

Social Research Call

Title:

PUBLIC POLICIES AND EQUALITY IN FIRMS



Acronym: EQUIFIRM

Project leader: Claudia Hupkau

Host organisation: CUNEF Universidad

Main purpose of the project: The project investigates how firms respond to Spain's landmark 2017-2021 paternity leave reforms. It asks whether equalising expected absences across genders reduces employer discrimination against women of childbearing age, how it affects firm productivity, and how firms reorganise work in response.

Design/methodology/approach: The project links population-level administrative data with an original management survey of 400-500 Spanish firms. Using Spain's stepwise sequence of reforms as a natural experiment, it applies quasi-experimental methods to estimate causal effects on hiring, promotions, wages, productivity, and management practices.

Potential results: EQUIFIRM will deliver causal estimates of whether the reforms narrowed gender gaps in hiring, promotion to permanent contracts, and pay. It will provide the first evidence on how paternity leave affects firm productivity, value added, and profits, and will reveal whether firms adapt by increasing workplace flexibility, standardising tasks, and making workers more substitutable.

Social relevance of the research: Gender gaps in employment and earnings persist and widen sharply after parenthood. By testing whether Spain's pioneering, partly compulsory fathers' leave achieves its aim of reducing workplace inequality, the project offers evidence directly useful to policymakers across Europe, and to businesses seeking to manage leave while supporting the careers of all employees.

Originality/value of the project: This is the first study of the firm-side effects of paternity leave expansions. It exploits Spain's unusual position as one of the few countries with equalised, mandated leave. By combining worker-level outcomes with firm-level productivity analysis and opening the organisational 'black box' of management practices, it shows whether family-friendly policies trigger the workplace reorganisation that research identifies as essential for closing gender gaps.