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by

Malina Voicu

Bogdan Voicu

Katarina Strapcova





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### Malina Voicu

The Research Institute for Quality of Life (Romanian Academy of Science), Bucharest

### Bogdan Voicu

The Research Institute for Quality of Life (Romanian Academy of Science), Bucharest

### Katarina Strapcova

The Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy of Science

**Abstract** The paper focuses on the factors influencing sharing of the domestic work in the European countries. Many of the previous studies have offered the individual level explanations, taking into account only the individual characteristic when predicting the spouses contribution to the chores. Using multilevel regression models, we try to combine the individual level factors with the countrys level ones in order to draw the explanatory model for the gendered sharing of housework within the couples, across the European societies. The analysis provides support for most theories that we have tested: the resource theory, the dependency/ bargaining hypothesis are confirmed: in a couple, when one of the partners has more resources or a better status, the other spouse uses relatively more hours for the housework. On the other hand, religious and gender values play an important role: the more secular and more oriented towards gender-equality a couple is in thinking, the more equally the partners share their housework. However, on average, all over the world, women use more hours for housework than men do. The country level indicators seems to be less important, but the more affluent societies, the post-communist ones, the ones where women are more present in the public life, the less materialist ones, and those where Catholicism is not the dominant religion determine a more equalitarian sharing of the housework.

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# Housework and gender inequality across Europe

Mălina Voicu  
Bogdan Voicu

*Research fellows  
The Research Institute for Quality of Life,  
Romanian Academy of Science*

Katarina Strapcova

*Research fellow  
The Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy  
of Science*

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## Abstract

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In the last decades the women involvement on the labor market has highly increased. In both the Western and the Eastern European countries the percentage of women employed has grown, even if the social and the political contexts were different. The rise of women participation in the paid work was not accompanied by a proportional men involvement in the housework, as expected. Even if the role of women has changed from that of the main housekeeper in a dual one of earner and care supplier, the men' contribution to the domestic work is lower.

On the other hand, the European countries highly differ with the respect of the time spent by both sexes in doing the household chores, the sharing of the domestic work being more equalitarian in Nordic countries compared to Mediterranean ones or with that characterized by a Conservative welfare regime (see Addis, 2002; Leon Borja, 2002; Geist, 2005). Moreover, the former communist countries have developed different gender regimes compared to the Western ones, stressing the role of women as mothers and earners, but doing nothing to involve men in the domestic area (Brainderd, 1997; Pascal, Manning, 2000; Zamfir et al., 1999; Lohkamp –Himmighofen, Dienel, 2000; Pascall, Kwak, 2005; Steinhilber, 2006, M.Voicu, 2004).

This paper aims to identify the factors influencing the sharing of the domestic work in the European countries. Part of the existing literature have focused on the individual level explanation, taking into account only the individual characteristic when predicting the spouses' contribution to the chores (South, Spitze, 1994; Breen, Cooke, 2005; Coverman, 1983; Presser, 1994; Hallerod, 2005). Our approach is to combine the individual level factors with the country's level ones in order to draw the explanatory model. Knudsen and Waerness (2001), Evertson, Neramo (2004) and Geist (2005) have stressed the role of interaction between country's characteristic and the individual features.

The paper is structured in four parts. The first reviews the literature. The second introduces the indicators and the strategy used for the analysis. In the third one we present refers the data analysis. The last part includes the conclusions and a short discussion.

## **Review of literature and hypotheses**

Traditionally, the prevalent model in the industrialized societies was that of gender division of tasks within the family: "full-time work for men" and "child care and housekeeping for women". However, the traditional model of family characterized by the wife's full economic dependency was gradually replaced with the dual-career or the two-earner model of family and the nature of employment changed (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Quinlan and Shackelford, 1980).

Many studies have shown the relation between the economic development in the postwar period and the significant rise in demand for the female labor (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Cotter et al., 1998; Quinlan and Shackelford, 1980; Oppenheimer, 1973; Weisskoff, 1972). The postwar economic development was characterized by the shift from the primary toward the secondary and

tertiary economic sectors. Growing industry and business created the need for the new occupations and for the labor force, too. The increase in the managerial and professional occupations mostly filled by men was accompanied by the higher demand for clerical positions, which were traditional women's domain. The discrimination against the married women and women with children declined, as a consequence of the expansion in the female job opportunities and of the shortage of young single women (Oppenheimer, 1973). According to Cotter et al. (1998) the higher demand for the female labor played the crucial role in the increase of the women labor force participation during the postwar period.

As women moved into the paid work, the traditional model "men have job, women do housework" become questioned in the light of the changing women's social role. With the rise of service economy the housewifery disappeared and it "become a fact of life that women insist on being economically independent" (Esping-Andersen, 2002, p.70). Full-time employment only for men became the past and most of the people in young generation were raised in the two-earner family.

With the higher educational attainment women are competing also for the higher professional and managerial positions now. Clear line between the "typical female job" and "typical male job" is being less visible. According to Esping-Andersen (2002, p. 71) "women's life course is becoming more 'masculine' in terms of their lifelong career behavior". Increasing interest in the career development and the rise in the earning power of women is linked with to the higher family income, too. Thus it is a great disadvantage to have one partner excluded from the labor market nowadays. With the higher level of female participation in the labor market changed also the nature of the women's economic status in respect of economic dependency and subordination within marriage. The problems of combining the career and the family life is one of the central issues of the gender equality debate not excluding the debate on unequal sharing of the housework within the households.

Two types of approaches shape the explanation of the housework division. The first one points out the role of the individual characteristics. The second one sustains the role of the interaction between individual characteristics and country level features. The first group of studies can be clustered in two distinct categories, one of them stressing the role of the spouses' resources in sharing the domestic work, while the second sustaining the contribution of gender ideology supported by the individual.

The theories supporting the role of individual resources in allocation of the domestic work have the roots in the economic theory. These studies indicate the resources of the husband and wife, namely the human capital and the individual income, as the most important factor in the housework division. Becker (1993) shows that the allocation of the domestic work is the result of an rational process of decision making within the family, the spouse with the highest market income dedicating less time to domestic chores. The partner which has a higher human capital and thus the probability to earn more outside home will do less within household. According the rational approach, the housework division is not influenced by peoples' attitudes and values, but by the rational decision. The researches which addressed this topic show the role of the relative resources matter in sharing

the housework.

Income and age seem to play an important role in housework division. Hobson (1990) argues that the power in decision-making within the family is linked to earning power of the spouse. Presser (1994) indicates that the husbands with higher income do less housework, while the husbands older than their wives are less involved in the domestic issues. Geist (2005) finds that women with higher income do less domestic work and Presser (1994) shows that when both of spouses have higher incomes the total amount of housework is decreasing. It seems that the total income of the household has a different effect compared with that of the individual one, contradicting the resources theory. In households with higher earnings the time spent for domestic work is lower compared to poorer family, because the partners can afford to buy services on the market and the men are much involved in the house chores. On the other hand, the income captures an attitudinal effect (Brines, 1994), the persons with higher income being more inclined to support the gender equality.

