

## **“The ‘positive turn’? Women’s activity status and childbearing in Poland and Spain”**

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### **Introduction**

The intention of our analysis is to verify few hypotheses on fertility, including the Hypothesis of Fertility Positive Turn, comparatively for Poland and Spain, taking into consideration their demographic and institutional context. The choice to compare these two countries is intentional as they are both perceived as similar in terms of population size (38.2 mln in Poland and 46 mln in Spain in Jan 2010), attachment to conservative values, strong family ties, similar labour market structures and low fertility. However, further studies show some of these similarities are quite superficial and therefore Poles and Spaniards may react on similar shocks differently, taking different decision on entering the parenthood.

The Hypothesis of Fertility Positive Turn explains the recovery of fertility rates emerged in some Western countries that rooted social institutions allowing women to combine family responsibilities with employment. Conversely, countries with lower fertility rates are those in which women still have to endure severe work-childcare conflict (Hobson and Oláh, 2006). Since the childcare is provided, female paid work is an advantage for having children as it provides income, which increases financial security. The ‘positive turn’ goes hand in hand with the Theory of Security (Hobcraft and Kiernan, 1995: 27) that says the decision to have children in modern societies, with a broad middle and low middle class, is associated with the sense of financial security and stability in general: being in a partnership, having completed full-time education and training, owning a home; being employed and having an adequate income, and, less concretely, a feeling of security. In Poland and Spain, these conditions are specified in a set of factors that, even though viewed from different perspectives, always point towards a similar result: the delay in emancipation of young people from the parental home and the decision to have children.

Having presented the delay in the process of emancipation and the lower fertility rate that seems to result, it is important to be aware of the effect of the possible factors involved in the decision to have children. What is the role of cultural and institutional context? What are the socioeconomic factors associated with the decision to become parents?

The manuscript starts with a brief presentation of a theoretical system of interrelations between motherhood and its institutional context. Then, we provide a short review of hypotheses on shape of these interrelations. In part 3, the similarities and differences between Poland and Spain are presented, together with some interrelations between selected socioeconomic indicators and fertility. Four aspects are presented: labour market structures, living conditions, gender roles and norms as well as family/work reconciliation policies. Part 4 shows the design and Part 5 the results from Cox proportional hazards models on the transition to the first childbirth and recurrent proportional hazards models for the transition to first and second childbirth. To control for more detailed job characteristics, additional models for employed women were produced. We use these models to test “the positive turn” hypothesis in both countries. Part 6 concludes.

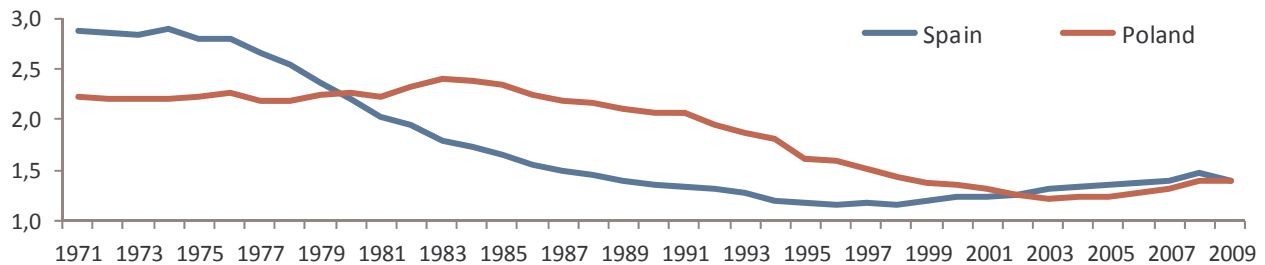
### **Below we present selected results of an institutional comparative analysis**

#### **Demographic context**

Dramatic drop in fertility started after 1976 in Spain and 1991 in Poland. The negative tendencies have already been reversed (in 2004 in Poland and 1998 in Spain) but only in the limited extent comparing with former drops in TFR.

In Spanish case, the slight rise of fertility rates is attributed to higher fertility of immigrant women (in 2008, more than 20% of newborns in Spain had a foreign mother). It is expected that in a few years these women will adopt the demographic patterns of the host country, as it is usually the case with immigrants arriving in western countries (Coleman, 1994).

