

mid-term conference of the ESA research network nr. 26
*From the cradle to the grave? Social policy in diverse temporal
and spatial contexts, org. by Hannu Turba and Volkan Yilmaz*

U N I K A S S E L
V E R S I T Ä T

*Deserving and undeserving families? Welfare state
redistribution by family form*

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Introduction

- ❑ Redistribution is one of the fundamental characteristics of the welfare state.
- ❑ Welfare state research has focussed on redistribution in terms of
 - ❑ workers/employees/tax-payers
 - ❑ individuals (mainly in need)
- ❑ Family has mainly been addressed as affected by these “higher-level” redistributive logics.
- ❑ All welfare states though directly regulate redistribution in terms of family, too.
- ❑ Redistributive logics of welfare states in terms of family have never been systematically analysed.

Project

- ❑ Research Project FaSo „The relevance of family for social rights in international comparison: between family allowances and legally obliged family solidarity”
- ❑ Financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG), 2020-2023
- ❑ Lead: Patricia Frericks
- ❑ Team: Julia Höppner, Martin Gurín
- ❑ Aim: Better comprehending the redistributive logics of welfare states in terms of family

Study's focus

- ❑ Analysing Germany in a cross-country comparison (EU).
- ❑ Mapping redistribution in terms of family by considering the interplay of
 - ❑ family-related *benefits*, and
 - ❑ family-related *obligations*
- ❑ Assumptions:
 - ❑ Since welfare states add to family income and decrease it, and since redistributive regulations address the various family forms differently, we expect to find different redistributive logics in terms of family in one welfare state (highly relevant for the social risks families are exposed to).
 - ❑ Countries may be clustered differently from generally identified country groupings when the focus is on redistribution in terms of family, but also to other family-focused research, when the analysis considers the interplay of benefits and obligations.

Conceptual challenges

- ❑ Two concepts have profoundly contributed to understanding welfare state logics in terms of family: *defamilialisation* and *individualisation*
- ❑ Both, however, are not suitable for our concern since they
 - ❑ apply a one-dimensional perspective on the family, not varieties of family forms
 - ❑ address factual outcomes, not the redistributive logics as stipulated in welfare state regulations
 - ❑ focus on the question of making a living independent from family, not the gradual differences of welfare state redistribution