A similar relation was reported in the case of education, too. If the partners have a high level of education, the sharing of the domestic work is more equalitarian. Presser (1994) shows that the time spent by the men for the domestic work is higher for the persons with higher level of education. As in the case of income the level of education captures an attitudinal effect, both men and women with higher level of education supporting the gender equality ideology (Brines, 1994).

Out of human capital and level of income, the available time is a resource which can influence the allocation of the domestic work. The spouse who has more free time will spend more time doing housework no matter the sex. Presser (1994) points out that the number of hours spent at home is increasing the time dedicated by both, husband and wife on the domestic work. Ross (1981) and Geist (2005) have similar results on the topic.

Based on the relative resource theory some scholar have developed the dependency theory which state that the husband and the wife are dependent on each other, man providing the family income, while woman supplying the housework. According to this approach the domestic work is provided in the exchange of money, this relation being a contractual one (Brines, 1994). Thus, women are in charge with the domestic work not because of gender role stereotypes, but because they are dependent of men who have a better position on the labour market. However, Brines (1994) shows that the dependency theory is valid only for women, the dependent men doing even less housework compared to the non-dependent. However, even if the both partners are employed and have equal income, the dependency is reported, but is a symmetrical one and women have a better status and more power in negotiating the house chores (Oppenheimer, 1997).

Other version of the resources theory points out that the allocation of the housework is the result of bargaining process. The main assumption of this approach is that usually people avoid doing domestic work, using their relative power within family to obtain a lower burden. Consequently, women who have a reduced power, due to their lower income and higher dependency, have to do more compare to men. The bargaining power is not determined only by the level of income, the available alternatives playing a role, too (Breen, Cooke, 2005). Thus, women will do most of the housework, even they do not like it, if they consider that the marriage is the best

alternative for them. The implicit assumption of this approach is that there are conflicts within households and the allocation of the domestic role is based on the power relations (Hallerod, 2005).

According to previous studies, the women employment plays an important role in equal sharing of the domestic work. Ross, Mirowsky and Huber (1983) point out the effect of the women employment on reducing the housework, because they have more resources and the difference between them and their husbands are a reduced one. Ross (1987) shows that the employed women do less housework because they are less dependent on their husbands. A working woman has more money and less available time, thus according to the resource theory she will perform less domestic work, while a part of the burden will be taken by her husband.

However, the resources approaches cannot fully explain the allocation of the housework. Hallerod (2005) points out the lack of effectiveness of the economic theories in clearing up the sharing the house chore in Sweden. Moreover, Hobson (1990) and Brines (1994) point out that even if woman becomes the main breadwinner in the family, and thus has a higher bargaining power to rearrange the division of housework, the unemployed husband usually resists involvement in doing housework. In this case the couples 'do gender', stressing the traditional gender roles in order to compensate the man failed in the male role of the main breadwinner.

Gender ideology perspective stresses the role of attitudes and values orientations in explaining the sharing the domestic work. According to this approach the housework's division is not the result of the partners' relative resources, but of the values shared by the spouses. Thus, a woman sharing the traditional gender ideology will perform all the domestic tasks even she is employed, because it is prescribed by their values (Diefenbach, 2002). Previous studies support the contribution of the values orientation in explaining the housework's division (Ross, 1987; Diefenbach, 2002; Geist, 2005; Presser, 1994; South, Spitze, 1994). Ross (1987) stresses the effect of husband gender attitudes in sharing the house chores, while Presser (1994) points out the role of the wife's expectation and her gender ideology.

Gender values can be structured in two different dimensions: values related with women participation on the labour market and values regarding the housework division (Voicu, 2004). Out of the direct effect of the values related with housework sharing, Thorton, Alwin, Comburn (1983) and Ross, Mirowsky, Huber (1983) show that sex-roles attitudes are strongly influencing the women involvement in the paid labour market. We are expecting that both dimensions are involved in the housework's division.

Many studies have demonstrated that the religious beliefs and the religious practices have a great influence on the attitudes towards gender role (Sherkat, Ellison, 1999; Ghazel Read, 2003; Wilcox, Jelen, 1991; Peek, Lowe, Williams, 1991; Gay, Ellison, Powers, 1996; Thornton, Alwin, Comburn, 1983; Sherkat, 2000; Hertel, Hughes, 1987). The mentioned researches have shown that persons who are religious affiliated, especially to a fundamentalist Protestant denomination or to the Catholic Church, are more inclined to share inequalitarian attitudes towards gender role and to consider that women are first of all housekeepers and mothers. Some studies have identified a similar relation at the macro level. Hofstede (1981, 1990) has classified countries, according to the main gender role orientation, in countries with a masculine culture in which the predominant



attitudes are those of differences between gender roles and countries with feminine culture which encourage the gender equality. Using Hofstede's classification, Verweij, Easter, Nauta (1997) point out that the countries with feminine culture are more secularized than those with a masculine culture. Thus, we are expecting that the high level of religiosity will be associated with low level of gender equality and consequently will determine a low involvement of the husband in the domestic work.

The presence of the children in the household has an influence on sharing the domestic work. Even if our paper is focused on the housework excluding the time spent for childcare, the children presence in the household will directly influence the total amount of time dedicated to the domestic chore, like cleaning, cooking, doing laundry. According to Esping-Andersen (2002) even if the higher women's employment makes their life-cycles more masculine, the female careers are limited with the desire to have children and the motherhood duties. The previous studies pointed out that the presence of the children in the household will increase the time spent for domestic duty by both partners, but mainly for the women (Presses, 1994). Moreover, according to Cooke (2004) couples are experiencing a crisis of the gender division of housework after the birth of the first child.

However, the children and the families with children represent an important topic for the social policy. For most of the women their participation in the labor market depends on the possibility to combine the career and the motherhood. According to Esping-Andersen (2002) women-friendly policy constitutes affordable day-care, paid maternity leave and provisions for work absence when children are ill. According to Hobson (1990) there are also other important social services which allow women to have a job - in school lunch, after school programs or care for the older parents.

Nevertheless, some studies have emphasized the role of country's features on the equal share of the housework. Diefenbach (2002) stresses the role played by the cultural norms which operate as a mediator for the relative resources of the spouses. In equalitarian cultural contexts, the resources have no effect, while in societies in-between traditionalism and modernity the resources are very important in determining the housework division. Evertsson and Neremo (2004) have found that the relative resources theory fits better in Sweden and 'doing gender' approach is valid for the United States due to the different social context. Kundsén and Waerness (2001) highlight the differences in performing the gender role produced by the interaction between the national context and the individual factors. Thus, the explanation of the housework division should be searched not only among the individual characteristics, but also at the country level.

