

Leave policy and early childhood services: cross-national overview

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Contents

- ✓ Comprehensive systems to support the care of children under 3
- ✓ Leaves and services as complementary or alternative schemes
- ✓ In the framework of EU social policy, can we perceive trends towards building comprehensive public systems to suf childcare support for families with small children?
- ✓ The balance between leaves and services varies across countries
- ✓ Indicators and data available: How are small children cared for while parents are at work?

- Principal means to support the care of children under 3:
 - Regulation and subsidy of parenthood leaves (maternity, paternity, parental leave, childcare leave, leave to take care of children when ill)
 - Regulation and subsidy of childcare services
- Comprehensive systems of public support for childcare for families with children under 3 years are based on this interplay and providing a certain amount of choice for these families.
- Leave and services can be viewed either as complementary or as alternative public measures when looking at the early years of parenting, when there are children under 3 years old in the family.

- The quality and availability of leave arrangements affect the demand for services, while the public provision and quality of childcare services affect the use and duration of leaves. However situations differ very much according to the age of the infant and to the particular circumstances of his/her family.
- It also depends on the territorial context (urban or rural, size of the municipality, distribution of competences)
- Public regulations and family preferences seem to favour options that allow home care by a parent for children under one year old. Afterwards solutions and preferences are more diversified.

Table. Parental leave: duration and benefits in EU-15 countries in 2002.

PARENTAL LEAVE DURATION & BENEFITS	6-7.5 months	11-24 months	Up to 3 years
Earnings-related benefits during the whole parental leave period	Denmark	Italy (30%)	
First part: earnings-related benefit; second part: flat rate		Sweden	Finland
All parents on leave are paid flat rate benefit	Belgium	Austria Luxembourg	
Parents with some additional conditions are paid flat rate (from second child on, under an income ceiling)		France	Germany
Unpaid	Greece Ireland UK	Netherlands Portugal	Spain

Based on Deven & Moss, 2002

Data and indicators

1. Comparative databases:

- Labour Force Survey: Indicators on parental employment, working hours of parents with young children, potential coverage of leave schemes, maternity and parental leave coverage...

D Data on expenditure: Social protection public expenditure on family benefits (maternity and parental leave), on family services (childcare) (SOCX OECD), expenditure on early education?

Eurobarometer (attitudes, values and expectations)