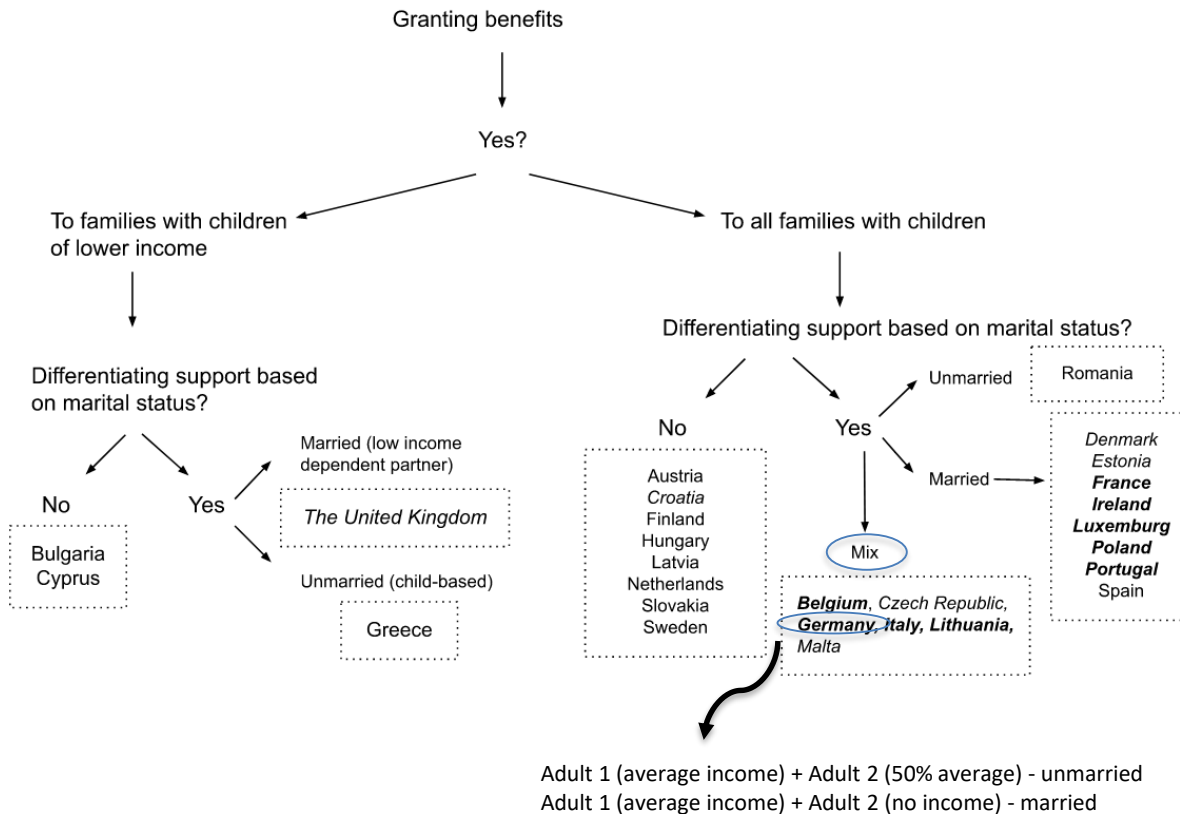
Conceptual decisions

- ❑ Modelling of *various family forms* (here: 68 in total, referring to marital status, children, various income levels, and different forms of couples' income distribution)
- ❑ Analysis of welfare state *regulations* including (means- and non-means tested) transfers, contributions and taxes
- ❑ Analysis of *gradual* differences
- ❑ Analysis of *granted* benefits to families and *legal obligations* of families to financially support family members in particular situations before granting public support to them

Methodology and Data

- ❑ Use of the micro-simulation model EUROMOD and its Hypothetical Household Tool (HHoT)
- ❑ Redistribution in terms of family is measured as difference between specified family forms and reference point(s) (RPs): *single individual without a family*
- ❑ Reference points: individuals with the same market income as individuals in our family forms
- ❑ Identification of family-related redistribution: **difference in net disposable incomes** of adult(s) with and without a (legally identified) family

Cross-national differences in family-related benefits



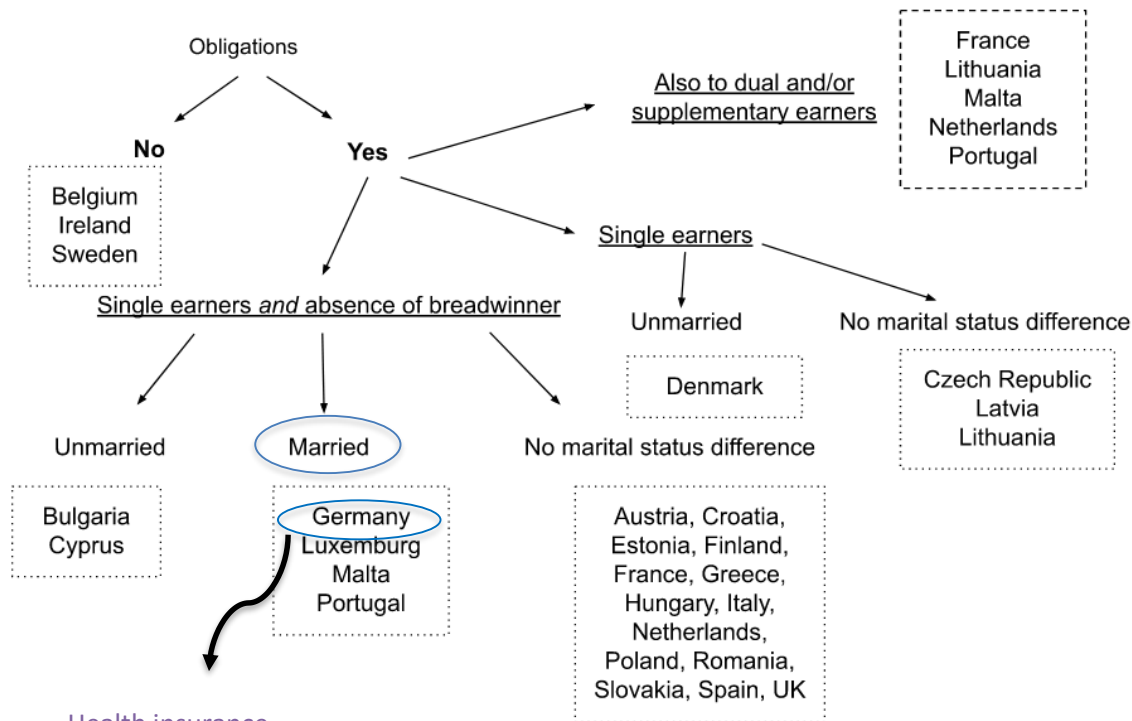
All countries grant family-related benefits