The characteristic of the welfare regimes are often invoked for explaining the differences between countries in the housework's division. Geist (2005) shows that the conservative welfare states have lower level of equal sharing in house chores, while the social-democrat regimes have higher level and the among the liberal countries is a large variation. Leon Borja (2002) supports the similar ideas stressing that in the liberal regime the market mediates the gender relations and the women are highly involved in the housework especially when they have children. On the contrary, Addis (2002) demonstrates that the social-democrat and the liberal regimes are quite similar in the

way that they are influencing the gender relations and the same is valid for the conservative and the Latin regimes. Therefore, the liberal and the social-democrat regime are symmetric with the respect of women and men position on providing care, while the conservative and Latin ones are asymmetric. In the symmetric regimes the women and men are free to buy caring services from the market and they not need to provide care, whereas in the asymmetric regimes the public provision of care (either for children and elders) is reduced someone being forced to provide it. Even if we are not focusing the analysis on the childcare provision, the availability of the childcare / elders care facilities has a strong impact on the gender equality in the country (Randall, 2000).

Other factors influencing the gender equality are the country's history and the interaction between history and the individual features, like the age or the education (Knudsen, Waerness, 2001). The mentioned authors emphasize the effect of the later urbanization in Norway as compared to Sweden and United Kingdom on the gender relations. The differences between the former communist countries and the Western states can be included in the same categories. The particularities of the communist welfare system and of the societies under the soviet regimes generated a different pattern of gender relations. The social policies during communism have encouraged the women involvement on the labour market but without support for gender equality in the housework (Brainderd, 1997; Pascal, Manning, 2000; Zamfir et al., 1999; Lohkamp – Himmighofen, Dienel, 2000; Pascall, Kwak, 2005; Steinhilber, 2006). Moreover, the communist regimes forbid the father's access to family benefits (Pascall, Kwak, 2005; Pascall, Lewis, 2000). On the other hand, the gender equality policies were introduced in very traditional societies, thus the citizens of post-communist countries use to think the gender relations in a traditional way (Hanson, Wells-Dang, 2006). In the same time, the higher women's involvement on the labour market has changed their attitudes towards the employment. According to Hanson and Wells-Dang (2006) they shared more non-traditional opinion about the employment compared with women from the Western Europe.

The country level of social development could influence the gender equality in sharing the domestic work. The effect is rather an indirect one, mediated by the individual values orientations and by the total time dedicated to the housework. In countries with high level of socio-economic development many home appliances are available for the households, reducing the time dedicated to the domestic work. Between the cultural change and the socioeconomic one there is some interdependency. The change of values affects and is affected by the socioeconomic changes (Inglehart, 2003).

Talking about the modernization and Postmodernization impact on the gender values, Inglehart and Norris (2003) distinguish two stages in the process of values' change. The first stage corresponds to the industrialization process which brings women into the paid labour force and dramatically decreases the fertility rate. This stage is related to the decline of the traditional family and consequently to the decline of values which sustain the traditional type of family. The second phase is the postindustrial one. It brings a shift towards greater gender equality, women being more and more involved in the management or in the political processes. According to this approach, the first stage set free women from the gender relations of the traditional family, while the second

established the equality between sexes at the societal level.

However, the process of passing from the industrial society to the postindustrial one is simultaneous with a more complex social and cultural shift, known as the shift from the Modern society and culture towards Postmodern ones. As Inglehart (1997) points out, Modernization and Postmodernization 'are strongly linked with the economic development, but Postmodernization represents a late stage of development that is linked with very different beliefs from those that characterize Modernization' (pp. 8). The Postmodernization changes the values pattern in the domains of politics, religion, work, family life. Thus, in Postmodern societies are more open to the gender equality in both, public and private space.

Starting from the theoretical approaches mentioned before we have elaborated two hypotheses which will be tested in the next sections.

(H1) The resources theory and the gender ideology theories are not exclusive, but complementary, the division of the housework being influenced by relative resources and by ideology.

(H2) Macro level factors, such as the level of technological development and the profile of social policy play an important role in shaping the housework division.

### **Methodology and data presentation**

The population of our study consists of living together couples, no matter if they are officially married or not. We considered only heterosexual couples, in order to be able to investigate the gendered differences. Moreover, in order to have similar basis for the partners' time budgets, we have excluded those couples in which at least one of the partners is retired.

Our analysis is based mainly on the ESS02 (European Social Survey, round 2, 2005) data set. The research offers information about the total number of hours used by the household for housework, both during a regular week-day and a regular week-end day. Then, a couple of ordinal variable allows comparing the respondent and his/her partner: *And about how much of this time do you spend yourself? 1.None or almost none; 2.Up to a quarter of the time; 3.More than a quarter, up to a half of the time; 4.More than a half, up to three quarters of the time; 5.More than three quarters, less than all of the time; 6.All or nearly all of the time.* A few transformations (the first category of the ordinal variable becomes 0, the second 0,125; the third 0,375; etc.) allow computing an estimate of the number of hours weekly spent for housework by each of the two partners. The difference between the two figures represents our dependent variable.

ESS02 includes 22 European countries. For a more complete picture, in the descriptive part of this paper we have added supplementary information from another data set, EQLS (the European Quality of Life Survey, 2003), which covers 28 European societies. EQLS provides information about the number of hours used by the respondent for housework in a regular day. No distinction is provided between the week-end and the week-days. Also, there is no information about the partner's share of housework. On the other hand, the direct registering of the number of hours may

provide more accurate data than in the ESS, where the ordinal scale was employed.

The measurement differences between EQLS and ESS lead to differences in the estimates that can not be explained through the two year distance in data collecting. For instance, in Austria, the estimates for the wives number of hours used for housework are not significantly different in the two data bases. However, when considering husbands, the weekly seven hours distance between the two estimates is quite big. In other countries that are covered by the both surveys, the same differences are registered for both men and women (see the case of Sweden, in **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). In other cases, by instance Slovakia, the same estimates can be inferred from both data sets.

**Table 1. The number of hours used for housework in selected countries: differences between ESS and EQLS**

	Average number of hours spent for housework by WIFE	Average number of hours spent for housework by HUSBAND	Difference (women - men)
<b>ESS02</b>			
• Austria	22.9	6.7	16.2
• Ireland	34.4	8.2	26.3
• Poland	23.5	7.4	16.1
• Slovakia	26.9	13.3	13.6
• Sweden	14.7	9.0	5.7
<b>EQLS</b>			
• Austria	23.7	13.8	9.9
• Ireland	31.2	18.6	12.7
• Romania	41.3	39.2	2.2
• Slovakia	25.9	14.8	11.1
• Sweden	18.0	14.0	4.0

17 countries are included both in ESS02 and in EQLS. When considering the average differences between spouses, the ranking of these countries is quite similar in the two data sets. The Spearman's  $\rho$  (rho) is 0,870<sup>1</sup>. This implies that the two data sets can be merged through transforming the estimates of the differences in housework in such a way that they become standardized. We have chosen to simply divide the country estimate in each data base to the average for the respective data base. The unified series of values allows us comparing a larger number of societies, better describing the phenomenon that we are studying.