2. National databases

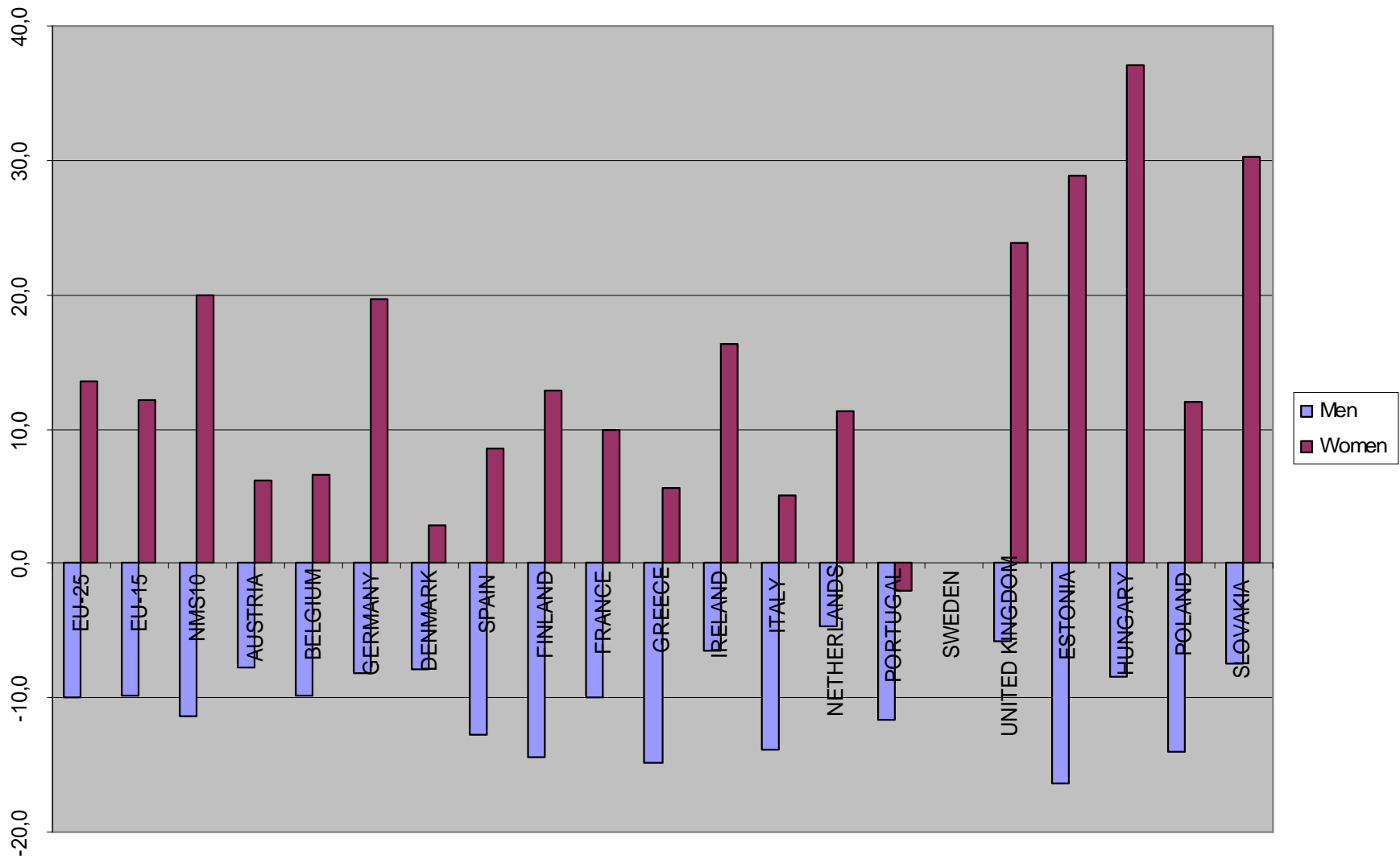
Childcare indicators: coverage, number of places