7 clusters of countries with different redistributive logics

Factors:

- 1) Having a dependent child
- 2) Income level
- 3) Marital status

Cross-national differences in family-related obligations



Health insurance
Legal obligations to income/care
dependent older parents (before 2020)

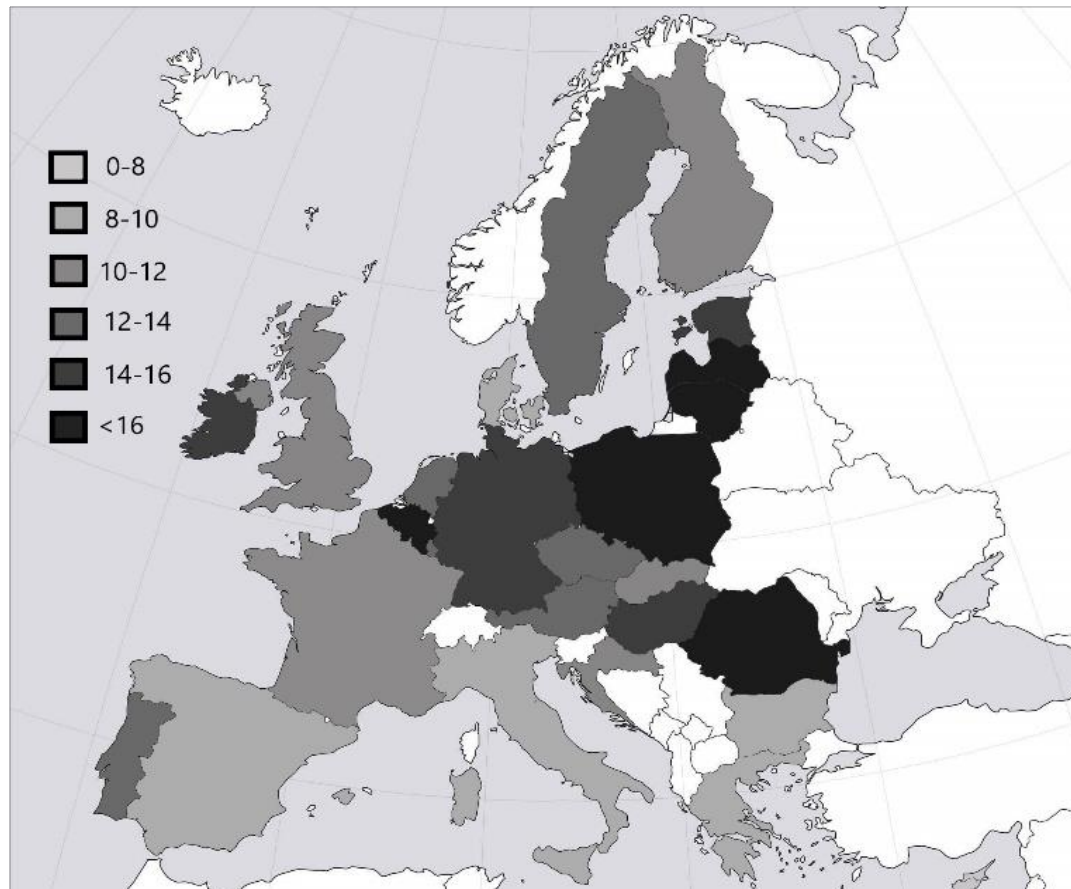
Only in 3 countries no obligations

Again 7 clusters of countries, but different country-composition

Factors:

- 1) Earner model
- 2) Marital status
- 3) Income

The overall extent of family-related redistribution



Germany is among the countries with the highest degree of redistribution (15,7%).

Most pronounced in Eastern European countries (plus Belgium, Ireland and Germany)

Least pronounced in Mediterranean countries (plus Bulgaria and Denmark)

Lowest average degree in Cyprus (7,5%) and the highest in Poland (35%)

Redistributive logics

- ❑ **Families with/without children:** highest average degree of redistribution towards single parent families, lowest to childless couples
- ❑ **Family forms with similar market income:** redistribution is highest for single earners, followed by dual and supplementary earners.
- ❑ **Family forms with high/low market income:** significantly higher degrees of redistribution towards single earner with half-average income (often due to high obligations)
- ❑ **Redistribution towards whom?** Income is most increased for single parents with two children and no market income. In contrast, income is most decreased for unmarried single earners with half-average income and no children.