In order to test our hypotheses, we produced several regression models, using the ESS02 data set. In all these models, the household is the analyzed unit. The difference between the wife and the husband in terms of weekly hours spend for housework represents the dependent variable.

<sup>1</sup> Also, the Pearson coefficient of correlation between the two series of weekly average differences is 0,831.

We employ several predictors for the general level of resources of the household. A 12-point scale indicates the relative income of the household. It has been computed by the ESS research team for each of the countries included in the sample and stands in the data set as the only variable related to the income.

For the education we might have employed an ordinal variable, the highest level of education achieved. The database include this information for both the respondent and the partner, allowing us to compute a dummy variable, indicating if the wife is better educated than the husband. We use this variable to test for the resource allocation theory. However, for the household education we have preferred the interval variable given by the number of full-time years of education completed by the respondent. Since we lack similar information for the partner, we have assumed that the couple is homogenous and the education of one of the spouses may reflect the education of both. The results of the analysis come as an external validation of our choice. As indicator for the age, we employ the age of the oldest spouse. The age difference between the husband and the wife is also considered as potential indicator for testing the bargaining theory.

We use dummy variables for the various combinations of the employment statuses of the spouses (both employed, both unemployed and the two mixed situations), leaving outside the regression model, as reference category, the case when both partners are employed. We have also run alternative models with dummies for the wife, respectively, the husband employment status. The number of hours weekly spent by each of the partners in their main job is also used for testing the resource allocation theory.

For value orientations and some related behaviors (religiosity, gender values) we have used the characteristics of the respondent as rough indicators for the situation of the couple. The same assumption that the couple reunites similar people was done. Religious practice is measured as church attendance at least once a week or less frequently. A ten points subjective assessment of self-religiousness stands for the respondent's (and, implicitly, household's) religious belief.

For the value orientations of supporting gender equality on the labor market, we use the average value of two 5-point scales, indicating the level of disagreement with the statements *A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family*, respectively, *When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women*. For the values of supporting the equal share of labor, we use the agreement with the statement *Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children* (also a 5-point scale).

Using the level of agreeing with other three statements ("*There are so many things to do at home, I often run out of time before I get them all done*"; "*I find my housework monotonous*"; "*I find my housework stressful*") we have computed, as factor score, an index of how stressful housework is. Another subjective indicator provide information about 'how well equipped is your home for housework', on a 10-point scale.

Most of the aggregate (country) level indicators that we use come from the Eurostat online database, or from the National Offices for Statistics in the analyzed countries. GDP per capita and the women employment rate are computed for 2005. The "pay gap" represents the average difference between the hourly wage of men and women as percentage of the men hourly average

salary, in 2004. Rich-to-poor ratio (income quintile share ratio) is used as indicator for inequality in society (2004). We have used two indicators for the social policy: the level of family/children benefits (percent in total social benefits) and the public expenditures with preschool education (percentage from the GDP). Both are collected for 2003.

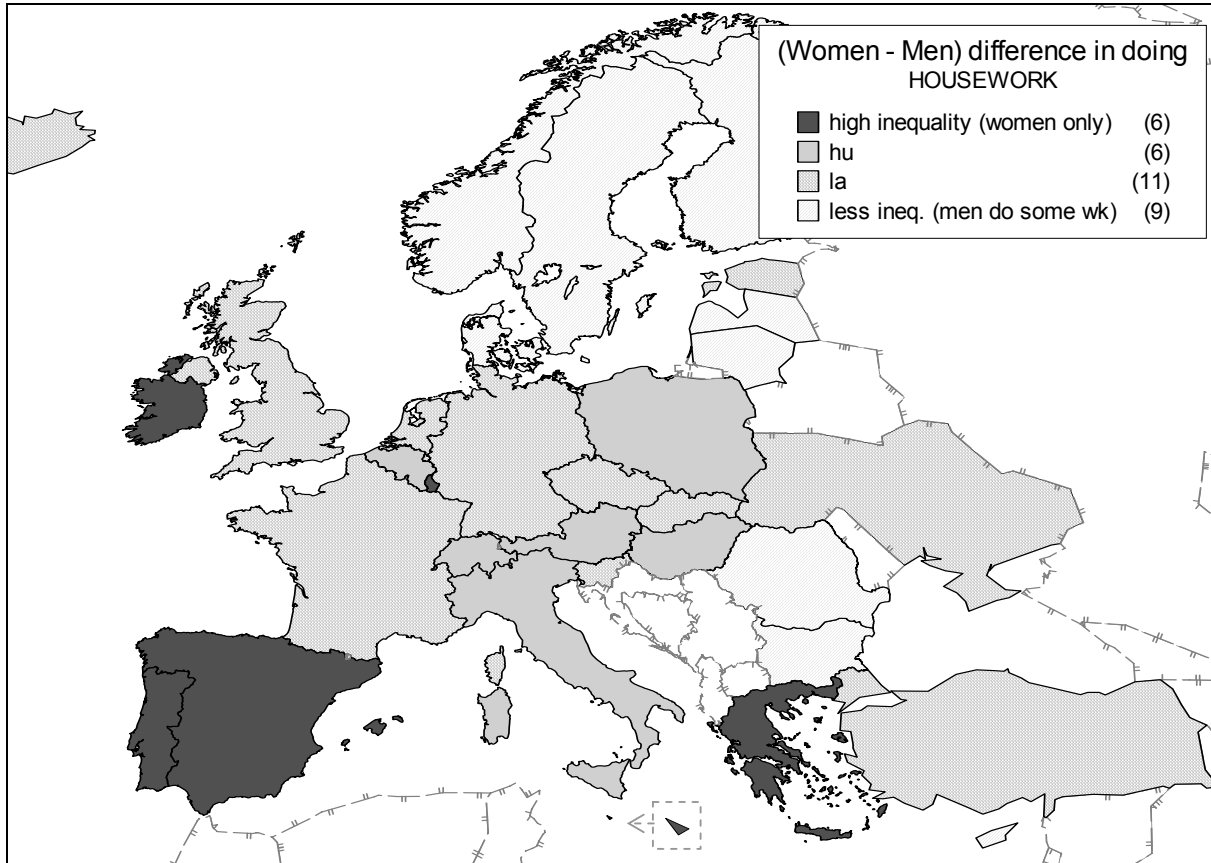
The religious structure is compiled from multiple sources: the National Statistics Offices, the CIA Worldfactbook 2004, estimates based on survey data (EVS1999-2002, ESS02). At least two concordant sources were considered for each country. The Innovation Index (European Commission, 2005) reflects the technological development of each society. The relative education of women was computed by dividing the percentage of women with tertiary completed education to the respective figure for men, considering the 24-65 years old population. Eurostat and OECD provided the raw data for this indicator. The percentage of postmaterialists is computed using the classic Inglehart's 4-item index, from EVS-WVS 1999-2001.