Data on leave users provided by Social Security Institutions

Specific surveys

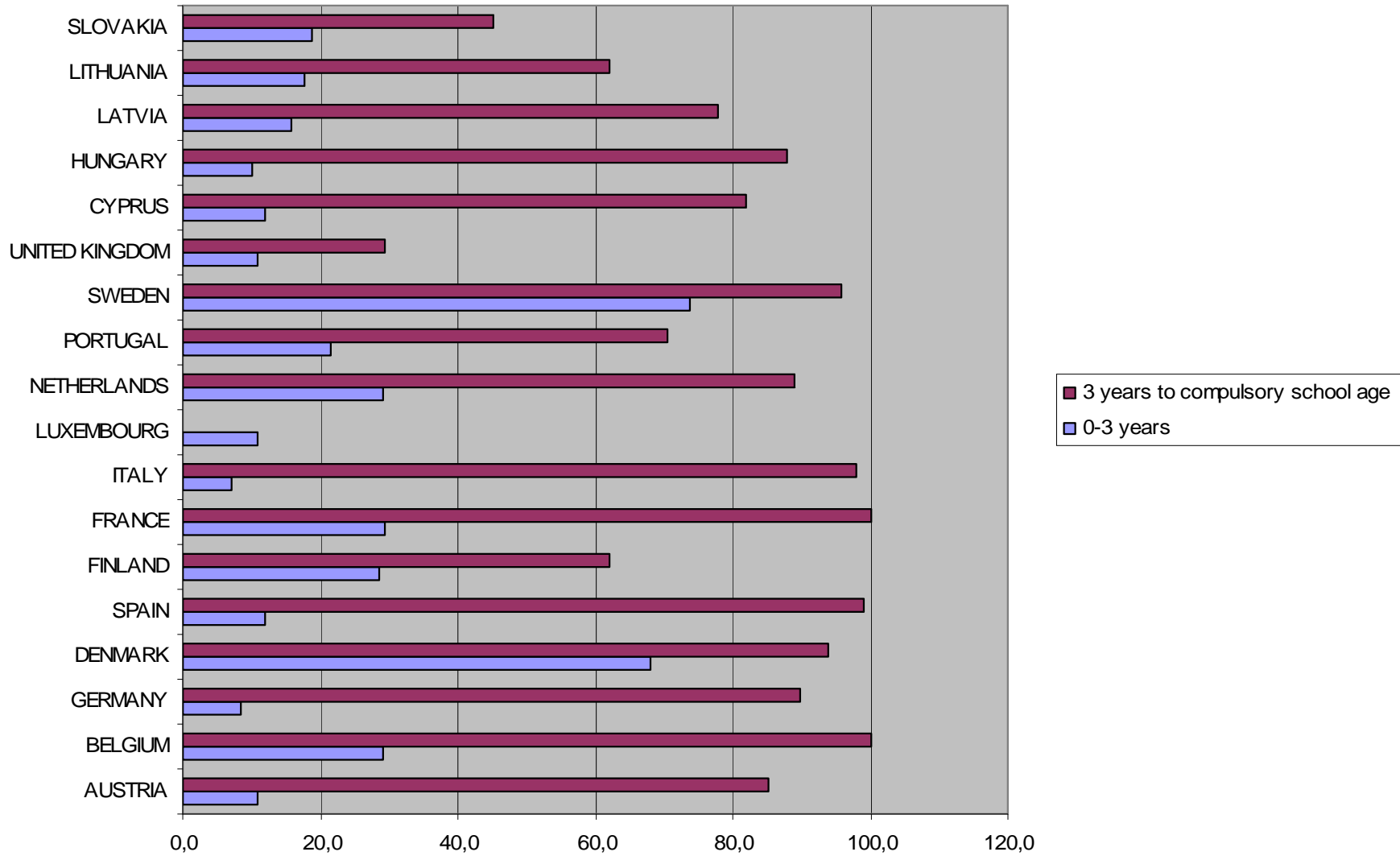
3. Indicators foreseen for monitoring the European Employment Strategy (childcare and leaves coverage)