Conclusions

- ❑ Family is an essential redistributive principle of all the analysed welfare states with a high degree of redistribution towards the family.
- ❑ Germany is among the countries with the highest average degree of redistribution.
- ❑ Country commonalities:
 - ❑ Families with children receive benefits (some countries provide these benefits mainly to low income families)
 - ❑ Almost all countries impose obligations
- ❑ Country differences:
 - ❑ Country clusters in family-related redistribution differ from acknowledged country clusters
 - ❑ and they differ depending on whether studying benefits or obligations

Discussions

- ❑ Social policy debates focus mainly on the question of how much welfare regulations add to family income. Our study shows that for understanding redistribution we need to consider also in how far welfare states *decrease* it.
- ❑ A decrease has been identified particularly for low-income childless family forms, but also for many low-income families with one or two dependent children.

Thank you

for listening and sharing your critique and ideas with us!

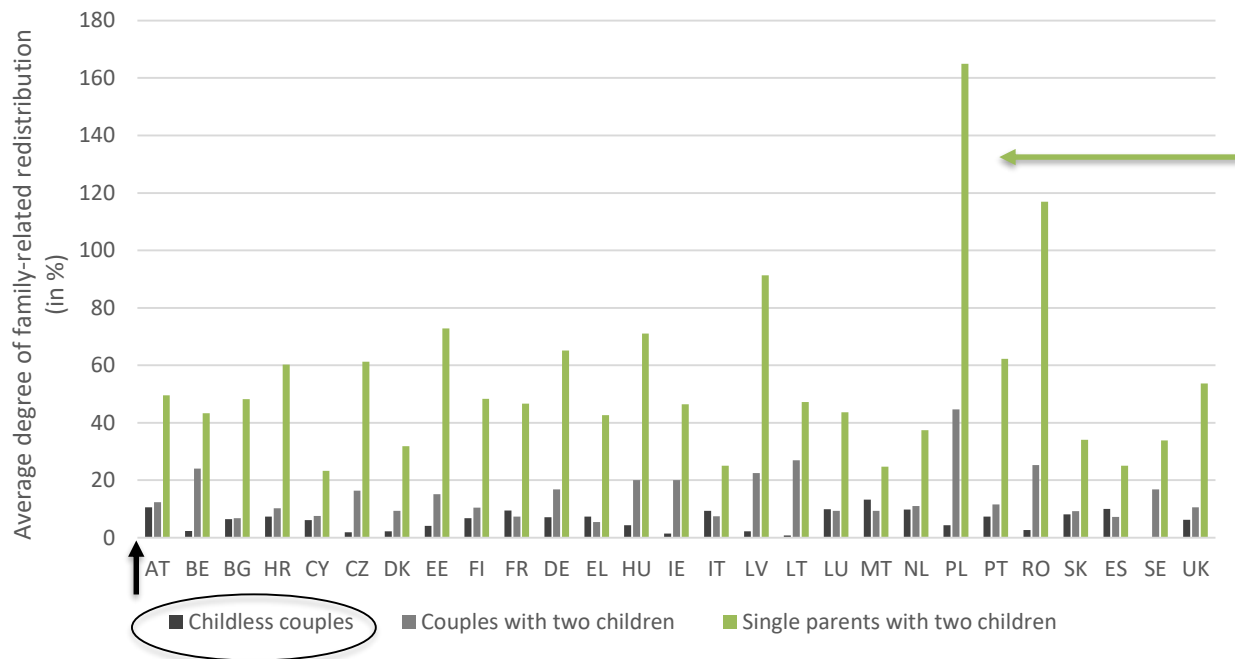
FaSo-publications so far:

Frericks, P. & Gurín, M. (2022), Family as a redistributive principle of welfare states: an international comparison, *Journal of European Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09589287221115670>

Frericks, P., Gurín, M. & Höppner, J. (2021), Family as a redistributive principle of the welfare state. The case of Germany, *Journal of Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279421000787>.

