

**Submission for the 8<sup>th</sup> ESPAnet Conference**

***Social Policy and the Global Crisis: Consequences and Responses***

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Title: ***'Laggard' Spain? Two Cases on the Politics of Child Benefits Policy***

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Stream: 7.1 Economic Crisis and Social Policy Reaction

Abstract:

The current Spanish and Portuguese welfare states were born at a time when other European governments started to engage in cost-containing policies. This explains important characteristics of the welfare models in place in the two countries today, though striking differences exist in the development of child benefits. Whilst Portugal has engaged in some reforms, expanding child benefits both in level and scope soon after democratic transition, such developments appeared to be absent in Spain, where provisions on family allowances stemming from the Franco era remained largely unchanged until the 1990s and on one of the lowest levels within the EU until today.

Building on the assumption that political and institutional determinants of child benefits may produce strong policy differences among most similar cases, our research is intended to shed light on the constellation of actors and processes that may account for the case of cumulative non-decisions in the field of child benefits in Spain. Whereas previous research has focused on the structural conditions of policymaking and its outcomes, this contribution is intended to look into the process leading to these outcomes, that is to say, the decision-making process. This includes the institutionalisation of family interests at state level, the role played by feminist organisations and other civil society actors as well as the positions and alliances of relevant political parties and social partners.

Following a most-similar case design, the study presents a thorough research and review of the reforms and changes introduced in this policy field and a mapping of the constellations of actors and institutions involved in the decision-making processes in Portugal. This mapping will be contrasted against that of Spain to be able to assess to what extent differences in these constellations can account for the non-development of child benefits. The structured and focused comparison is based on qualitative methodology and makes use of a wide range of written resources, both primary and secondary.

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