

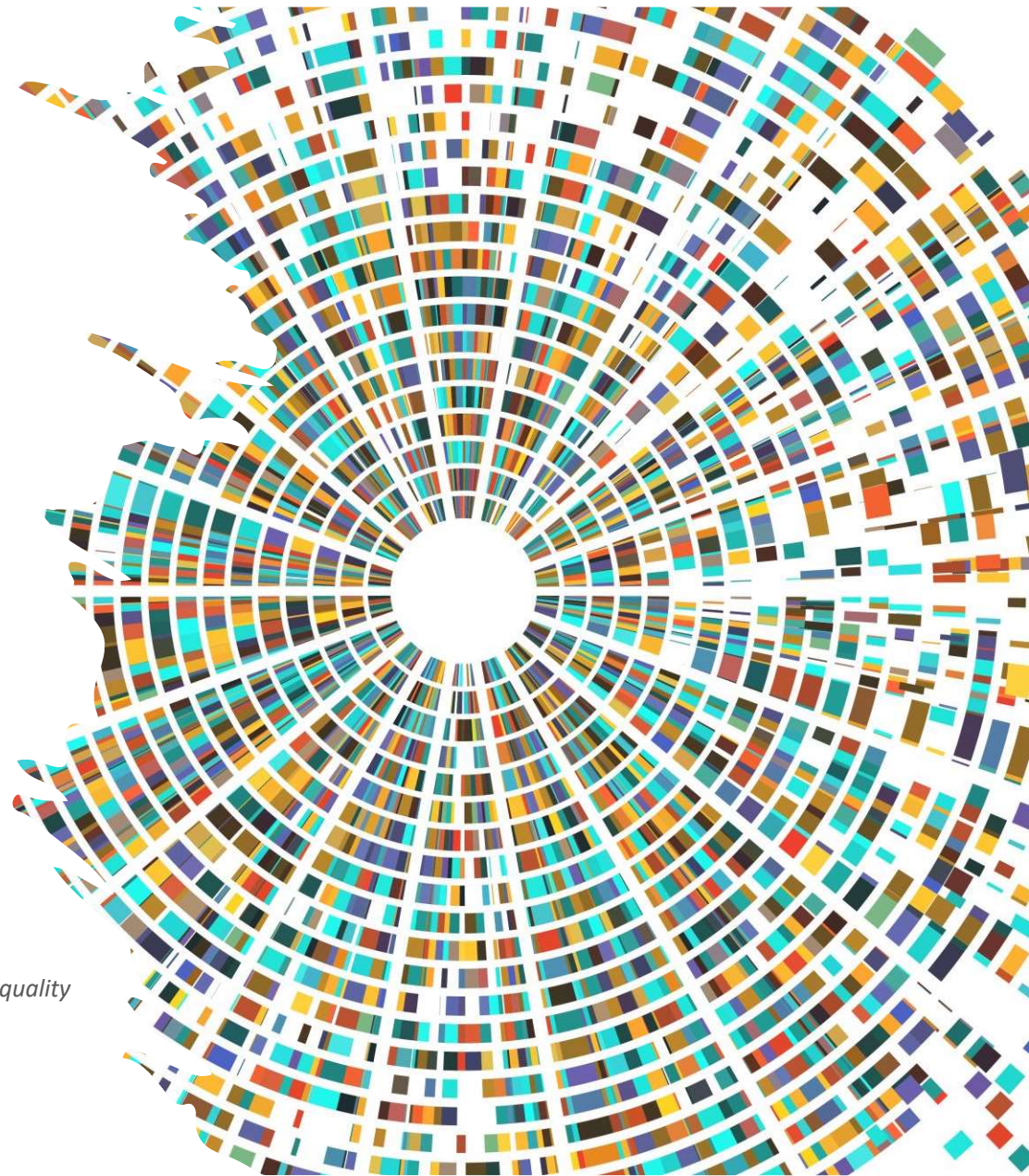
# What has the pandemic taught us about (parenting) leaves?

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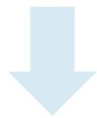
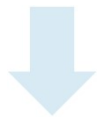
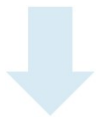
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*Leave Policies in Changing Times: New Patterns of Work and Care and Gender and Social Equality*



# Research puzzle?

- ECEC/school closures (a key component of containment policies)
- Teleworking (often in combination with homeschooling a widespread practice)
- Increase in the provision of informal care to disabled/elderly relatives/parents



**(1) Where and what (new) leave legislation** has been enacted to support parents and other carers during the pandemic?

**(2) To what extent leave policy responses were *congruent* with other measures** aimed at parents, such as ECEC and school closures or flexible working arrangements?