Graphic 2. Employment impact of parenthood. European Union, 2003



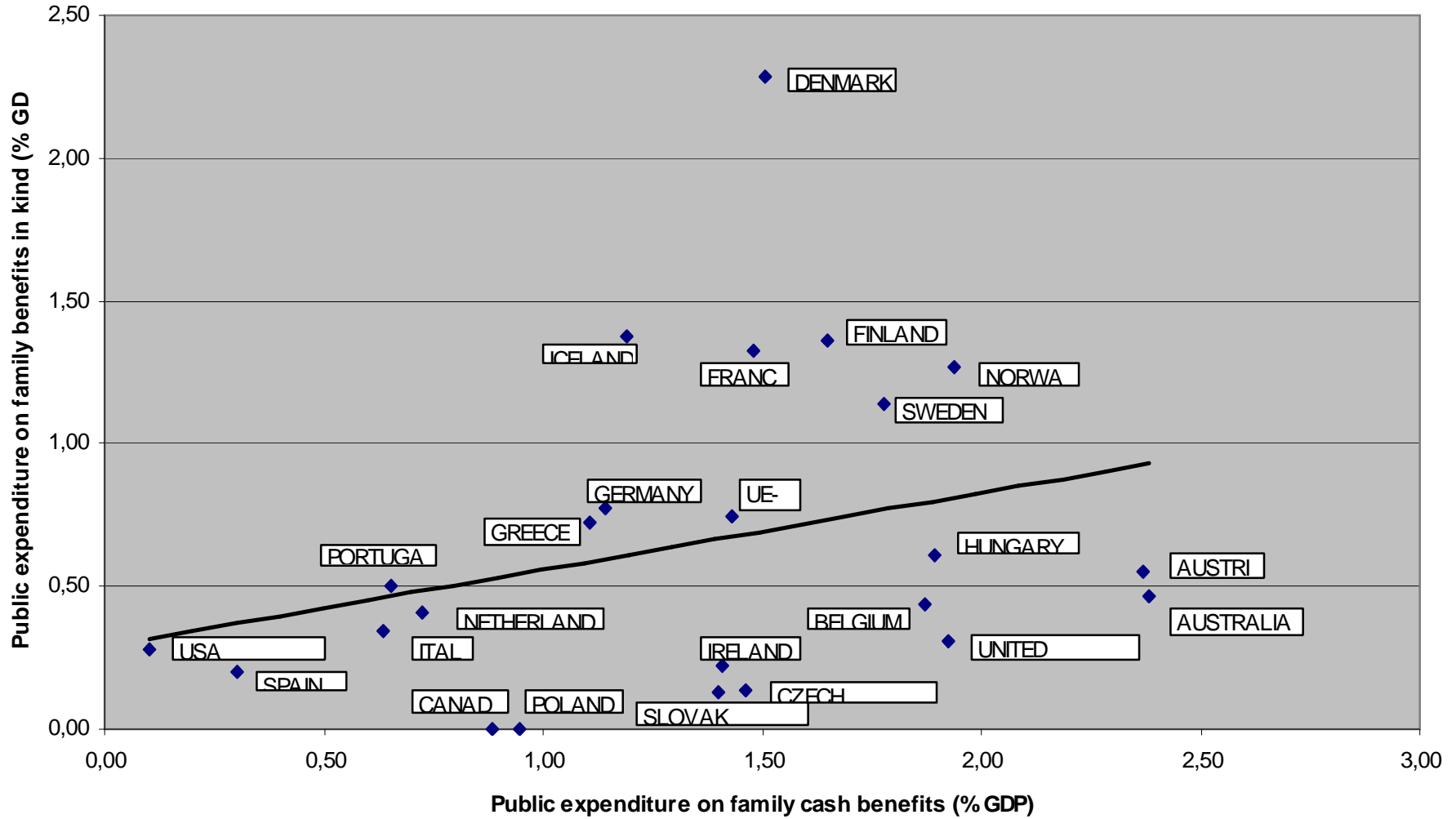
Source: Own elaboration by Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines 2004-2005 compendium. EC, 2005

