despite of working full-time, Danish women take the responsibility of child care and house-work. This shows how difficult it is to eradicate the gendered distribution of care work roles completely (Warren, 2001:564). Given the difficulty of achieving remuneration of unpaid care work, the path to further gender equality could be to promote the following areas:

- Full-time work: women could choose between part or full-time and not consider part-time jobs as the only option;
- Social security: women could avoid economic dependency and combine labour and personal life;
- Awareness-raising campaigns: men should be aware of the importance of sharing unpaid care work so that women would not need to assume the entire responsibility.

In sum, the Danish model is appealing because it has a large female working force and, besides, employment is created on the basis of a high amount of full-time work. It is important to emphasize that flexicurity, understood as more part-time jobs, could be counterproductive for women, because it does not solve women's economic dependency and it forces them to assume the majority of the care activities.

#### 4.4.2 Day care system

The shift from flexicurity to flexicarity is lead by a model not based on “the state-market relations and on social security, and not on the state family relations or on services” (Hansen, 2007a:91). The ‘golden triangle’ will be completed when public care facilities are incorporated or, at least, when gender mainstreaming (i.e. considering gender impact of all policies) will be incorporated.

According to the universalistic welfare state, the right to social security is independent of family relations. This principle is defined by Hansen as the ‘principle of individualism’ and it is presented as one of the main ways to reach female economic independence and labour market participation. There is, however, an attempt to weaken these principles in the recent neoliberal reforms, which replace the principle of individualism with criteria based on the

total income of the family. Individual unemployment benefits are made dependant on family income and not on individuals. This shift would affect mostly women, whose unemployment benefits would decrease and difficulties in conciliating labour and private life would increase in some cases. If this tendency is consolidated, it would break down the linkage between welfare state and labour market (Borchorst & Siim, 2006), so far as the state does not provide security enough to ensure labour market flexibility for groups such as ethnic minorities and/or women.

Women have lower employment rates than men and it would be recommendable to find new ways to supply the lack of female employment through active labour market policies. The public care system must be maintained and promoted as a tool to labour market flexibility (making it easier to hire and fire). Regarding the public, it has also been observed that the decreasing expenses in the public sector have a bigger impact on women because most of the women (more than two thirds) work in the public sector (Emerek, 2008). When the state refuses to raise wages in the public sector, the gender gap is becoming higher. Massive demonstrations among nurses and pedagogues in Denmark this year show the importance of making public and private salaries more equal because it would equalize women's and men's salaries more. The public sector should be strong both in labour market and day care policies.

The gender dimension is also considered by Ruth Emerek (2008) who emphasizes that institutional frames such as a comprehensive childcare system are a precondition for a flexible labour force. There is high labour market flexibility and high childcare coverage but there is no correspondence between flexible labour and flexible care. Care facilities follow traditional working hour schedules which do not mix with variations in the working day. There is still a tendency to consider only 'normal eight to four' employment whilst there is an increasing need to implement different and more flexible workdays. This paradox is made stronger when local authorities decide to close day care institutions on weekends, holidays and vacations.

To sum up, we suggest acting in three fields in order to achieve gender equal flexicurity (or move from flexicurity to flexicarity):

- The principle of individualism: promote female participation in the labour market;
- Strong public policies in the day care system: implement labour flexibility and avoid the gender gap in the public sector;
- Flexible care institutions: add functional and work time flexibility.

These are the main fields of action. The specific measures to be implemented will be outlined in the conclusion (chapter 6).

In sum, the Danish model offers social security for all and active labour market policies with a focus on education. The labour market flexibility is financed by the state. Recently, a focus on reducing state costs through a decrease in unemployment has been salient. This has happened mainly through job incentives (lower unemployment benefits, encouragement to stay on the labour market longer, etc.). Regarding the gender dimensions, the Danish model benefits from high full-time rates for women as well as a strong public day care system.

#### 4.5 Some considerations on Spanish flexicurity

There is not only one model of flexicurity and every model should be contextualised to the concrete labour market situation. As we have shown, there are some specific aspects which characterise the Danish model but they are not necessarily extensive to the Spanish case. Here, we want to briefly present some of the main points which would be necessary in order to develop flexicurity according to the Spanish labour market situation. We have selected the following criteria as necessary to assess the potential for developing a flexicurity model in Spain:

- General categorization of the Spanish flexicurity model;
- Degree of temporary employment;
- Creation of an active and well-qualified workforce;
- Industrial relations as a condition for applying any kind of reform;
- Political discussion about the concretization of the flexicurity model.