### **Data analysis**

All over Europe, women spend more time for housework than their partners. The absolute differences depend on the measuring procedure (see previous section). However, on average, the most equalitarian countries seem to be Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic countries and the Nordic countries, with only a few hours difference in a week. Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Malta and Greece are at the opposite, the wives doing in these cases around 20 hours more housework than men. Two patterns seem visible: The first refers to the impact of religion, with Catholicism determining less equalitarian sharing of domestic duties. The second is that post-communist societies are, on average, more equalitarian than the others.

It seems that the post-communist countries are more supportive for the equal sharing of the domestic work, compared to the Western ones. Poland represents an exception, being much closer to the traditional model of the work division within the family. The data support the results of the previous research which point out the Poland evolution towards a non-equalitarian – traditional gender regime (Pascall, Lewis, 2000; Fodor, Glass, Kawachi, Popescu, 2002; Pascall, Kwak, 2005; Steinhilber, 2006). According to the mentioned studies, the Catholic Church seems to play an important role in supporting the re-traditionalisation of the family life and in encouraging the image of the 'Polish mother'.

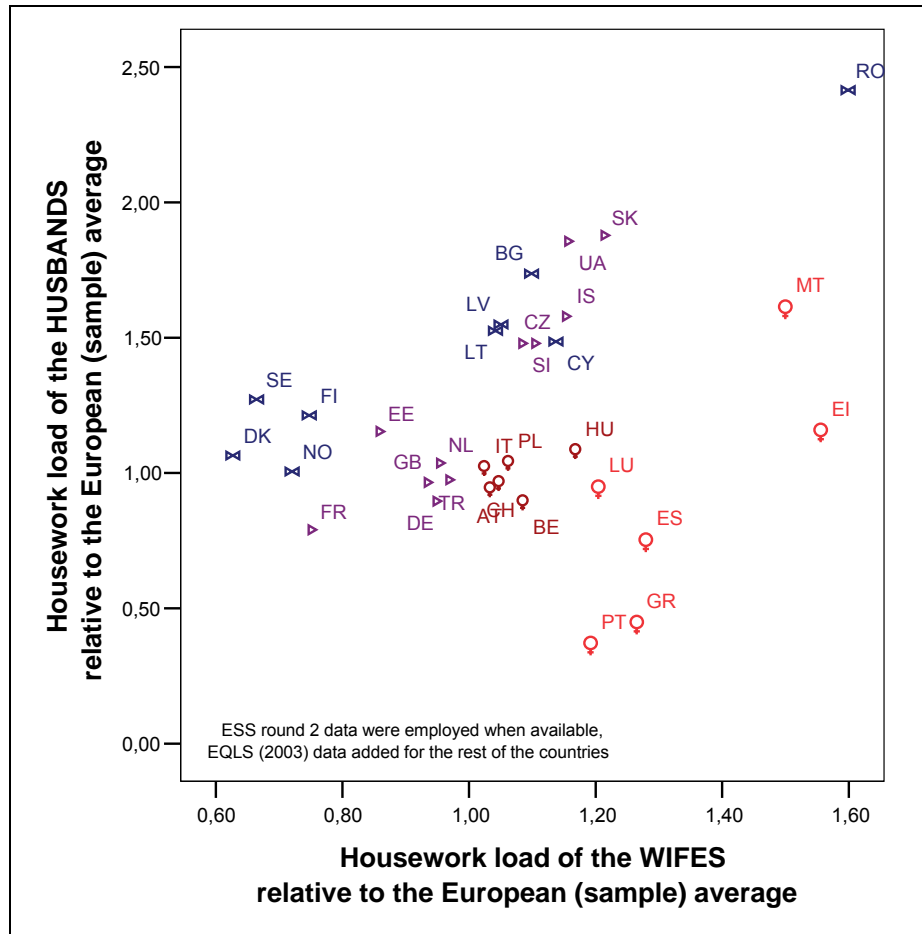
**Figure 1. Differences between wives and husbands in doing housework across 33 European societies**



Data sources: ESS02 (2005), respectively EQLS (2003), when ESS02 was not available. For the white-colored countries no data were available. The countries are classified according to the ratio between the difference in housework in the respective society and the one in the whole European sample from which the data is gathered.

When considering the size of the housework load (Figure 2), the citizens of the less developed societies tend to spend more time for the housework, while the Western and the Northern European are the opposite. According to the data the European countries cluster in few categories: the ex-communist countries characterized by a high level of housework performed by both husband and wife (with the extreme case of Romania, scoring very high on both dimensions), the traditionalist Catholic countries, Malta and Ireland with a high level of housework and not equal share between the partners, the Mediterranean countries, Spain, Greece and Portugal, in which the amount of time by wife for the domestic work is higher compared to that of the husband, but the total amount of this time being a lower as compared with the previous category. The countries with higher level of economic development have an inequal sharing of the housework, too, but the time spent by the women doing housework is reduced.

**Figure 2. The number of hours weekly used for housework by men and women across Europe**



Data sources: ESS02 (2005), respectively EQLS (2003), when ESS02 was not available. The figures indicate the number of hours weekly used for housework by the average wife/husband in the respective society and the same average for the entire European sample from which the data is gathered.

Table 2 reviews the direct relations, at country level, between selected macro-level indicators and the gender equality in sharing housework, as resulting from both EQLS and ESS02. The relations with the GDP per capita, and with the presence of Orthodox population depend on the countries selected for analysis. However, when considering the maximum number of countries, their effect is the expected one: wealthier societies tend to better share housework, while the Orthodox ones tend to leave the women to undertake all domestic duties. All the other indicators display the expected associations: the societies with a more equalitarian sharing of the housework are the ones which are more technologically advanced, which have more women active on the labor market, where the women access a better education, are more involved in politics, at the top level, and have similar wages as men. Postmaterialist values orientation is positively associated with gender equality. On contrary, Catholicism has a negative effect. Unequal societies transfer their inequality to the gender relations. Both social policy indicators positively associate with gender-equality in housework sharing, but the relation seems to be very weak.



**Table 2. Country level Pearson correlations**

<i>Dataset</i>	Average difference of the number of hours weekly used for housework: WIVES - HUSBANDS		
	ESS02	EQLS	Combined set of data (relative differences)
<i>N</i>	24	25	33
GDP per capita	-0,107	0,256	0,227
Women employment rate (% employed active age women)	-0,542	-0,386	-0,254
Hourly pay gap (women-men)	-0,421	-0,477	-0,410
Inequality (quintile share ratio)	0,504	0,274	0,230
Part time employment (total population)	-0,264	0,105	0,048
Part time employment (women only)	-0,156	0,230	0,167
Public expenditure with child and family benefits (% of GDP)	-0,083	-0,089	-0,091
Innovation Index	-0,488	-0,091	-0,041
Preschool public expenditure (% of GDP)	-0,355	-0,102	-0,232
Women seats in the parliament (%)	-0,410	-0,234	-0,231
Women university participation	-0,448	-0,660	-0,365
Relative higher education women/men	-0,170	-0,285	-0,235
% of Catholic population	0,621	0,589	0,534
% of Orthodox population	0,288	-0,197	-0,222
% of Protestant population	-0,623	-0,330	-0,328
% Postmaterialists (1999-2002)	0,032	0,425	0,277

When controlling for both the individual and country-level effects, it seems that the characteristics of the couple are the ones that determine the sharing of the domestic duties rather than the type of the society. Constrained by multi-collinearity restrictions, we have run several multi-level regression models (Table 3). The effects of the country-level predictors were confirmed, but they are small, as compared with the individual level indicators.