Graphic 1. Childcare. European Union, 2002-2003



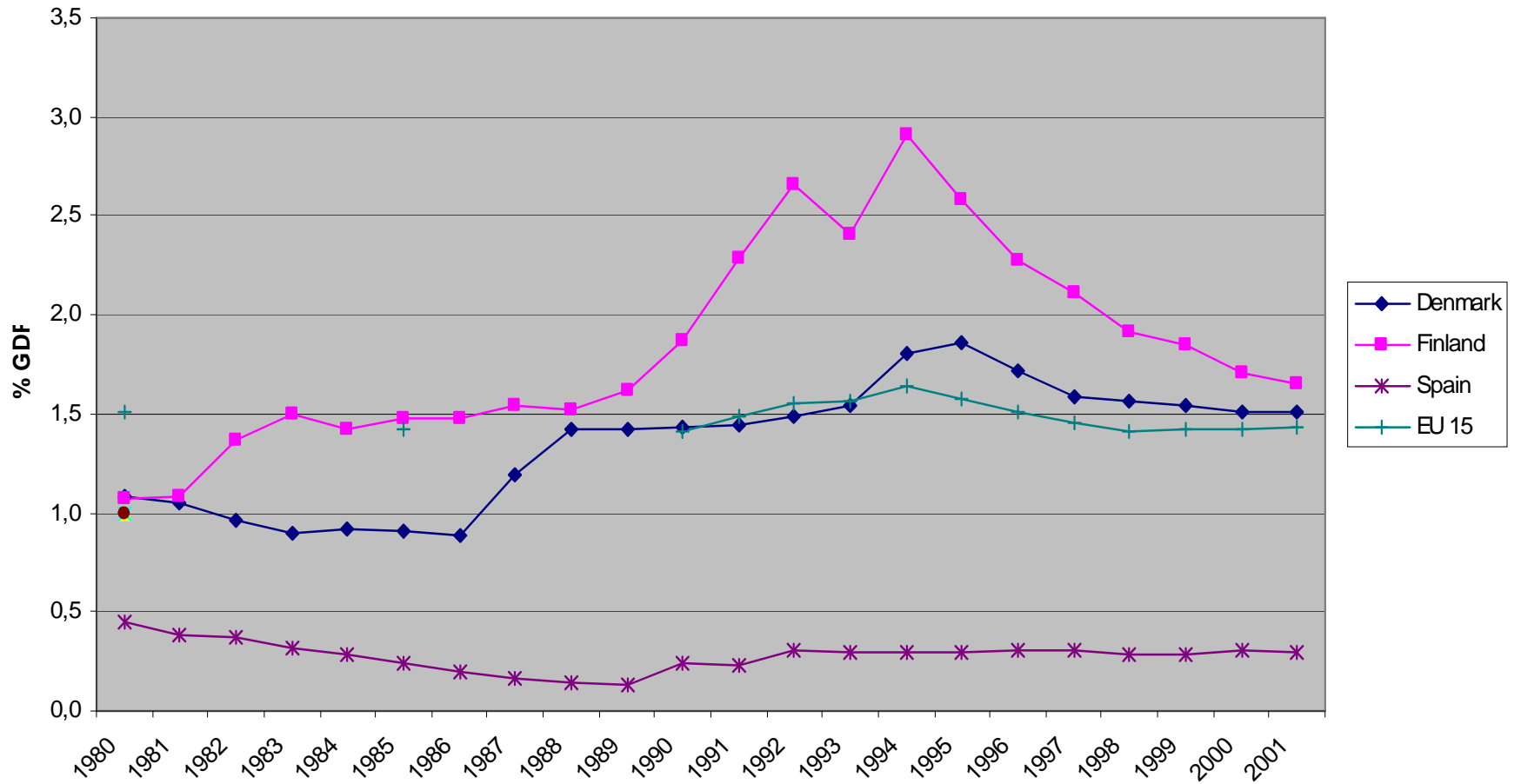
Source: Own elaboration by Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines 2004-2005 compendium. EC, 2005

Graphic 1. Public expenditure on family cash benefits and family benefits in kind. Selection countries, 2001