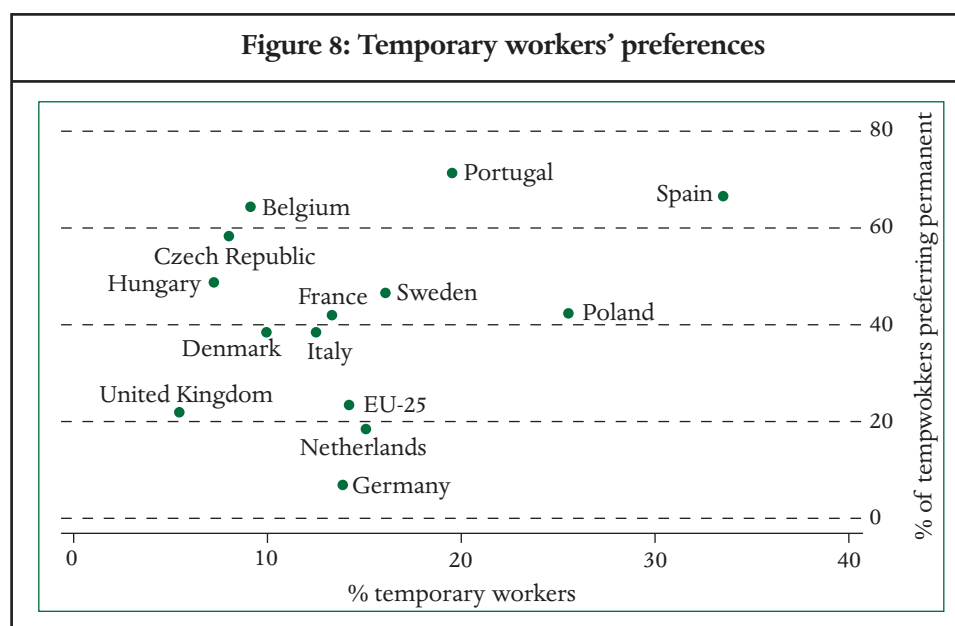
We want to emphasise that all these elements must be gendered and include particular gender policies in order to ensure equality. In the following, these assessment criteria will be applied to the current Spanish model in order to evaluate the potential for flexicurization in Spain.

##### *Inflex-insecure models*

Combining the two axes of flexibility and security, Tangian (2007:11) concludes that only Denmark and Netherlands are developing both dimensions. A group of countries (Portugal, the Czech Republic and Spain) are considered as inflex-insecure models because there is neither flexicurity nor security in these countries. Employment protection is strict and social protection is very low. Deregulation is moving forward without sufficient social compensation. The group is characterised by “poor labour market adaptability and low income protection. Training and education indicators are surprisingly low. Unemployment is relatively high while employment is at a comparatively low level” (Philips & Eamets, 2007:30).

##### *Labour market segmentation*

The percentage of temporary work in Spain is extremely high compared to other EU member states. The decrease in unemployment rates has been reached in part by creating more temporary jobs, with a percentage of temporary workers over 30%. Although temporary work could be seen as a transition to permanent work, mostly for young people, the fact is that temporary workers are unsatisfied with their work situation and do not consider temporary work as a choice but rather as an undesirable condition.

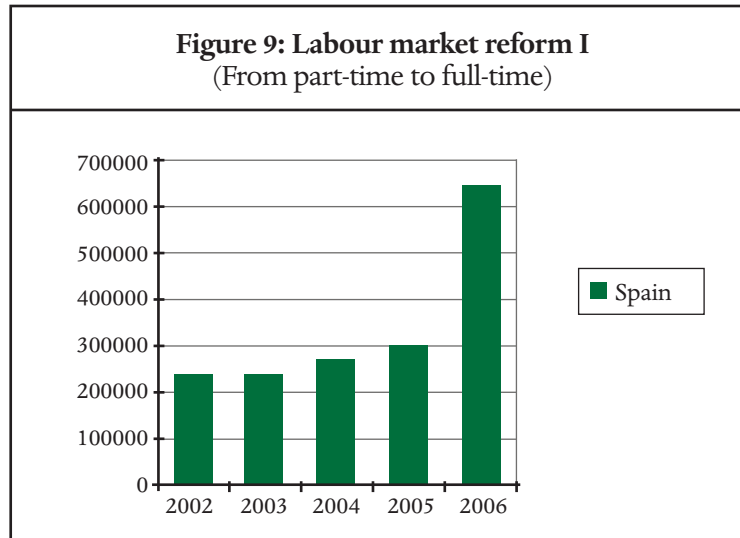


Source: EUROSTAT Labour Force Survey, 2006

More than 60% of the temporary workers in Spain would prefer a permanent job. As the figure above shows, this percentage is only exceeded by Portugal and it is far from the EU average. The main reason for taking a temporary job is the impossibility of finding a permanent job. Moreover, it is remarkable that the temporary work rates in Spain are the highest, followed by Poland. The temporary work affects both the low-skilled (30%) and the high-skilled works (23%). This means that temporary work is not only a consequence of lacking adequate qualifications. Finally, temporary work is also high among immigrants, reaching the highest percentage in the EU with 44%.

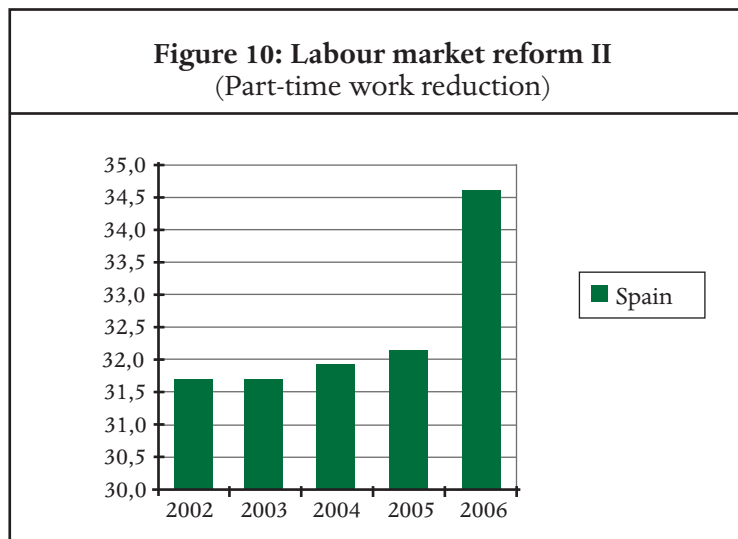
However, recently the Spanish government and the social and economic actors have made an effort to create more permanent jobs. In 2006, a new labour market reform was agreed upon. Its target was, among others, to fight temporary work and promote flexibility in the companies. It was assumed that high employment protection would cause higher temporary work rates (Chung cited in Berkhout et al., 2007:34-35) and that temporary work could be reduced by modifying the labour market protection. The reform combined the advantage of hiring permanent workers with company cost reductions. Regarding temporary workers, continuous chains of ongoing temporary contracts were prohibited in cases where temporary contracts for one worker covered more than 24 months of a 30 month period. The transformation of temporary jobs into permanent ones was promoted (MTAS, 2006a).