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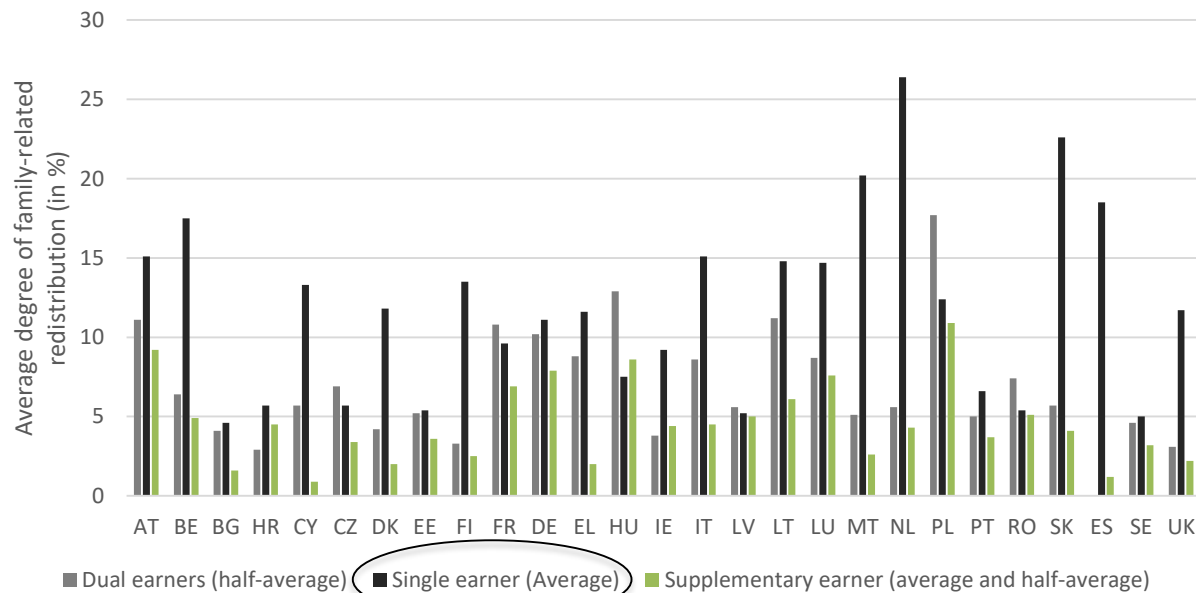
Redistributive logics: childless families vs families with children



highest average degree of redistribution towards single parents

The lowest towards childless families (here particularly Austria, France, Malta or Spain stands out with average degree of redistribution over 10%)

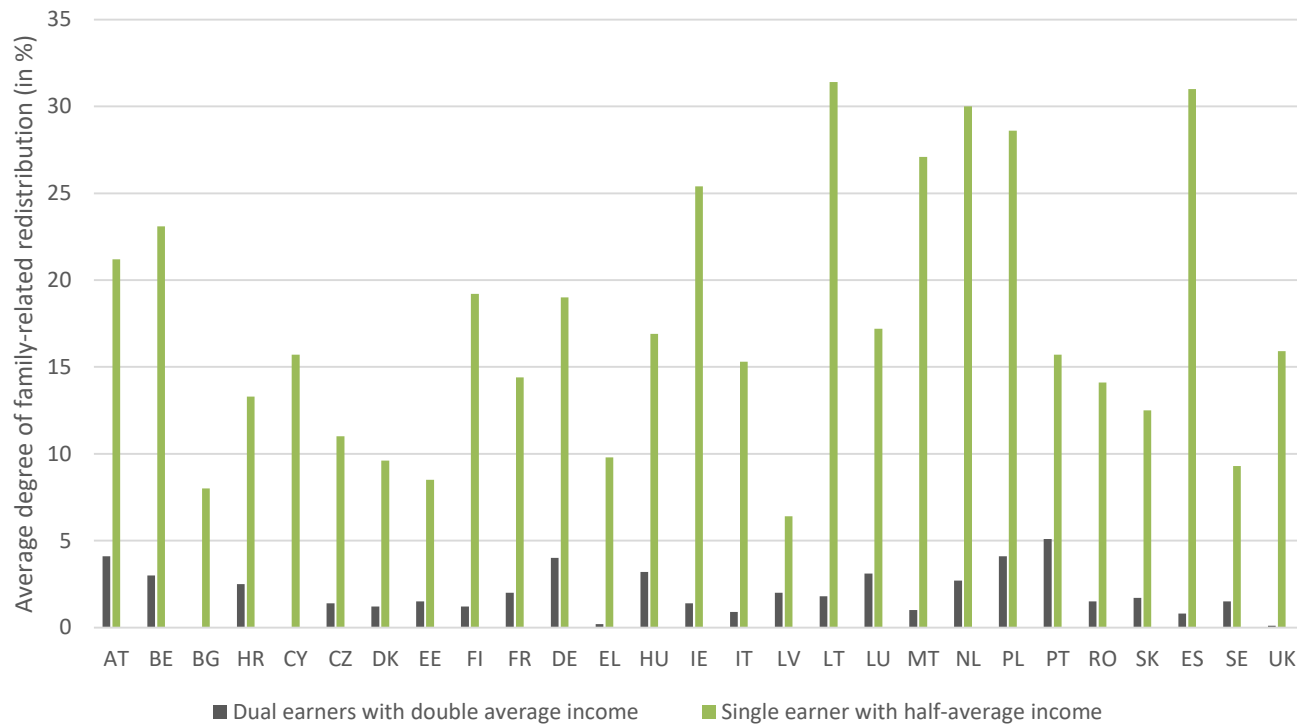
Redistributive logics: family forms with similar market income