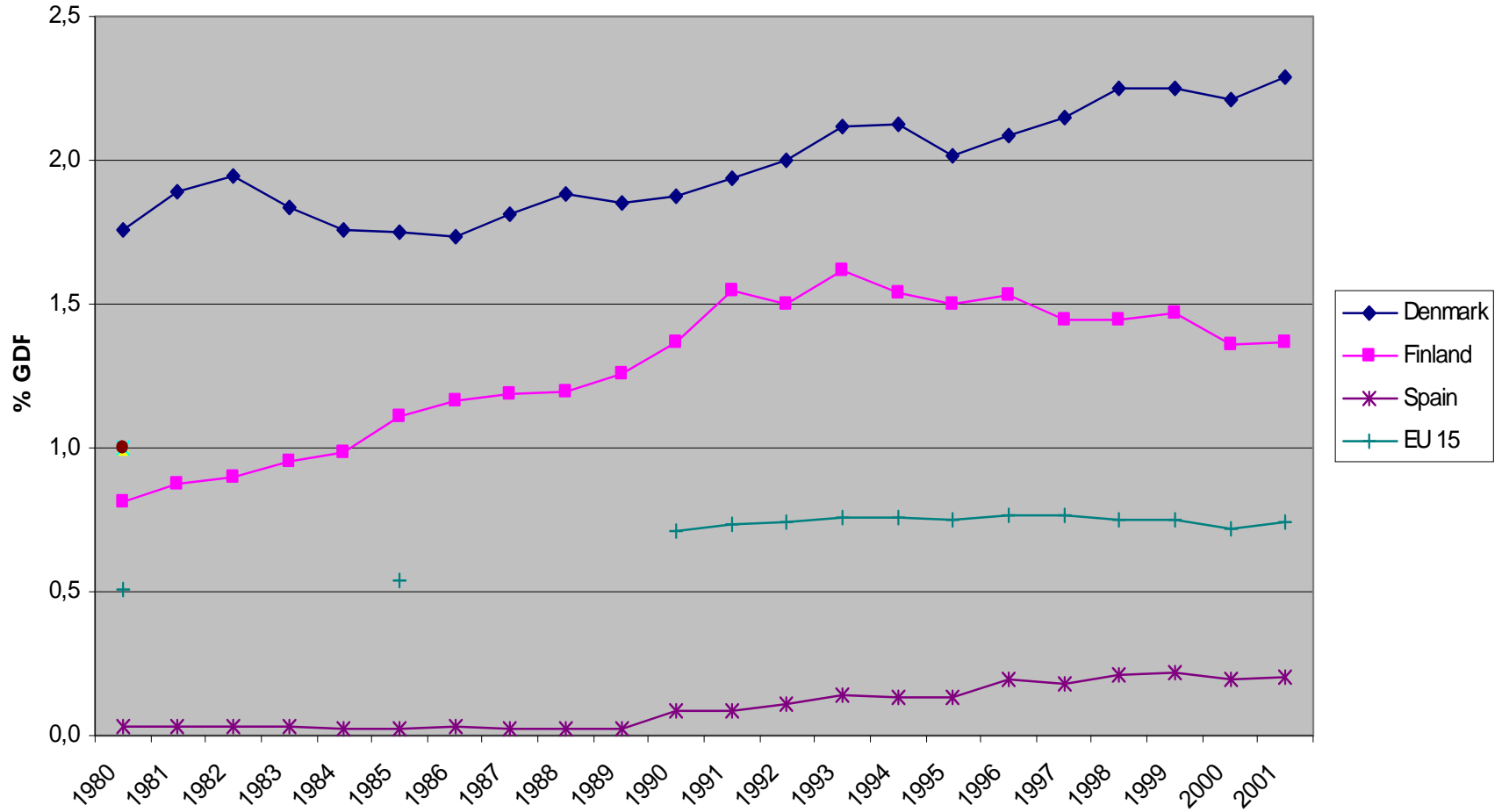
Source: Own elaboration based on OECD data (SOCX)

Public Family Cash Benefits. Selected countries, 1980-2001.