According to the National Institute of Unemployment (INEM, 2007), the implementation of the reform was very successful. The transformations from temporary contracts into permanent ones increased rapidly, growing from 321.981 in the 2nd semester of 2005 to 670.238 in the 2nd semester of 2006.



Source: INEM, 2007

On the other hand, permanent initial contracts are used more and more frequently and they exceed the number of temporary initial contracts (i.e. for newcomers to the labour market). These two factors (transformation into permanent work and more permanent initial contracts) have contributed to a strong decrease of the temporary jobs in the private sector, towards which the reform is oriented. Although the percentage is still very high, compared with the average of the EU, it has been reduced from 34.85 to 31.9 in less than a year.



Source: INEM, 2007

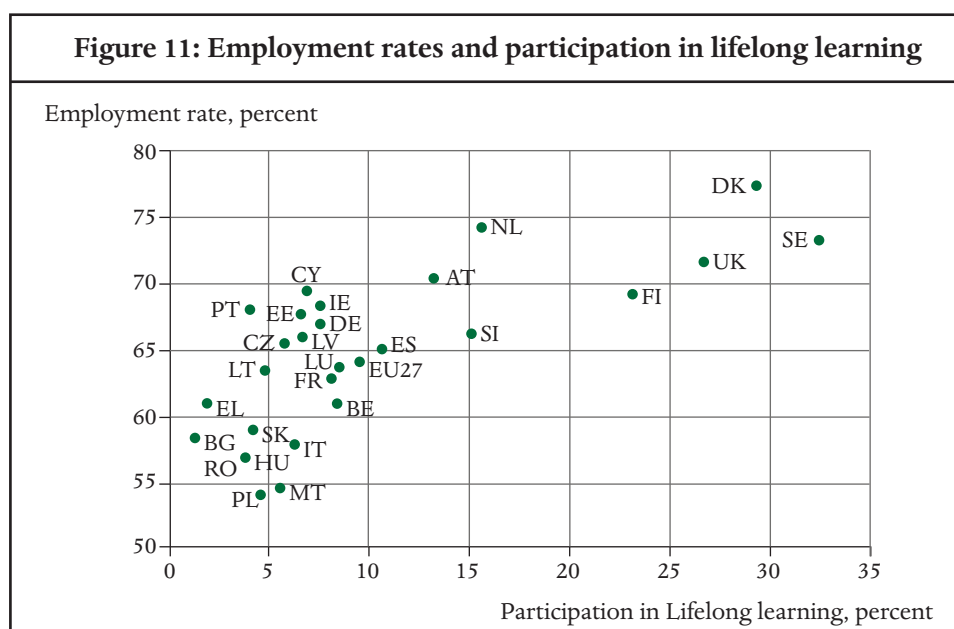
Temporary work is still a challenge, though, and it affects especially female workers who have “low quality jobs and weaker employment and social security” (Council of the EU, 2008:13). As we have pointed out, there is still a gender gap in employment (women participate less than men in labour market) and part-time and temporary work is mostly occupied by women.

*Activation policies*

Spain is making progress in promoting an ‘active inclusion’ approach and integrating people at the margins of the labour market (Council of the EU, 2008:10), especially immigrants. Just like Denmark, Spain considers immigration a crucial element to face market needs and it is simplifying the procedures for work and residence permits in some strategic sectors. Besides, language courses are offered together with activation measures and support from the employment services. Furthermore, Spain is giving subsidies to employers for hiring disabled people and support equal opportunities in employment.

*Lifelong learning*

The labour productivity must be improved by investment in human capital, specifically in lifelong learning. There is a tight connection between employment rates and participation in lifelong learning.



Source: EUROSTAT

High employment rates are only reached when there is a certain level of participation in lifelong learning. Although the figures for Spain are above average, it is important to emphasise that the overall EU-27 figures are still quite low. Investment in education is carried out with uneven success. The improvements are considerable in youth education but the results are not satisfying in relation to the transition from insecure to secure jobs and regarding the reduction of the labour market segregation. Nevertheless, the recent progress in Spain is remarkable within this area.

### *Social dialogue*

One of the core aspects which make flexicurity possible is industrial relations: the model could not be developed without collective bargaining and the high trade union membership rates, which represent “a ‘trademark’ of the Danish model” (EC, 2007b:17). The trade union density is quite low in Spain but similar to the rest of the Southern European countries. However, collective bargaining coverage is relatively high and above European average (Philips & Eamets, 2007:33).

Social dialogue is fundamental to reaching consensus on labour market policies on security and flexibility. Recently, the attention to social dialogue has increased in Spain and there is a broad consensus on the necessity of applying policies aimed to promote security for workers, deregulation and higher competitiveness for companies. Regarding the reform of the labour market, a clear example of agreement is showed by the Statement for Social Dialogue, signed in 2004 by the government, the trade unions and the employers. All participants commit to developing a model based on competitiveness and productivity, maintaining the importance of the public sector.

