

Social Research Call

Title:

Assessing the Impact of Gender-Equal Parental Leave Reforms in Spain.

Acronym: AIGEPL

Project leader: Michael Christl

Host organisation: Universidad Loyola Andalucía

Main purpose of the project: The project aims to assess the causal impact of Spain’s gender-equal parental leave reform (2017–2021) on women’s labour market outcomes and wage trajectories. It investigates whether equal parental leave rights reduce employer discrimination against women of childbearing age and improve wage differences through increased paternal involvement in childcare.

Design/methodology/approach: The study uses a Synthetic Control Method (SCM) to construct a counterfactual “synthetic Spain” from other EU countries and estimates the policy’s effects by comparing observed post-reform outcomes. A complementary Difference-in-Differences (DiD) strategy is applied to validate results. Harmonized data from Eurostat, such as EU-LFS and EU-SILC, and other publicly available sources will be used.

Potential results: The project is expected to show reduced gender disparities in new employment, improved wage trajectories for women of childbearing age, and increased relationship stability due to shared caregiving. It will generate rigorous causal evidence and produce open-access datasets, a research report, a peer-reviewed publication, and policy briefs to inform ongoing debates on gender-equal family policies.

Social relevance of the research: This study addresses persistent gender gaps in employment and earnings by evaluating a structural policy intervention. Results will inform policymakers in Spain and other EU countries about the real-world impact of equal parental leave on labour market behaviour and gender norms. It contributes to broader goals of inclusive growth, social resilience, and gender equality.

Originality/value of the project: The project shifts the analytical focus from parental behaviour to employer responses, offering a novel perspective on how family policy reforms influence labour demand for women. It innovatively uses SCM in a cross-national context and emphasizes reproducibility and policy engagement. The findings will support evidence-based design of equitable labour and care policies.