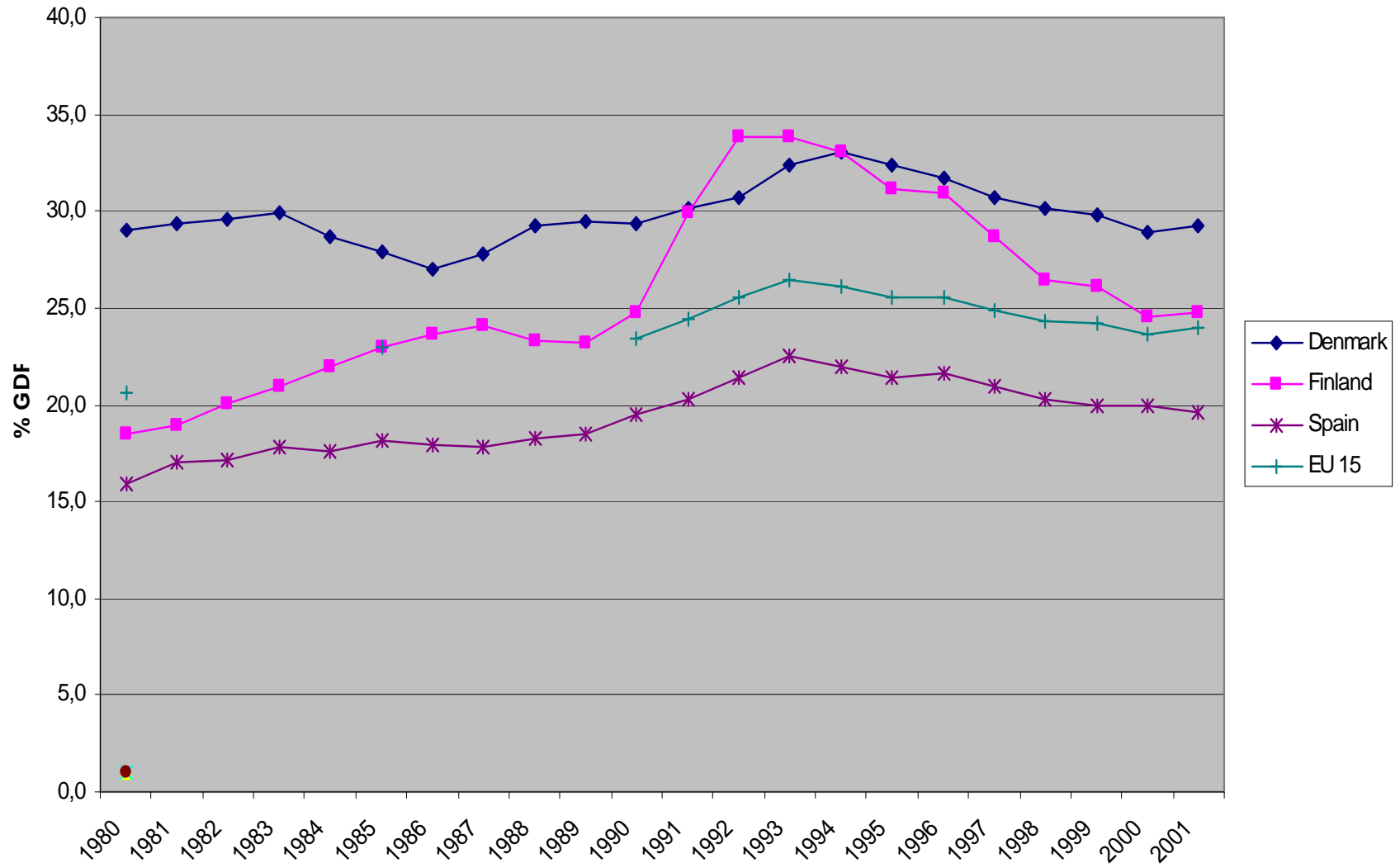
Source: Own elaboration based on OECD data (SOCX)