assumption that the redistribution towards the family forms differs depending on the family forms is *confirmed*

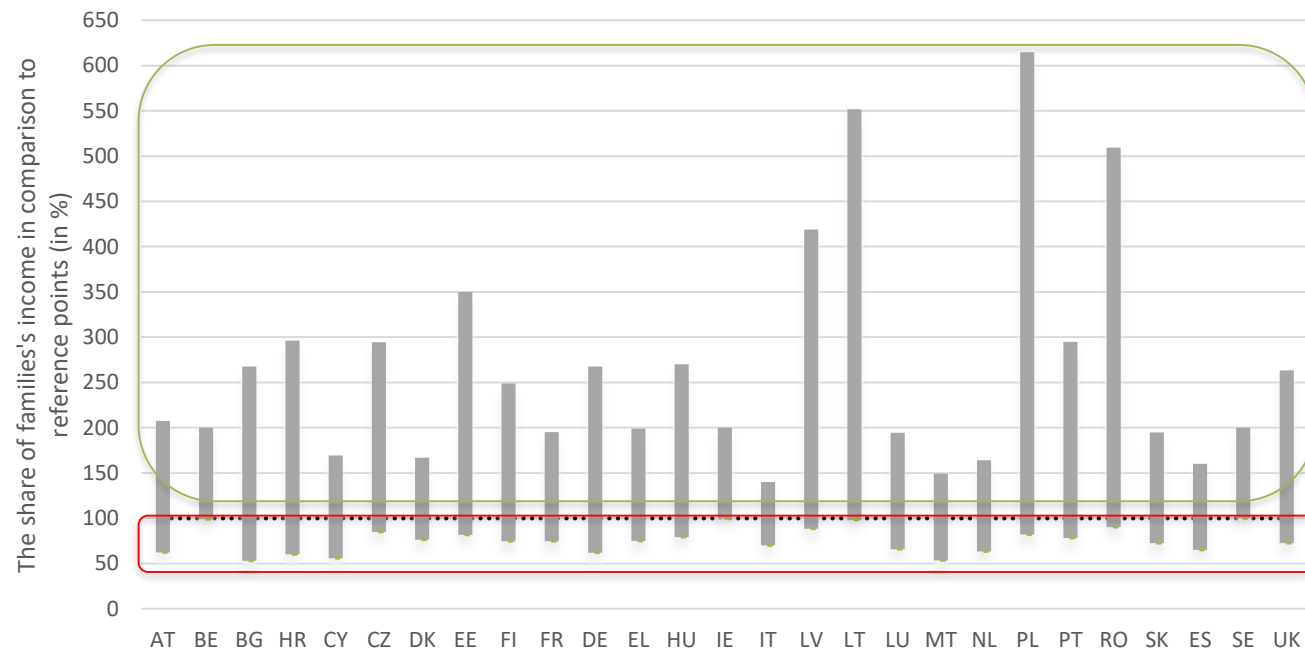
Most often has been the degree of redistribution highest for single earners, followed by dual and supplementary earners

Redistributive logics towards family forms with high resp. low market income



Significantly higher degrees of redistribution towards single earner with half-average income (often due to high obligations)

Redistributive logics: redistribution towards whom?



Family forms with the proportionally most increased income:
Single parents with two children and no market income.

The income of single individual(s)

Family forms with the most decreased income: childless family forms of the lowest or no market income.

A decrease in income considers also many low-income family forms with dependent children!