# ECEC/schools closures and leaves in the pandemic

Severe **consequences** of ECEC/school closures on work-care balance and gendered division of work, well-being and health, education and learning (see Blum & Dobrotić, forthcoming)

The **functions/types of leaves** in the pandemic (Koslowski et al., 2022)

- Adjustments for current leave takers
- Adjustments for future leave takers (e.g. eligibility, entitlements)
- Pre-existing emergency leaves (e.g. to care for sick children)
- New emergency leaves (temporary)
- Reliance on labour market measures (e.g. right to telework)

? ...and possibly others...

**Feeding into** public enquiries into pandemic response?



# Data

## For leave-related policy responses

- Country notes in the *International Review on Leave Policies and Related Research 2020 and 2021* that included a subsection on policy responses to the pandemic up to the end of June 2020 and end of June 2021 [not always fully „reliable” – **do say if you see errors!**]

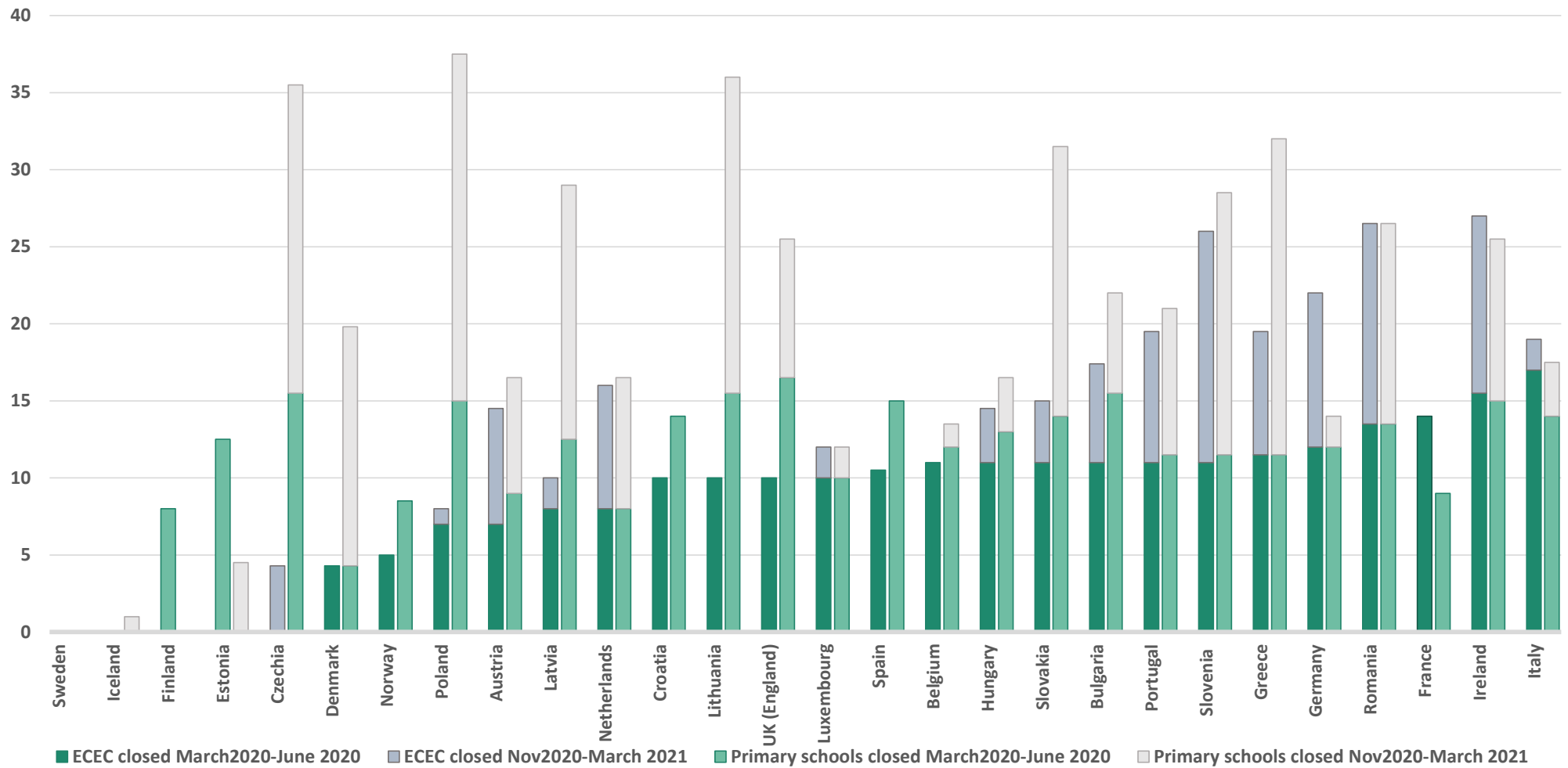
## For ECEC/school closures

- COVID-PCPR data set (Dobrotić & Blum, 2023; available at Figshare; **state-imposed statutory closure episodes!**)

## Focus on **European countries**



# How widespread was the practice of ECEC/primary school closures in European countries?



Source: Dobrotić & Blum, 2023

# Pandemic childcare-policy responses (Dobrotić & Blum, 2023)

## European countries cluster into five models:

- Strict closures (public health approach)
- Educational approach
- Strict work-care approach
- Lenient work-care approach
- No closures (high-risk approach)

Most widespread practice: from public-health approach (wave 1) to high-risk approach (wave 2)

	Wave 1	Wave 2
Austria	strict work-care	<i>(high-risk)</i>
Belgium	strict work-care	high-risk
Bulgaria	public health	public health
Croatia	strict work-care	high-risk
Czechia	<i>(lenient WC)</i>	<i>not clear</i>
Denmark	<i>(s/l work-care)</i>	lenient work-care
Estonia	lenient work-care	high-risk
Finland	<i>(lenient WC)</i>	high-risk
France	public health	high-risk
Germany	public health	<i>(high-risk)</i>
Greece	public health	public health
Hungary	public health	not clear
Ireland	public health	public health
Italy	public health	high-risk
Latvia	strict work-care	lenient work-care