**Figure 1. Total Fertility Rates in Poland and Spain**



Source: Eurostat, CSO of Poland

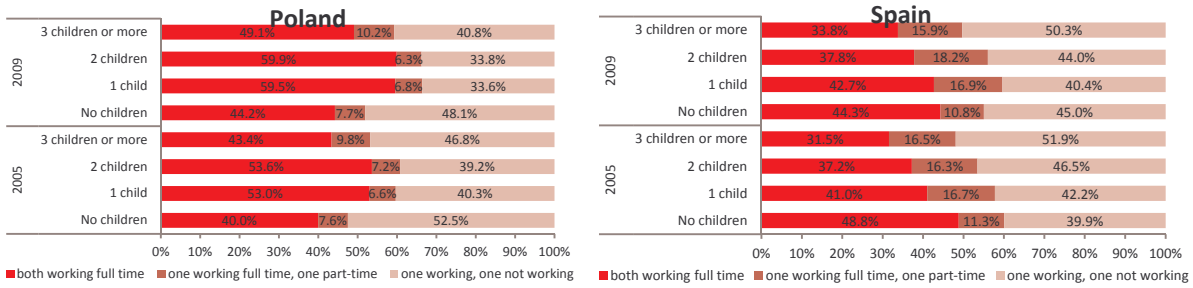
For both Poland and Spain tempo (fertility postponement) and quantum effects (decline in age-specific fertility levels irrelevant to fertility postponement) are observable. Considering tempo effect, the average age of women at childbirth rose from 26.21 (Poland) and 28.86 (Spain) in 1990 to 28.61 and 31.03, respectively. Adjusted TFRs suggest significant part of former drop in fertility can be explained by fertility postponing. However, recent reduction of this process coexists with only slight rebound in fertility. Within the quantum effect, a drop in subsequent order births has been more significant than drop in first births. This drop has taken place first in Spain – first births consisted 43.9% of overall births in 1983 and 54.5% in 2006. In Poland dramatic drop in subsequent births started in 1993, when first births amounted 38.6% of overall births – in 2007 this indicator rose to 50.8%.

### Labour market structures

It is likely that labour market structures may influence fertility behavior. Labour market can have direct impact on fertility through shaping work-family balance, in particular the number of hours spent at work that reduces number of hours remaining for family chores. Both working spouses/partners still can be eager to enter into parenthood as they have access to flexible working-time arrangements or to some forms of childcare that they can afford. The impact on fertility can be also indirect, through influencing living conditions and/or gender roles. Having job provides income and, consequently, security for households that are vital for taking decision to enter into the parenthood. Rise in labour supply without rise in labour demand does not necessarily lead to the rise in household income and it may modify gender roles instead.

Polish couples with children apply dual-earner model more often than Spanish couples with at least one child. In 2005, 53-4% of Polish couples with one or two children implemented it, comparing with 37-41% for Spain. In 2009, dual-earner model became more popular in both countries, but this tendency was stronger in Poland. Such model applied 60% of Polish and 40% of Spanish couples with one or two children. On the other hand, Spain notes approximately higher rates of couples with core full-time breadwinner and additional part-time earner (in 2009, 17-18% for 1-2 children couples in Spain versus 6-7% in Poland). In both countries, combining full-time job is less frequent for both couples with upbringing 3 or more children, but in 2009, almost half of Polish couples did that (for Spain it was 34%). It is worthy to notice that in Poland, dual-earner model is less frequent for childless couples than for couples with children, opposing to Spain. In 2009, proportion of dual-earner childless couples in all childless couples with working person consisted 44% instead of 60% as for couples with 1-2 children (in Spain it was 44% instead 43%). Exceptional difficulties to find a job by youth (women in particular) can be a possible explanation for this phenomenon.

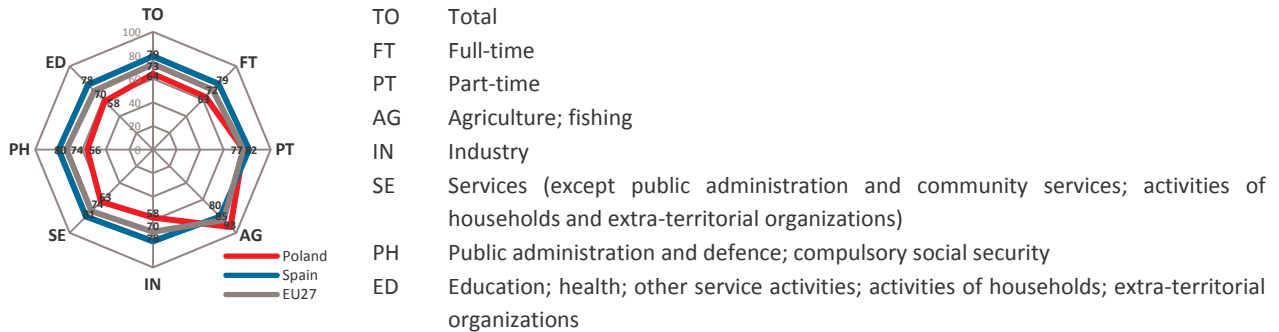
**Figure 2. Family models of labour division**



Source: Eurostat. Sample limited to couples where any of its members is working

Restrictions towards changing working hours were there more severe than in Spain and EU27 in all sectors except agriculture and fishing (mainly due to sector specificity and the fact people are usually self-employed in this sector and thus they can decide on their working hours on their own).