The gender inequalities in performing housework prove to be lower – i.e. there is a more equal housework sharing – in the better educated couples, when the value orientations of the spouses support gender equality, when the wife is employed, when the husband is unemployed, or spends less time at work, when the couple generally does less housework.

Having young children increases the probability that the wife does more housework than the husband. This is probably related with the fact that women continue to be also more involved in child caring. Doing some housework in this time might be seen as a kind of additional activity which naturally comes together with child rearing. However, the presence of young children on the household becomes significant only when we have controlled for the effect of the interaction between the presence of the young children and the public expenditures for childcare. Thus, we can assume that the presence of children in the household will increase the total time spent by mother for the housework only when there is less public childcare available.

Income is, surprisingly, not significant in most of the models that we have run. Moreover, when it proves to have some effect, this effect is also unexpected: apparently, relative wealth increase gender inequality. However, the effect of the interactions of income with the Innovation Index, or with the GDP per capita, both related to the society level of development, shows that the fact may be different. In most affluent and technologically advanced societies, the richest a household is – in relative terms – the more equalitarian the sharing of the housework is. This confirms the existent literature. However, in the less developed societies, the income seems to play an inverted role: probably the poorer families here have less types of housework to do. In the better off couples from the poorer countries, the gendered division of roles is strong, and it is highly visible due to the fact that some more sophisticated housework needs are expressed. For instance, instead of only one or two types of food daily, more refined menus are supposed to be daily cooked.

Resource allocation theory is partially contradicted by the lack of importance of the differences in age and education. However, employment plays a decisive role. Spending more hours at job, as well as being employed, while the partner is not, decrease the probability that the respective spouse's housework share will be higher. Among the types of couples, depending on employment status, as expected, the less equalitarian is the one in which the husband is employed, and the wife is not. On the opposite is the reversed situation, with the women having a job, and the men not work. Thus, the data do not provide support for the 'doing gender' approach, because in the case of the European countries the unemployed man spent more time in housework as compared with the male breadwinner. The two situations of equal status (both employed or both not working) do not significantly differ and place such couples as having average sharing housework behavior.

Time seems to be the most important resource in influencing the sharing of the domestic work. The longer is the working program of ones of the spouses, the lower will be its involvement in the domestic labor. However, the effect of the woman working hours is not significant when controlling for the country's pay gap. Moreover, the total time dedicated by the household to the domestic work has a significant effect on the dependent variable. It means that when there is more work to do in the household, the difference between women and men will increase, wife dedicating more time to the domestic chores.

The gender values seem to have a significant effect, but only the orientation towards the gender equality within family. The second component considered in the analysis, the gender equality on the labour market has no effect on the dependent variable. The result indicates that not the general attitudes towards gender equality are important for the equal share of the domestic work, the attitudes to gender equality within family being more important. Thus, the positive attitude towards women employment is not enough to involve men in the domestic labour. Moreover, one should mention that the second level variable, the indicators for country's level of development do not interact with the values orientation in influencing the sharing of the domestic work. Thus, the individual values orientation towards gender equality in the private space is important per se, no matter the level of social development.

**Table 3. Multilevel regression models for housework sharing (ESS02)**

Dependent: difference <women – men> of the # of hours weekly used for housework

	model 1	model 2	model 3	model 4	model 6	model 7	model 8	model 9	model 10
<b>R2</b>	<b>31,9%</b>	<b>39,8%</b>	<b>40,0%</b>	<b>40,1%</b>	<b>39,7%</b>	<b>39,8%</b>	<b>39,9%</b>	<b>40,3%</b>	<b>40,7%</b>
Intercept	13,14***	0,43	4,19	20,24***	10,18***	7,85**	8,28**	11,53***	11,60***
Pay gap (hourly, country level)		0,13	0,13		0,12	0,08	0,09		
Relative education								-2,13***	-1,24
Women employment				-0,18*					
Family/children benefits					0,08				
Preschool public expenditures						7,12***	7,24***	2,01	2,30***
Technological innovation index		22,81**							
GDP per capita (thousands EURO)			0,27*	0,17**					
Women seats in the parliament (%)							-0,03		
% catholic								0,05***	0,05***
% orthodox								0,09***	0,08***
Ex-communist (dummy)									-3,59***
Education	-0,39***	-0,39***	-0,37***	-0,42***	-0,38***	-0,38***	-0,38***	-0,41***	-0,36***
Income	-0,01	0,61**	0,76***	0,00	0,10	0,09	0,10	0,13*	-0,11
Technological innovation * Income		-1,24**							
GDP/capita * Income			-0,03***						
Difference of age between partners	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,04	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,04	0,04
Number of children less than 13 year old	0,10	0,07	0,10	0,04	0,37	1,77***	1,81***	0,00	0,08
Family/children Benefits * no. of children <13					-0,04				
Preschool Public Expenditures * no. of children <13						-3,37***	-3,46***		
Household - equal duties (value orientation)	-1,26***	-0,64	-1,55**	-1,35***	-1,35***	-1,31***	-1,34***	-1,32***	-1,34
Technological innovation * Household equality (value orientation)		-1,57							
GDP/capita * Household equality (value orientation)			0,01						
Labor - equality (value orientation)	-1,26	-0,12	-0,83	0,39	-1,23	-1,25			
Technological innovation * Labor Equality (value orientation)		-2,42							
GDP/capita * Labor Equality (value orientation)			-0,02				-1,19	-1,11	-1,24
Women employment * Labor Equality (value orientation)			-0,03						
Wife better educated	0,09	-0,11	-0,18	-0,15	-0,16	-0,17	-0,11	-0,06	-0,19
Total time dedicated to housework	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***	0,46***
Wife working hours	-0,12***	0,01	0,02	-0,12***	-0,01	-0,01	-0,01	-0,13***	-0,12***
Pay gap * wife working hours		-0,01**	-0,01**		-0,01**	-0,01**	-0,01*		
Husband working hours	0,10***	0,10***	0,11***	0,10***	0,10***	0,10***	0,10***	0,10***	0,11***
Religious belief	0,11	0,11	0,11	0,11	0,10	0,08	0,09	0,09	0,09
Religious practice	-0,21	-0,13	0,16	-0,10	-0,34	-0,49	-0,52	-0,10	0,40
Man - no job, woman - has job	-13,19***	-13,03***	-13,04***	-13,30***	-12,95***	-12,90***	-12,87***	-13,13***	-13,29***
Man - no job, woman - no job	-1,99	-1,99	-1,71	-2,02	-2,01	-1,57	-1,57	-2,02	-1,69
Man - has job, woman - no job	9,01***	9,03***	8,99***	8,92***	9,07***	9,04***	9,05***	8,91***	8,77***

See text for the description of indicators. Significance levels: \*p<0,10; \*\*p<0,05; \*\*\*p<0,01. HLM 6 was employed for estimating the coefficients. The R<sup>2</sup> were computed as squared power of the correlation coefficients of the predicted values with the dependent variable. The unweighted N is 10065.