Lithuania	public health	<i>(lenient WC)</i>
Luxembourg	public health	high-risk
Netherlands	public health	educational
Poland	public health	lenient work-care
Portugal	public health	public health
Romania	public health	public health
Slovakia	public health	lenient work-care
Slovenia	public health	public health
Spain	public health	high-risk
Sweden	high-risk	high-risk
Iceland	high-risk	high-risk
Norway	educational	high-risk
UK (England)	public health	lenient work-care

Childcare-policy r. (Dobrotić & Blum, 2023)			COVID-related leaves ( <i>first data, need to be cross-checked; LP&amp;R data</i> )		
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Adj. for current leave takers	Adj. of (sickness) leave schemes to cover ECEC/school closures	New COVID-related leave (yes, if employers agree) yes (1st: if employers agree)
Austria	strict work-care	<i>(high-risk)</i>	no	no	
Belgium	strict work-care	high-risk	yes (postp.)	no	
Bulgaria	public health	public health	no	no	yes
Croatia	strict work-care	high-risk	no	no	no
Czechia	<i>(lenient WC)</i>	???	no	yes	no
Denmark	<i>(s/l work-care)</i>	lenient work-care	yes (ext.)	no	no
Estonia	lenient work-care	high-risk	no	no	(yes, only children with dis.)
Finland	<i>(lenient WC)</i>	high-risk	no	no	yes
France	public health	high-risk	no	no	yes
Germany	public health	<i>(high-risk)</i>	yes (postp.)	no	yes
Greece	public health	public health	no	no	yes
Hungary	public health	???	yes (ext.)	no	no
Ireland	public health	public health	-	-	-
Italy	public health	high-risk	no	no	yes
Latvia	strict work-care	lenient work-care	yes (ext.)	no	no
Lithuania	public health	<i>(lenient WC)</i>	no	no	yes
Luxembourg	public health	high-risk	yes (postp.)	no	yes
Netherlands	public health	educational	no	no	no
Poland	public health	lenient work-care	no	no	yes
Portugal	public health	public health	no	no	yes
Romania	public health	public health	no	no	yes
Slovakia	public health	lenient work-care	yes (ext.)	yes	no
Slovenia	public health	public health	no	no	yes (labour-market)
Spain	public health	high-risk	yes (benefit I.)	no	yes (labour-market)
Sweden	high-risk	high-risk	yes (ext.)	yes	no
Iceland	high-risk	high-risk	no	no	yes (???)
Norway	educational	high-risk	no	yes (???)	no
UK (England)	public health	lenient work-care	no	no	no