### *Political debates*

The idea of flexicurity has been introduced into the Spanish political parties quite recently and both the conservative party and the social democrats have referred to it. In their 16th national congress in June 2008, the conservative party employed ‘flexicurity’ as a key to combine competitiveness with the security and stability of the citizens. The social dialogue would be the way of balancing flexibility and security, and increased salaries should depend on productiveness. Although the social dialogue is emphasised, there is no trace of the role of the state. It is forgotten that the flexicurity model emanates from the development of the welfare state where the state assumes new functions but is still strong.

Flexicurity was also considered by the social democrats in their 37<sup>th</sup> federal congress held in July 2008. The social democrats are inspired by the Nordic model and the axis of their politics is threefold: more competitiveness, safer employees (the conservative party talks about ‘citizens’ in stead of ‘employees’ or ‘workers’) and social dialogue. Whilst competitiveness follows the liberal conception of globalization, safety is ensured by the new role of the state. In the political proposals of the federal congress, the term ‘dynamizer state’ is used to emphasize the role of the state in fighting social inequality and promoting active labour market policies.

### *Gendering policies*

Every potential reform aimed at achieving more security in employment would fail or be flawed if it is not gendered. The starting point makes it difficult due to low female labour market participation and high temporality in Spain. Therefore policies in this field cannot be applied without considering their impact on female employees. The target should be to reduce the gender gap not only within the labour market but also in the access to employment.

In sum, the current Spanish model shows some positive tendencies towards more progressive active labour market policies and an efficient effort to create more permanent jobs as well as education initiatives especially for the younger age groups. However, there is a lack of life long learning programmes and the security elements are not sufficiently prioritised. In general, the model is characterised by low security and low flexibility dimensions. The part-time rates are high and women take up the bulk of this work. There is a need to address the gender impacts of the labour market policies, especially in terms of labour market participation, temporality and the gender gap. Examples from the Danish best practice will be given in the following chapter and, based on these, specific recommendations on a way to make the flexicurity model works towards gender equality, through leave arrangement and day care systems, will be made.



## Best practice opportunities in reconciliation policies

On the basis of the analysis of the development of the Danish flexicurity model and its potential translation into the Spanish context, the main question that concerns us is how the model can best be gendered in order to ensure the three-fold goal of gender equality, security and flexibility. In this chapter, we will give a short historical overview of the Danish gender policies and explore the current state of gender policies in both Denmark and Spain more in detail. We will focus on identifying specific practices of care policies and m/paternity leave arrangements in Denmark as a background upon which gender equality can be furthered in future flexicurity policies. The aim is to assess the Danish experiences critically in order to identify possibilities of influence regarding the Spanish case. Particular attention will be paid to the issues of parental leave, care facilities and reconciliation, all in relation to employment, in order to elaborate recommendations for future Spanish policy initiatives within these areas.

Examples will be given from 6 municipalities in Denmark of different size.<sup>12</sup> The 2 largest ones (Copenhagen and Aarhus) have been assessed by the Ministry of Equality to do very well in terms of gender equality practices whereas the medium and small size municipalities have been assessed to perform rather poorly on these issues. The 3rd largest municipality (Aalborg) is situated in the middle in terms of gender equality performance overall.

### 5.1. M/paternity leave arrangements

The Danish laws and policies on parental leave and care date back to the beginning of the 20th century. Employed women were obliged to stay at home, without pay, the first four

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<sup>12</sup> The 6 municipalities chosen are Copenhagen, Aarhus and Aalborg (the 3 largest municipalities), Varde (medium size and provincial), Lemvig (small and provincial) and Laesoe (the smallest municipality in the country).

weeks after birth. This was economically difficult for some women and a few years after this first law, an economic fund was established: women received financial help if they had made contributions to the fund. The rights increased over the years in two ways: the leave period was extended and the right to (part-time) pay developed. Especially significant was the law in 1919 which gave women in the public sector the right to part-time pay (the first six weeks) and a longer leave period (3-6 months). In 1960, women gained the right to 14 weeks leave with compensation. All employed women were entitled to these benefits. In 1984, mothers were granted the right to 20 weeks of leave, of which 6 could be divided among the parents and fathers became entitled to two separate weeks. Somewhat better conditions applied to the ones employed in the public sector. In 1991, fathers, for the first time, were granted the right to compensation regardless of the mother's employment status (Valdimarsdóttir, 2006).

In 1997, the leave period was extended with 2 weeks (from 24 to 26), earmarked for the father (Borchorst, 2003). This measure was withdrawn in 2002, leaving the current leave arrangement in 4 weeks pregnancy leave for the mother prior to the birth and 14 weeks after. The father is entitled to 2 weeks' leave immediately after the birth. The first 20 weeks are fully covered by subvention arrangements. Apart from this the mother and father can use 32 weeks each, half of which is compensated. These weeks are not earmarked for either of the parents, and mothers tend to take up the major part of this leave. All in all 52 weeks are covered economically. These leave rights are universal and does not depend on the employment category. It even extends beyond this by granting rights to housewives and students. The illustration below shows the m/paternity leave rights stipulated in the legislative framework at the national level.

**Figure 12: M/paternity leave in Denmark**

Mother	4	14	32	
Father		2	32	

Source: Own elaboration

The leave arrangements are regulated by the state, the labour market partners' agreements and specific company arrangements (Olsen, 2005). Parents on m/paternity leave are, as a minimum, guaranteed a leave subvention from the municipality. If in employment, they receive 32 weeks of financing. Depending on the collective agreement under which the employee is hired, the leave subvention may equal full pay. Out of the full pay, the employer gets refunds for the amount of the public leave subvention. A collective fund covers, in most cases, (part of) the additional amount (from leave subvention to full pay) for some of the duration of the leave. The employers contribute to one of the collective m/paternity fund with an amount per year per employee and receive refunding from the fund if an employee takes leave with full pay. In this way, the costs of the leave arrangements are shared across employers, and workplaces with many female workers do not have substantially higher leave expenses than others.