The individual religious believes and practices have no significant effect on the equal

sharing of the domestic work. However, the religious orientation at the country level significantly influences the dependent variable. Thus in countries with high percentages of Catholic or Orthodox believers, the traditional pattern of housework division is prevalent. It seems that these two religious denominations are imposing a traditional model in the family life, supporting the gender inequality. One should mention that Romania and Bulgaria, two countries with large Orthodox communities and with a higher equal sharing of the domestic work, are not included in the analysis due to the lack of data<sup>2</sup>. The data indicates that the religious context is more important for the equal sharing of the housework as compared to the individual religious orientation.

The weight of family/children benefits in the mix of social transfers seems to have no effect on gendered-housework sharing. On its turn, the second indicator for the social policy that we have used, the public expenditure with preschool education has a contradictory effect. Its direct effect seems to maintain inequality<sup>3</sup>. However, when considering its interaction with the number of young children in the family, one may see that the increase of public expenditure with the preschool education changes the effect of having children. That means that the presence of affordable child care facilities increases more equalitarian gender-sharing of the housework responsibility, and – probably, as a consequence – increases the chances of having the mothers on the labor market.

The multi-level regression analysis confirms the differences which exist between the Western countries in one hand, and the post-communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe, on the other hand, with the respect to the equal sharing of domestic work. Thus, the residents of the post-communist countries are sharing more equal the house chores, compared to those of the Western ones when control for all the others effects. It seems that the gender policies followed by these countries have been more effective in encouraging the gender equality within the housework.

We have run the regression model for each of the 24 countries included in the ESS02 data base (Table 4). One should be cautious in interpreting the results for each country, because for some countries only few cases were valid for the analysis, due to missing answers, as well as to the selection criteria – couples, heterosexual, none of the partners is retired. The unweighted N is 200-250 in several countries (Spain, Iceland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, Ukraine and Slovenia), and range up to a maximum of about 740, for Norway and Sweden. With larger number of cases, the insignificant coefficients for some societies might become significant and some apparently significant relation might prove to be very weak. From this perspective, our interpretation of the effects of each predictor considered not only the significant coefficients, but also the tendency given by the signs of the insignificant ones registered for all the 23 societies.

One should mention that the regression model better fits the data for the Western countries, as compared to the Eastern ones. When not including the total number of hours weekly used for housework by the household members, the model explains between 20 and 30 percent of the total variation in countries as Spain, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany and less than 20% for the countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> Romania and Bulgaria are not included in the ESS 02 data set. They are included only in EQLS data set.

<sup>3</sup> The size of the expenditures with the preschool education is also related to the number of (young) children in the respective society. It is likely that its direct effect actually stands for the current fertility pattern in the respective society.

**Table 4. OLS Regression models of sharing housework, in 24 European societies**

Dependent: difference <women – men> of the # of hours weekly used for housework

	AT	BE	CH	CZ	DE	DK	EE	ES	FI	FR	GB	GR	HU	IE	IS	LU	NL	NO	PL	PT	SE	SI	SK	UA
Age of the oldest spouse	0,0	0,1	0,1	-0,1	-0,1*	0,0	0,0	0,1	0,0	0,1**	0,0	0,1	0,1	0,2**	0,2**	0,0	0,0	0,1*	0,1	0,1	0,1**	0,3**	0,0	0,0
Age difference	0,2	0,0	0,1	0,3**	0,0	0,1	-0,2	0,2	0,0	-0,1	0,0	0,0	0,3	-0,2	-0,2	-0,3*	0,0	0,0	-0,1	0,0	0,0	0,2	0,2	-0,1
Income	-0,1	-0,2	-0,7**	-0,2	-0,1	0,1	-0,9	-0,3	-0,1	0,0	-0,2	0,1	-3,9**	-0,9	-0,5	1,3**	-0,3	0,0	0,0	-0,5	-0,2	1,4	0,0	1,1
Education	-0,3	-0,2	-0,3**	0,0	-0,5**	-0,4**	0,1	0,0	-0,3**	-0,2*	-0,5**	0,0	0,5	0,4	-0,4	-0,4**	-0,4**	-0,5**	-0,8**	-0,2	-0,2	-0,7	-0,2	-1,0**
Wife better educated than husband	-0,4	-1,1	-1,8	-2,9	-3,0**	-0,8	-0,5	-2,1	0,4	0,8		2,3*	2,5	1,4	-1,7	-0,7	0,9	0,0	-0,8	-0,3	0,1	2,0	0,1	-2,5
man - no job, woman - has job	-12**	-9**	-18**	-20**	-14**	-6**	-10**	-18**	-13**	-14**	-6*	-12**	-16**	-22**	-3	-21**	-13**	-9**	-16**	-8**	-9**	-15**	-13**	-9**
man - no job, woman - no job	2	-11**	-6*	-7**	-5**	2	-4	-6	-14**	-4**	-6*	-3	-14**	1		-13**	-3	-6**	-4	-8**	-2	-11	-14**	-14**
man - has job, woman - has job	-5**	-6**	-6**	-11**	-4**	-2	-6**	-10**	-7**	-4**	-4**	-5**	-8**	-9**	-8**	-8**	-5**	-5**	-8**	-3**	-4**	-18**	-11**	-9**
Wife working hours	-0,1*	-0,1	-0,2**	-0,2**	-0,2**	-0,1**	0,0	-0,2**	0,0	0,0	-0,1*	-0,1**	-0,1	0,0	-0,2**	-0,1**	-0,1**	-0,1*	0,0	-0,1*	-0,1**	0,1	-0,1	0,0
Husband working hours	0,2**	0,2**	0,2**	0,2**	0,1**	0,2**	0,2**	0,1	0,2**	0,1**	0,2**	0,1**	0,1	0,1	0,2**	0,1**	0,1**	0,1**	0,2**	0,0	0,1**	-0,1	0,1	0,1**
# of children < 13 y.o. in the household	0,1	-0,8	1,1**	-0,8	0,7	0,9*	-0,3	0,4	0,1	-0,4	0,9	0,5	-0,1	1,1	0,4	1,4*	0,9**	-0,1	-1,2**	0,2	0,7	-3,3**	0,1	-1,5*
Equipped for housework	0,5	-0,1	-0,1	-0,4	0,2	0,7**	0,5*	0,0	0,1	-0,6**	0,0	0,0	0,3	0,9	0,5	-0,5	0,1	0,5*	-0,1	-0,1	0,0	0,8	-0,4	-0,1
Stressful housework	0,4	0,1	1,1**	1,5**	0,7	0,6	2,6**	1,4*	0,7	0,1	0,3	0,3	1,0	1,7	1,2	1,2*	0,6	1,1**	-0,3	0,2	0,7*	4,1**	1,6	2,8**
Household equality	-0,4	0,0	-0,8	0,2	-1,8**	-2,2**	0,1	-0,3	-0,9	-1,7**	-1,5	-1,1	-1,0	-0,1	-2,0	-0,2	-1,8**	-1,8**	-0,9	-0,2	-0,3	-0,6	0,1	-0,6
Labor Market Equality	-1,8**	-1,6**	0,4	-0,4	0,1	-0,8	-1,6**	-1,5	0,0	-1,3**	-1,9**	-0,2	-0,9	-2,3**	-0,3	-3,0**	-0,4	-0,5	-0,5	-0,9	-1,3**	0,3	-1,9	0,9
Religious belief	0,0	-0,1	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,2	-0,2	0,1	0,4**	0,0	-0,4	0,5*	0,2	0,4	0,3	0,2	0,1	0,0	0,2	-0,2	0,3**	-0,1	0,0	-0,7*
Religious practice	-0,4	5,5*	-0,7	-5,0*	2,1	3,9	-2,1	-2,0	1,4	0,5	2,1	0,7	2,8	1,4	0,0	-0,8	0,9	-1,0	-2,2	0,8	-0,8	-2,2	-4,6*	-2,3
Weekly hours of housework by all household members	0,4**	0,5**	0,6**	0,3**	0,5**	0,2**	0,3**	0,6**	0,3**	0,6**	0,5**	0,8**	0,3**	0,4**	0,4**	0,5**	0,6**	0,4**	0,4**	0,8**	0,2**	0,3**	0,1**	0,1**
<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<i>Unweighted N</i>	302	415	517	391	611	494	409	254	648	467	414	272	360	389	205	262	548	743	304	214	741	200	230	237