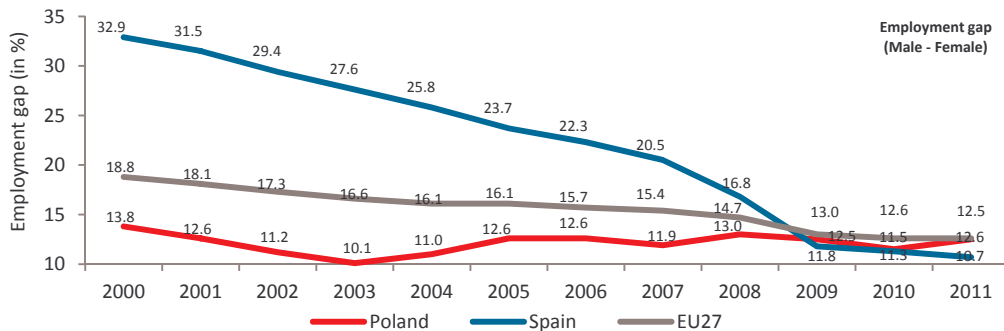
**Figure 3. Percentage of employed persons aged 15-64 who could vary start/end of working day for family reasons in 2005**



Source: Eurostat

In the first decade of XXI century, one could observe substantial fall in unemployment and employment gaps in Spain. Poland, on the other hand, registered slight fall in unemployment gap in line with stable, relatively low comparing with Spain and European average, employment gap. Convergence of both gaps in Poland, Spain and EU27 led to their equalization in 2009.

**Figure 4. Gender gap for aged 25-49**



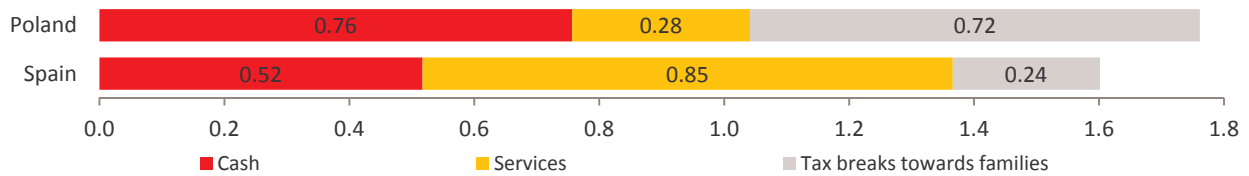
Source: Eurostat

Employment gap is highest when the youngest child is below 6 (in 2009, this effect is stronger for Poland, contrary to 2005). Employment gap decreases as the youngest child grows up – more rapidly for Poland than for Spain. In Poland, non-employment after having child is more frequent but duration of non-employment spell is approximately shorter (and shorter in 2009 than in 2005).

## Policies

Family policies aim – inter alia – to raise fertility, mainly by creating settings that shape the relations between work and family, providing services and investing direct or indirect transfers to improve living standards of families with children.

**Figure 5. Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, % GDP, 2007**



Source: OECD, Polish Ministry of Finance

Poland and Spain spent less on family policies than EU average (2.0% of GDP in 2007). Although they spend comparable part of GDP on family policies (in 2007, Poland 1.76% GDP and Spain 1.60% GDP), the structure of these spending is different – while Poland spends mainly on direct and indirect (tax breaks) cash benefits, Spain spends mainly on services. The share of means-tested benefits is a second difference. In Poland, means-tested benefits prevail, while benefits in Spain are more egalitarian.

## Conclusions

To sum up, there are differences in labour market structures between both countries, namely the prevalence of dual-earner model and unpopularity of part-time model among couples with children in Poland comparing with Spain. To other differences belong lower flexibility of work arrangements and higher gender gaps for parents with children aged below 6 for Poland comparing with Spain. These differences, combining with low fertility in both countries suggest us the following: there is some evidence that the ‘positive turn’ hypothesis can be denied in Spain while in Poland the situation in Poland is unclear. It seems the different role of second earner income in the family budget is the crucial reason for that. In Poland, double-earner model is often a prerequisite to afford raising a child but then severe incompatibility between work and family chores inhibits decision on transition to motherhood. In Spain, one income is usually sufficient to raise children but, despite that, women still value their jobs and therefore they do not decide to have a child until they gain more stable contract. Anyway, if they lose a job, the unemployment is for them just very good period to enter the motherhood.

The differences between Poles and Spaniards are not negligible in terms of gender roles and values, contrary to many common sense views. Different gender roles explain in some extent may be an explanation for possible invalidity of the ‘positive turn’ hypothesis for Spain (though dynamics show gender roles in Spain change). Poles and Spaniards differ in their religiousness but they are still attached to family values, though cohabitation is more common in Spain. The discrepancy between the number of real and desired children shows that not a crisis of family is the reason for low fertility.

Poland and Spain spend on family policies similar share of GDP, slightly less than EU average. However, the structure of this spending is very different in both countries, with stress on tax breaks and means-tested benefits in Poland and subsidizing childcare in Spain. Unfortunately both approaches seem to be insufficient or ill-fitted. In Poland, lack of cheap childcare seems to be major obstacle in having more children. In both countries labour market institutions hinder fertility – in Poland through insufficient flexibility of work arrangements and in Spain through too strict EPL in case of permanent contracts.

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