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**Stream 16.** Welfare State Attitudes and Economic Crisis. Consequences for citizens demands in social protection and welfare values?

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Abstract by

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**Title:** What drives attitudes towards mothers' employment and care? A comparison of 15 European countries between 1990 and 2008.

Policies supposed to reconcile care and gainful employment have become more important in European welfare states. We know from the policy responsiveness literature that such policy reforms are in part due to a change in people's attitudes towards mothers' employment and the provision of childcare. On the other hand attitudes themselves are influenced by policy reforms, but also by the nation-specific culture and socio-economic context individuals live in. In this paper we show that this is indeed true for public attitudes towards childcare and mothers' employment in 15 EU countries between 1990 and 2008 on the basis of individual data from the European Values Survey. We combine this data with our own database that includes regional information on the socio-economic context (gdp/capita, employment and demographic structure, population density etc.) and policy information at the national level. We estimate a multi-level model that allows us to separately identify the effect of individual determinants (gender, family structure, age, income, education), socio-economic context factors and policies on attitudes. All determinants can be analyzed over time to investigate potential changes in the relationships. Is there a convergence towards more "modern" or more "traditional" attitudes – between social groups and between European welfare states? In addition, we will shed light on the consequences of the economic downturn. Based on our estimates we are able to predict how attitudes will change after the latest crisis. If unemployment levels rose people could be less in favor of mothers' employment and thus

work/care policies. If we find this to be true the latest trend towards strengthening reconciliation policies could come to a halt or could even be reversed. An interesting side note is that in this case the financial and economic crisis might lead to claims to reduce welfare state policies in a specific field.