An earmarked leave for fathers was eliminated from Danish legislation just a few years after it was introduced. However, similar arrangements in other Nordic countries have shown their effectiveness as to getting more fathers to take leave time. The case of Iceland, for instance, has shown an increased rate of male take-up of leave since the introduction, in 2000, of the 3+3+3 arrangement (3 months for the mother, 3 for the father and 3 to share). More than 75% of the Icelandic men now take leave. Earmarking of the paternity leave was already introduced in Norway and Sweden in the 90s and in this sense Denmark is lacking behind the other Nordic countries. Experiences from these countries show that earmarking is an effective tool to increase the rate of fathers taking leave. When the parents can choose, the mother most often ends up taking the large majority of the leave. In the Danish case, collective agreements last year led to 3 weeks earmarking but this is not yet a general trend and not implemented in the legislation in the field (Bloksgaard & Borchorst, 2007; Borchorst, 2003; Drews, 2007).

### 5.1.1 Best practice recommendations

The Spanish legislation and policies within the same area are quite different. Concerning the leave arrangements in relation to p/maternity, the Spanish Equality Law from 2007<sup>13</sup> foresees an earmarked paternity leave of 13 days to add to the already stipulated 2 days. This leave is subsidised through social security. The paternity leave is meant to be gradually extended in order to reach 4 weeks by 2013. The maternity leave gives the mothers 16 weeks. Both leave arrangements are dependent on labour market participation but a new leave arrangement was introduced with the same law, giving mothers without sufficient labour market relations a subsidised leave scheme for 42 days. In some companies the leave period can be extended, however there are no financial contributions to this measure.

The following best practice examples would be recommendable to implement in the Spanish case. The recommendations will be further explored, in relation to the overall gendered flexicurity model, in the concluding chapter:

- Extension of leave periods for both mothers and fathers;
- Continuing earmarking of the fathers' leave;
- Awareness-raising campaigns on fathers' care responsibilities;
- Shared financing responsibility for leave arrangements between employers and state with the setting-up of central m/paternity leave funds.

## 5.2. Care policies

Until the 1970's, care institutions in Denmark had been a social service specifically for vulnerable groups, i.e. for children from families with special needs. However with the law on social assistance from 1976<sup>14</sup>, the child care service became universal and directed

<sup>13</sup> Organic law no. 3/2007 of 22.03.2007 on effective equality between women and men (Spanish government).

<sup>14</sup> Law no. 333 of 19.06.1974 on social welfare (applicable as of 01.04.1976).

towards the needs of both the children and the families. Moreover the day care services were extended as a result of the social changes occurring in the 70's when more women entered the labour market in Denmark. The number of day care institutions rose alongside the development of the dual-breadwinner model.

The need for day care in relation to employment goals turned this area into a prioritised political issue and in the 90's the idea of care guarantees entered the political scene. This became articulated as a new citizen right (Wilmann, 2000). The day care guarantees meant that the municipality was responsible for establishing the needed number of day care seats and that all children were to be treated equal in relation to day care. In 1997 a new law<sup>15</sup> in the area put the needs of the child back on the agenda: the day care was still universal but instead of the labour market, the child's wellbeing, social and linguistic competences, cultural values, participation, and creativity, were in focus. The day care system should cover social, pedagogical and care-related needs. The law, thus, underlined the benefits for the child of attending day care and the social interaction with other children. Parents who chose private day care would receive public subventions. Furthermore the care guarantee was aimed at eliminating discrimination of the children of unemployed who, with the previous system, often had to wait longer for day care since the labour market focus was prioritised. However, as of January 2003, it was again made possible to favour certain family groups at municipal level for example out of labour market needs. The new law<sup>16</sup> gave parents the possibility to freely choose between public and private care with municipal subventions. This meant the beginning of a previously unheard of privatisation of the soft areas of the welfare state. This was part of a governmental "free choice" strategy in several areas.

The 2007 law<sup>17</sup> reformulates the objective of the day care system by focusing both on the child (wellbeing, health, development, and learning) and the family (need for flexibility, choices, planning of family and work life according to wishes and needs). The law also aims to prevent negative social heritage and exclusion. The objectives in relation to the child are extended in relation to participation (understanding democracy) and to autonomy and cooperation (integration into the Danish society). Technically these objectives are all fomented by established obligatory written learning plans for the children (including personal development, social competences, linguistic development, cultural values, etc.).

### 5.2.1 Municipal coverage of day care

The current legislation, following the law on day care from 2007, establishes that each municipality makes the decision regarding admission but they must offer day care guarantees for children under school age (i.e. it is the municipality's obligation to appoint a seat in a day care facility for all children from age 26 weeks to school age). The children are put on a waiting list according to age (eldest children are assigned first)<sup>18</sup> and the

14 Law no. 454 of June 10 1997 on social services.

16 Law no. 141 of 25.3.2002 on equal treatment between men and women in relation to employment and leave, etc.

17 Law no. 501 of 06.06.2007 on day care facilities, etc. for children and young people.

18 Some criteria of exception exist such as siblings in the same institution, children with specific social or pedagogical needs or municipal decisions regarding gender, age or linguistic quotas in the individual care institution.

maximum waiting period is 4 weeks. The parents can make specific petitions regarding individual institutions but the guarantee covers any institution, not specific ones. If no day care can be assigned, the municipality must cover the parents' expenses for private care facilities or in a day care facility in another municipality.