Public Family Benefits in Kind. Selected countries, 1980-2001

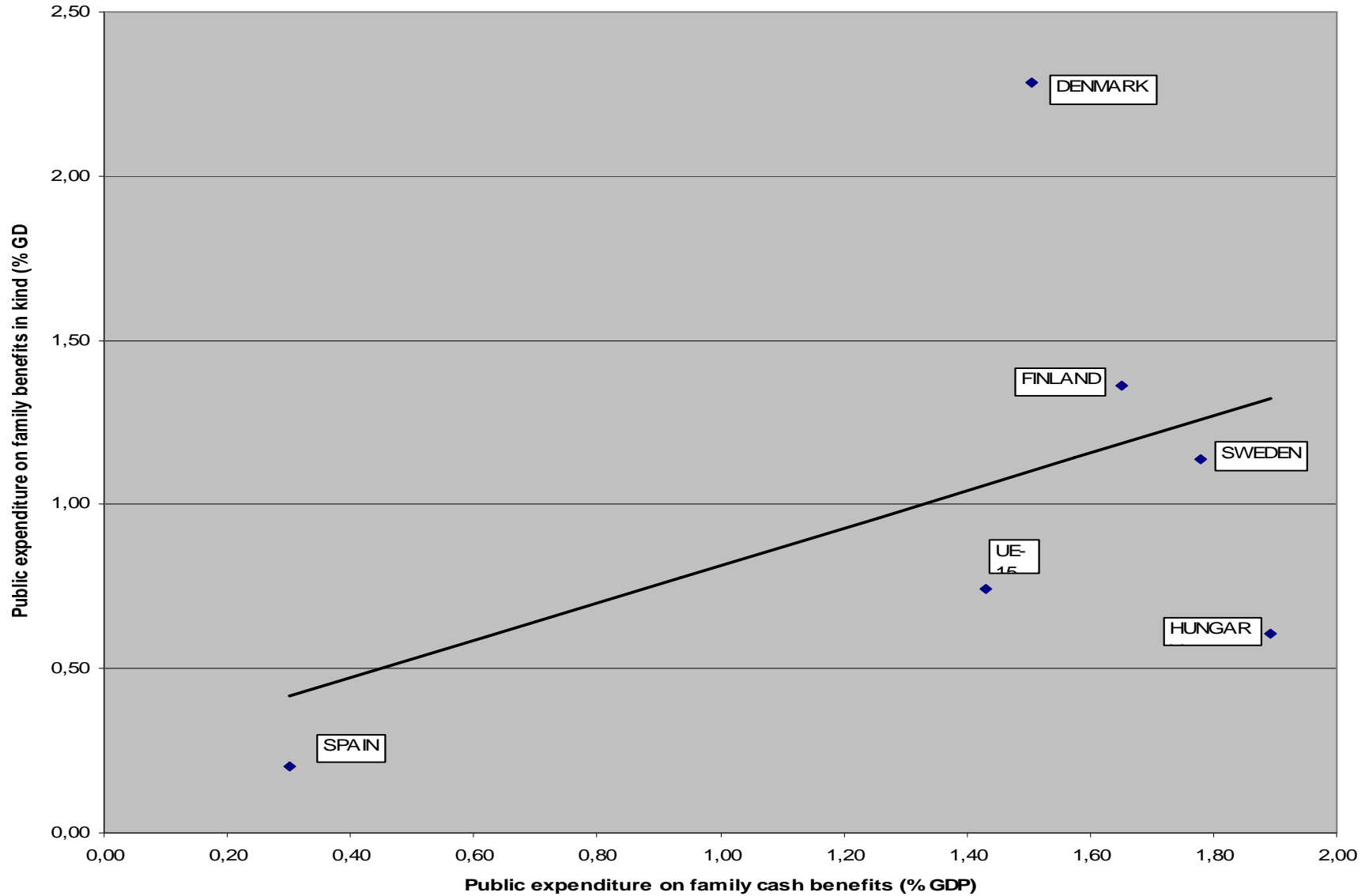


Source: Own elaboration based on OECD data (SOCX)

Public Social Expenditure. Selected countries, 1980-2001.



Graphic 2. Public expenditure on family cash benefits and family benefits in kind. Selected countries, 2001



Source: Own elaboration based on OECD data (SOCX)

Formal and informal childcare in Spain

- **Child care is formalising in connection to parental employment within the framework of educational schemes**
- **Employment rate of under 3's mothers is increasing**
 - from 32 to 45%, average weekly working hours decreased from 36.6 to 35.9 (1992-2000)
 - Employment rate of fathers from 88 to 92%, their average weekly working hours from 42.6 to 42.8
- **Leave schemes other than maternity leave have not yet developed as a real alternative. Presently under discussion, with regional innovation**
 - Maternity leave (16 weeks) coverage increased from 31% to 44% in relation to births (54% in 2002). The coverage of the unpaid parental leave is about 1% of the the under 3s
- **Early education increased from 4 to 15% of the under 3's.**
 - Extensive arrangements of childminders (*canguros, household assistants*) mainly on informal employment basis (nearly 220,000 employments emerged in 2005 as immigrant household assistants)
- **Nearly universal coverage for 3-5 year-olds organised as a pre-school stage. Out-of-school care is presently developing**

Care arrangements for children under 3 years old