Data source: ESS02. For the description of the indicators see text. Significance levels: \*p<0,10; \*\*p<0,05.

The main findings of the analysis remain unchanged when the regression model is run country by country: wife employment, education and value orientations towards gender-equality are the most important factors to determine a more equal sharing of the housework.

In some of the Western societies, the age produces a significant impact: the oldest the couple is, the less equally the housework is divided between men and women, with women having a relatively higher share.

The age difference between partners is not important except for a few societies: in Czech Republic, the older the husband is as compared with his wife, the more share of the housework she gets. In Luxembourg, the relation is the opposite: when women are older they do relatively less housework. In several western societies, the presence of young children (as well as their number) increases the probability to have women doing more housework than men. In the Eastern part of the continent the relation is insignificant. In a few cases (Slovenia, Poland, Ukraine), the presence of young children strangely decreases the differences within the couple.

When the household is perceived as being better equipped with home appliances and other tools for housework, one may expect that the gender differences in sharing domestic duties will decrease. This does not hold true for some societies: significant associations are reported for Estonia, Denmark, Norway, but the sign of the coefficient is the same in other societies, too. A possible explanation might be that when having a tool, one should use it, in order to justify the buying. In other few Western countries, the relation is reversed, the results being the expected ones: better equipped household display lower inequalities. All these findings should be considered with the caution that 'better equipped household' is a subjective, one-item measure. In those societies where religious belief and practice make a difference, their effect is to increase the unequal sharing of the housework.

## **Conclusion**

The cross-national comparisons indicate that differences in the equal sharing of housework do indeed vary across Europe, as expected. The most equalitarian countries seem to be Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic and the Nordic countries, with only a few hours difference in a week. In contrast, low level of the equal housework sharing is reported in South European countries - Portugal, Spain, Malta, Greece and Ireland. In these countries the wives are doing around 20 hours more housework than men. Two patterns seem to be visible: The first refers to the impact of religion, with Catholicism determining less equalitarian sharing of domestic duties. The second is that post-communist societies are, on average, more equalitarian than the others.

On the other hand, when considering the size of the housework load, the citizens of the ex-communist countries tend to spend more time for the housework, while the Western and the Northern European are the opposite. These results accompanied with the assumptions derived from the theory indicate that we can expect some important consequences from the fact that individuals are influenced by the social and economic context to which they belong. Thus we expected to see

the effect of higher level determinants of the equal sharing of domestic work which are linked to country level indicators such as technological development, GDP per capita, women's participation at the labor market, women's education, hourly pay gap between men and women, percentage of Catholic population etc.

However, while investigating complex patterns of variability we found that when combining the individual and country level factors, the individual level indicators have stronger effect on the division of housework than country level ones. Our analyses give evidence for the theoretical assertion that the sharing of domestic work is determined particularly by the characteristics of the couple rather than the type of the society and the social context to which they belong. Thus those partners with less differences in performing housework– i.e. there is a more equal housework sharing – are the better educated couples, couples with the value orientations that support gender equality, couples where the wife is employed, couples where the husband is unemployed/or spends less time at work, couples that generally does less housework.

The resource allocation theory is partially contradicted by the fact that relative household income was not significant indicator in most of the models we have run. However, when controlling for macro level indicators we found that in most affluent and technologically advanced societies, the richer a household is the more equalitarian the sharing of the housework is. More, even if we lack information about each partner contribution to the household income, the effects of the employment status and of the time spent at job may offer some hints about the validity of the dependency theory. When women have a job, the couple better share the domestic duties. The more time the woman spends at work, the relatively lower share of the housework she is responsible with.

The effects of some country-level predictors were confirmed, but they are small, as compared with the individual level indicators. Our empirical analysis did not satisfactory support the prediction that the equal housework sharing is significantly affected by the specific macro-social and macro-economic context in which women and men are living.

Discussing the importance of macro level factors some of the limitations of our macro level data should be pointed out. The measure that we have employed for the access to childcare facilities is based on the preschool public expenditure (as a % of GDP) indicator. However, this indicator tells us nothing about the quality of the childcare - if it is full-time or part time, if there are free days during the week and so on. The quality of the childcare facilities may have very important impact on women's labor force participation in general. On the other hand, the level of family/children benefits as percent in total social benefits is just a rough proxy for the type of social policy of the respective country: depending on the type of the respective benefits, they may encourage/discourage women to be resent on the labor market, with an immediate impact on the sharing of housework.

As mentioned, individual level factors are most important when talking about equal sharing of housework within the couples. The main findings of our analysis remain unchanged when the regression model is run country by country: wife employment, education and value orientations towards gender-equality are the most important factors which determine an equal sharing of the housework. Our results show, that the regression model better fits the data for the Western

countries, as compared to the Eastern ones. The model explains higher share of the total variation in the Western European countries and lower share in the countries from the Central and Eastern Europe.

Finally, we can conclude that our empirical analysis confirms our hypothesis. The division of the housework is simultaneously influenced by relative resources and by gender ideology within the couple. For the second hypothesis which predicted the important role of macro level factors in shaping the housework division we have found that the characteristics of society do influence the division of work within the couples, but not so much as expected.

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