It is the municipality's responsibility to offer day care, make sure the needed institutions are available, control the quality of both public and private facilities as well as compensate the lack of fulfilment of the care guarantee. The three main kinds of facilities in the Danish day care system are public day care institutions, public or private day carers and public kinder gardens (see Figure 13 below). The opening hours vary but follow to a large extend the working hours on the labour market, i.e. normally from 6.30 to 17.00. A few of the institutions have special opening hours outside normal working hours and also on weekends.

<b>Figure 13: Public day care institutions in Denmark</b>		
Day care institutions (public)	6 months to 3 years	Institution with many children
Day carers (public or private)	6 months to 3 years	Private home of the carer, max. 5 children (per carer), max. 10 in total <sup>19</sup>
Kinder gardens (public)	3-6 years	Institution with many children

Source: Own elaboration

Denmark has a day care coverage of 68% for children between 0 and 2 years (see chapter 3). The figure below shows the number of children as well as the number of day care facilities (both day carers and day care institutions) for the three largest municipalities. This gives an idea, for comparative purposes, of how many facilities are needed in a municipality of a certain size in order to reach similar coverage figures.

<b>Figure 14: Municipal coverage of day care</b>				
Municipality	Total population	Children 0-2 years	Day carers	Day care institutions
Copenhagen	509.861	21.135	499	133
Aarhus	294.954	10.921	661	80
Aalborg	194.149 <sup>20</sup>	6.682	937	7

Source: Own elaboration

<sup>19</sup> The child(ren) of the carer can be added to the maximum number of children per carer if they are covered by the day care offered. The public day care subvention for the child(ren) of the carer will then be added to the carer's income

<sup>20</sup> The numbers correspond to the year 2008, except for the total population of Aalborg (2007). Source: Statistics Denmark and brugerinformation.dk.

The municipalities show different ways to cover the child care needs as a combination of day carers and institutions. However, it should be noted that Copenhagen has a lower coverage (55%) than the national average. As we shall see below, in the case of Aalborg, where the weight is placed on day carers as opposed to larger day care institutions by basing the day care needs on 937 day carers and 7 day care institutions for children aged 0-2 years, the coverage adds up to 66% whereas the Barcelona targets for member states to reach by 2010 is only 33% for this particular age group.

### 5.2.2 The financing of the day care facilities

The costs of the day care are covered partly by the municipality, partly by the parents. For pre-school children in day care, parents must pay a maximum of 25% of the gross operational costs of the specific day care facility or of the average of similar facilities in the municipality. If parents choose to place their children in private day care, they receive a subvention from the municipality. It is the individual private institution that decides on the price of the total day care scheme.

The parents contribute to the day care system with a fixed monthly amount depending on the type of institution their child attends, the age of their child and the municipality in which they live. The parental contribution is set at a maximum of 25% of either the gross operational cost of the specific institution or the average of the gross operation costs of the municipal institutions of the same type. The municipality pays minimum 75% of the costs.

For the 6 chosen municipalities the average parental contributions per child per month are 335 € for the age group 0-2 years (day carers and day care institutions) and 213€ for the age group 3-5 years (kinder gardens). The parental contributions tend to be a little higher in the larger municipalities in accordance with the differences in general living costs and public expenditures.<sup>21</sup> These contributions may be reduced in accordance with the income of the parents or the responsible parent. Reduced parental contribution is calculated as a percentage of the gross operational costs per seat. In Copenhagen, for instance, the reduced contributions are calculated in the following manner:<sup>22</sup>

Income	Reduction (%)	Parental contribution (child 0-2 years)
< 18.440 €	25%	279 €
18.441-18.848 €	23.75%	284 €
18.849-57.227 €	-0.25% per 408 €	-
> 57.228 €	None	-

Source: Own elaboration

21 The parent contributions range from 231€ to 384€ (Laesoe and Aarhus) for the younger age group and 190€ to 234€ for the older (Laesoe and Copenhagen).

22 933 € is deducted from the total income per child in the household under 18 years of age.

Here we must bear in mind that the average income in Denmark per month amounts to 3.311 €, with an average taxation on income of 33.3% and a labour market tax of 8%. This means that the expenses for a family with one child under the age of 2 years in full-time public day care would amount to an estimated 8% of the total income after taxes.

Parent(s) with low income can receive additional subventions in order to reduce or eliminate the self-payment (“free seat”) (maximum total annual income of the household is currently set at 57.227 €). This may also apply if the children have special social or pedagogical needs. The subvention can cover all expenses or part of them. Parent(s) with more than one child in day care facilities receive a “siblings” reduction (i.e. full price for the most expensive day care seat and half price for the rest). This reduction does not depend on the parents’ income.

Each municipality offers subventions for private care arrangements. In the case of private day care (up to 5 children per carer in private homes), the subvention is maximum 25% of the gross operational costs of the day care. In the case of private care (one parent taking care of own two children for example), the minimum subvention is of 75% of the net operational costs per child in the municipal care facilities for the same age group. Looking at the 6 chosen municipalities, the average for public subventions for private care is of 683 € per month for children under 2 years of age.