# Pandemic leaves characteristics:

- Leaves mostly directed towards **children & tended to cover ECEC/school closure episodes**
- 13 (+?) countries: benefit level > **66% of previous earnings**
- In most cases, **the absence of strict eligibility criteria** (i.e. only employment at the time of emergency) **BUT** in some cases, **only if teleworking was not an option** (e.g. PT, RO)
- **Weak gender incentives!**
- Critical cases in terms of **care gap**: red & dark grey

## Notes:

\* Can be used for any person in care need.

▼ There is a ceiling.

■ Only if telework was not an option.

Any COVID-related leave characteristics ( <i>first data, will be cross-checked; LP&amp;R data</i> )			
	Age limit	Leave length (weeks)	Benefit level (% of previous earnings)
Austria	[14]	[3 (1st); 4 (2nd)]	[100%]*
Belgium	12	ECEC/school closures (2nd)	70% (2nd) ▼
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>ECEC/school closures</b>	<b>unpaid (one-off MT benefit)</b>
Croatia			
<i>Czechia</i>		<i>ECEC/school closures</i>	<i>70-80%</i>
Denmark			
Estonia			
Finland	10	ECEC/school closures	flat-rate
France	11	ECEC/school closures (1st)	84%
Germany	12	10 d. per emp. (20 if single)	67% ▼
Greece	15	ECEC/school closures	100% (3 out of 4 d. taken)
<b>Hungary</b>			
Ireland	-	-	-
Italy	14	15 d. (1st); ECEC/school closures (2nd)	50%
Latvia			
Lithuania	10 (2nd)	60 d. (1st); ECEC/school closures (2nd)	66%
Luxembourg	13		100%* ▼
<b>Netherlands</b>			
Poland	8	ECEC/school closures	80%
Portugal	12	ECEC/school closures	75-100% (!) ▼ ■
Romania	12	Up to 3 months	75% ▼ ■
Slovakia	15	ECEC/school closures	55%
Slovenia	12 (1st)	ECEC/school closures	80%
Spain	not specified	ECEC/school closures	unpaid*
Sweden	12	max 120 days a year	90%
Iceland	not specified	???	???
Norway	???	???	???
<b>UK (England)</b>			



# How far could carers rely on labour market measures?



## Encouragement (instruction) to work from home

But **only 3 countries (France, Greece, Italy)** introduced **explicit** FWA measures aimed at parents (see also Spain in previous slides)



## Job retention schemes

But care explicitly justified reason **only in Slovenia?** (i.e. employer cannot refuse the request)

**Discretionary** decision of the employer strong (e.g. UK)



## Occupational welfare?

**Inequalities** (available to higher-income workers & those with higher level of education)

# Instead of conclusion... still many open questions?

**Data „reliability”** (e.g. new COVID-related leaves vs „old” adjusted leaves)

Did any of these **changes endure beyond the pandemic?**

- Change to working from home patterns for many where their occupations allow but cross-national variation

**COVID-related reforms vs Work-Life Balance Directive related changes**

- How to discern what was a key driver of changes in a country?

Should we be **feeding into current enquiries** into the pandemic response?



# This presentation is partly based on our previous publications:

- Koslowski, A., Blum, S., & Dobrotić, I. (2022). [Leave policy in the time of pandemic: new developments and lessons learned](#). In Dobrotić, Blum & Koslowski (Eds) *Research Handbook on Leave Policy* (pp. 384-397). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Dobrotić, I., & Blum, S. (2023). [‘Sorry, we’re closed’: a fuzzy-set ideal-type analysis of pandemic childcare-policy responses in 28 European countries](#). *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1(aop), 1-37.
- Dobrotić, I. and Blum, S. (2023) COVID-PCPR: COVID Pandemic Childcare- Policy Response dataset 2020–2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22574533.v1>.
- Blum, S., & Dobrotić, I. (2021). [Childcare-policy responses in the COVID-19 pandemic: unpacking cross-country variation](#). *European Societies*, 23(sup1), S545-S563.
- Blum, S., & Dobrotić, I. (forthcoming) [Early childhood education and care in times of COVID-19](#). Ranci & Rostgaard (Eds) *Handbook of Care Policies*. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.