

Career-breaks and Maternal Employment in CEE Countries*

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Abstract

Post-birth career breaks and their impact on mothers' labor market outcomes have received considerable attention in the literature. However, existing evidence comes mostly from Western Europe and the US, where career breaks tend to be short. In contrast, Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, where post-birth career interruptions by mothers are typically much longer, have rarely been studied. In the first part of this study, we place CEE countries into the EU context by providing key empirical facts related to the labor market outcomes of mothers and the most important factors that may affect them. Besides substantial differences between CEE countries and the rest of the EU, there is also large heterogeneity within CEE itself, which we explore next. In the second part, we review the main family leave and formal childcare policies and reforms that have occurred in CEE countries since the end of Communism and provide a comprehensive survey of the existing scientific evidence of their impact on maternal employment. While research on the causal impacts of these policies is scarce, several important studies have recently been published in high-impact journals. We are the first to provide an overview of these causal studies from CEE countries, which offer an insightful extension to the existing knowledge from Western Europe and the US.

* We thank the Czech Science Foundation, grant number 18-16667S, for financial support. This text was prepared to be included as a chapter in the book "Mothers in the Labor Market" (Molina, J.A. Editor, Springer, 2022). We would like to thank the anonymous referee and Daniel Münich for their comments and suggestions. Anna Donina provided excellent research assistance.

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