If we turn towards the public expenses on day care facilities for children under 2 years of age, we can see that day care institutions tend to be more expensive per child than day carers (in charge of up to 5 children, in private homes but publicly employed). The average of the gross operational costs for day care institutions in the 6 municipalities are 17.828 €<sup>23</sup> per child per year and for day carers it is down to 13.586 € per year, the expenses being highest in the bigger municipalities. A municipality like Aalborg with 6.687 children in the 0-2 years age group has 3249 seats with day carers and 512 seats in care institutions. Little more than 600 children are under the free choice agreement (public subvention for private care or care in another municipality). This means that the overall costs of the municipality for day carers amount to approximately 30.635.904 € per year, assuming that all parents pay full price for the day care (i.e. the numbers reflect minimum net operational costs paid for by the municipality). The institutional day care cost the municipality 6.389.760 €, if we do not take into account neither the free choice arrangements nor the income-related subventions mentioned before.

### 5.2.3 Best practice recommendations

The Spanish day care system is not very highly developed, especially for children under 2 years. They depend to a large degree on private arrangements for care-taking, either through family (grandparents) or privately hired (legal or illegal) nannies working at the family home or in private homes. The public day care system initially was meant for underprivileged parents in need of this kind of help. Subventions and fiscal deductions have been offered over the years (until 1998). There is a different logic behind the Spanish

<sup>23</sup> The smallest municipality, Laesoe, is not covered here since no day care institutions exist on the island which makes up the municipality

day care policies, compared to the Danish ones. Whereas the Danish day care is founded on a logic of pedagogy aiming at the child's social and mental skills, the Spanish policies are embedded within the school policies. The educational system, thus, covers a voluntary phase of schooling from 0 to 6 years<sup>24</sup>. However, there are no free, public schooling for children under the age of 3, administered centrally. This means that the first stage of schooling is based on paid services in the private sector predominantly.

The main problem is with the 0-2 years age group (see chapter 3). There are few public services for these children. This is commonly attributed to a lack of demand (the mothers being unemployed or the grandmothers being labour market inactive). However, none of these explanations seems convincing. Mothers may be unemployed because they need to take care of their children and grandmothers inactive because they have been living in a system where they would have the role of working at home and taking care of their children, now the grandchildren. Thus, the system reproduces itself, leaving women with the same lack of opportunities in terms of reconciliation of work and family life as their own mothers.

The current system of 0-3 years day care is characterised by a lack of public coverage, long waiting lists, insufficient flexibility in opening hours and a rather large share of private services. The private services are more expensive than the public ones and it can double the expenses for a public day care seat<sup>25</sup>. The payment for both public and private services is income-dependent. Parents with low incomes can, thus, rely on subsidies and they have preferences on the waiting lists when assigning seats. The national coverage average is 27.1%, with substantial regional differences<sup>26</sup>. Over half of the parent using private day care receive subsidies (school check) covering approximately one third of the price. The criteria for receiving the check are based on family income, size of the family, special educational needs and/or disability (Álvarez, 2007; APFN, 1999).

The Socialist Party in government already promised 1.000 million euro for 300.000 additional public day care seats. A recent government plan for childhood and adolescence aims at a 34.000 million euro investment in childhood policies (MTAS, 2006b). Among the objectives is to reach a 33% coverage through public day care by the year 2010 (0-3 years). From 3 years and up, the day care should be free. The long-term aim is for the educational system for children 0-3 years to be free and universal too. The seats should be subsidised depending on the parents' income.

To improve the Spanish system more public day care is needed. This is a rather simple operation. To reach for example a 70% coverage (just above the Danish figures and well above the 33% EU target for 2010 for this age group), we would need a total of approximately 1.050.000 public day care seats for children aged 0-3 years. At the national level approximately 225.000 children in this age group are already in day care (some in

24 Organic law no. 1/1990 of October 3 (General Law for the Regulation of the Educational System, LOGSE).

25 The Spanish average price for a full time seat is around 250 euros a month. The maximum price for a public seat is usually around 200 euros (max. 8% of family income) whereas the same amount is just above the minimum for a private one (Consumer, 2005). Balaguer & Arderiu (2007) estimate that families on average pay between 100 and 600 euros per month for a seat in a private care facility.

26 See chapter 3 on statistical data.



private services and with school checks). The government has already allocated 1.000 million euro to 300.000 additional public day care seats. All in all, we would need financing of approximately 525.000 new seats. A part of this could be financed by substituting the baby check with free and public day care. The baby check initiative was presented in 2007 in order to stimulate higher birth rates. It consists of an economic subvention of 2.500 euro per child.<sup>27</sup> The amount is unique and, thus, only paid once after the child is born. The baby check amounts to approximately 1.200 millions in public expenditures per year.

On the basis of the best practice examples and in the context of the Spanish care policies and facilities already in place, the following recommendations can be made. These will be explored further in the concluding chapter below:

- Extension of the public day care system and day care guarantees for working parents (as a first step);
- Availability of a range of public/parental financed options for municipalities to choose from according to their specific needs and population constitution;
- Promotion of day carer system (individual carers in charge of up to five children in private homes);
- Flexible opening hours in day care institutions.

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<sup>27</sup> For purposes of comparison, it should be noticed that Balaguer & Arderiu (2007) calculate the cost of a public care facility seat for children 0-3 years old to amount to 2.202,75 €.

## Conclusions: framing the *right* equality policies

The Danish employment and reconciliation policies have a number of flaws. These have mainly been addressed here as the assumed difficulties of integrating a gender perspective in the current labour market model. However, a flexicurity model that would incorporate a gender perspective and take into consideration issues such as flexinsurance and flexicarity would be beneficial for the gender equality. The Spanish gender equality policies are more advanced when it comes to issues such as female representation in politics and counteracting structural inequalities and their expression in violence against women, for instance, but an extended Danish, flexicarity model may have something to contribute with in terms of labour market integration and employment-related gender policies. Drawing on the Danish experiences, and the improvements that may be incorporated into the flexicurity model, we have been able to make a number of proposals aimed at potentially enhancing the quality of the Spanish gender equality policies where it is currently less developed, namely in relation to women's labour market participation, leave arrangements and care provisions.

The main recommendations to incorporate the gender dimensions fully into the flexicurity model, as a way to proceed in the Spanish case, are the following:

- **Flexicarity strategy:** an overall strategy should be envisaged to combine flexibility in the labour market, social security and care need coverage. In order to get more women on the labour market, and avoid this translating into a double work burden (at work and at home) for the women, it is crucial that better reconciliation measures are devised. This includes focusing on the right of the mother not only to work but also her right to her own time and to economic independence. More importantly, however, is the awareness, through campaigns and through concrete measures such as earmarking of the leave, of the fathers' responsibility when it comes to care and the work load at the home. The role of the mother as the primary carer should be reverted and divided to be a parental responsibility. Through an extended and improved day care system it should be made possible for both parents to reconcile

work and private life. At the labour market level, what should be ensured is employment security, first and foremost by extending the social security system and improving the unemployment benefits and the lifelong learning opportunities. This would give individual security (less severe consequences of short-term unemployment) as well as flexibility in the labour market both in terms of company policies, when it comes to hiring and firing, and in terms of individual adaptability to new job situations and tasks.

- **Leave arrangements:** earmarked paternity leave should be attributed to the fathers (not transferable to the mother). This should be considered a right given to the father in order to be able to participate more fully in the raising of and caring for his child(ren). The financing of both the maternity and the paternity leave should not be left in the hands of the companies and the institutions. It should be ensured that the financing of the leave does not suppose excessive burdens on the employers since this would not be beneficial to the parents (mothers and fathers) taking up leave. Taking leave should be facilitated and standardised as much as possible and this implies setting up central m/paternity leave funds so that the economic burdens are shared among the employers and the state.
- **Universal day care schemes:** the public day care system must be expanded. The most feasible way to do this would be to make a range of partly public, partly parental-based financed options available for the municipalities to choose from. An overall national framework of possible ways of organising the day care with specific coverage targets (in percentage and in accordance with the EU objectives) should be designed, leaving it to the local municipalities and provinces to apply this framework in their own particular way. Within this scheme it would be recommendable to promote especially the day carer system whereby individual day carers with public funding take care of a low number of children in their own homes. This model has proven economically successful and contributes extensively to the high coverage measures of day care for younger children (0-2 years of age) in Denmark. Apart from the economic advantages of this system, it is also beneficial in the sense that it gives the public authorities a possibility to regulate within the area, ensuring thereby the quality of the care. This system would furthermore create more jobs with a public/private (i.e. parental) financing. It would also counteract the current tendency in Spain where more and more private day carers set-up small businesses of this kind but without regulation in terms of location (i.e. the standard of the apartments and, thus, the housing environment of the child during the hours he/she spends at the day care) and quality of care. Finally, it would also serve the purpose of regulating the jobs of a number of illegal immigrants making a living in this way. Ideally a shorter education scheme might be envisaged in order to qualify the potential day carers in terms of the pedagogical needs of the child. Last but not least, the day care institutions should adapt to the flexible labour market for instance through offering flexible opening hours and setting-up particular institutions in each municipality for people with unconventional working hours.

We suggest promoting the above mentioned political ideas as different kinds of *rights* from a multidimensional perspective. Neither the Danish nor the Spanish day care

services have ever been developed solely as an effort to allow parents to reconcile work and family obligations or exclusively as a matter of including women into the labour market. In the Danish case, the rights of children have been central in the sense that the inclusion into the day care system has been seen as a part of the child's social and mental development and therefore there has been a focus on the social-pedagogical sides of the day care services. The day care arrangements for children aged 0-2 years have not been included as a part of the educational system, as in the Spanish case, and this first phase of the day care does not serve schooling purposes in a strict sense. Children's capacities are developed but the focus has been social-pedagogical – and the state has a responsibility in the social and pedagogical development of children (in order to ensure general wellbeing and prevent social problems, for instance, later on in life). This is all in line with the Nordic welfare state model and its responsibilities vis-à-vis the citizens. More recently this idea of the day care system as part of a general social integration has been extended to immigrant children whose linguistic and social integration processes are centred on the participation in day care arrangements. Formulating the universal day care policies as a right of the child to social and pedagogical development and integration can go hand in hand with the right of both parents to time, to integrate into the labour market and to reconcile work and family life. At the same time, the labour market benefits from a large, diverse and flexible labour force, and jobs are created in the day care sector. The social security dimension is enhanced by guaranteeing these services. This constitutes part of the basis for making the labour force flexible as parents can rely on care services when changing jobs, moving or entering and leaving the labour market.

The reforms will not only aim at reducing the gender inequalities in the labour market. Flexicurity should rather be seen as a comprehensive model in which it is necessary to introduce higher unemployment contributions, improvements in the permanent education arrangements and active labour market policies, as well as a higher degree of social assistance. Flexibility is demanded by the labour market but the individuals' flexibility must be supplied with a stronger social security model to make it possible.

In conclusion, the introduction of the *flexicarity model* can be argued to serve both the rights of the child to care, the rights of the parents to time, security and equality as well as the needs of the labour market and the society in general in terms of integration, flexibility and productivity. In other words, a flexicurity model with a strengthened focus on the gender dimensions could contribute to advancing social protection, gender equality and economic growth.

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