

# Gendered Housework. A Cross-European Analysis<sup>1</sup>

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**Gendered Housework. A Cross-European Analysis.** The paper focuses on the factors which influence the sharing of domestic work in European countries. Many previous studies have offered explanations on the individual level, taking into account only individual characteristics when predicting a spouse's contribution to chores. Using multilevel regression models, we try to combine individual-level and country-level factors in order to draw an explanatory model for the gendered sharing of housework within couples across European societies.

The analysis provides support for most of the theories we have tested. The resource theory and the dependency/bargaining hypothesis were 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 spend more hours on housework than men do.

The country-level indicators seem to be less important, but societies which are more affluent, less materialist societies, post-communist societies, societies where women are more present in public life, and those where Catholicism is not the dominant religion are characterized by a more equalitarian sharing of the housework.

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At the beginning of the Third Millennium, according to the values surveys<sup>4</sup>, family is designated as “very important” or – at least – “important” by more than three out of four people in every single European society. It provides affectivity, economic stability, and emotional benefits, fulfils sexual needs, serves as main instrument for socializing the new generations and reproducing values and social structures etc. However, it is visible for everyone that family changes. The traditional model is no longer what we use to know. A popular American TV

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<sup>4</sup> European Values Survey/World Values Survey, 1999-2001, respectively World Values Survey 2005-2007.

series of cartoons for adults – *Family Guy*<sup>5</sup> – uses the current transformations as pretext. The musical theme in the debut of each episode deplores the immoral nowadays societies, and the decline of the traditional values, looking at the family as possible solution for stability<sup>6</sup>. The family described in the show is an early modern one: Peter, the husband, is the employed bread-winner. He has any domestic responsibility. Lois, the wife, housewife in the early episodes, has to do all the housework and the childcare. Later in the show, her decision for a (part-time) job initially creates rumour in the family, then is accepted, but she still has the responsibility of all the chores.

Division of the housework within the couple is the topic of this paper. We are specifically interested if the gender is still salient in the sharing of the domestic works, and which is its relative importance when controlling for various factors such as education, income, spouses' occupational status, the type of social policies within the respective society, its level of development etc.

We focus our research on the European societies, exploiting the data of the European Quality of Life Survey 2003. We inspect the differences between societies and search for individual level and country level explanations of the time spent for housework. Multilevel analysis is employed to test the hypotheses depicted from the existing literature.

The paper starts with a brief review of the literature. Then we describe the methodology and present the findings. Some expected changes for the near future are briefly sketched within the conclusions.

## Review of the literature and hypothesis

During the second half of the twentieth century, a new important shift in the shape of the family became visible. The domestic division of labour began to change from the housewifery to the dual-career or two-earner model of family. (Esping-Andersen 2002; Quinlan – Shackelford 1980; Oppenheimer 1973, 1997; Weisskoff 1972; Cotter et al, 1998) Women started to be more present on the labour market, due to various factors, including the expansion of the female job opportunities, the delaying of the age at the first marriage, the higher access to tertiary education, the shift towards modern, then post-modern values, including independence and self-fulfilment, etc. Simultaneously, the clear division of labour between the male-type and female-type specific tasks within the couple became weaker.

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<sup>5</sup> First season was broadcasted in 1999, on Fox TV. The fifth season is still broadcasting on Fox in May 2007, while a sixth season is planned to start in the autumn of the same year.

<sup>6</sup> The exact lyrics are: “It seems today that all you see / is violence in movies, and sex on TV. / But where are those good old-fashioned values on which we used to rely? / Lucky there's a family guy! / Lucky there's a man who / positively can do / all the things that make us, laugh and cry! / He's a Family Guy!”

The change, as all social changes, is not affecting all the societies in the same extent, as well as it is not affecting all the couples in any specific society. Several types of explanations were developed for the nowadays differences between couples with respect to sharing housework. A first large cluster considers individual factors, such as income or education as being determinant. The relative resources theories are salient in this respect. They consider that when one of the partners controls more resources, the other one is likely to take more responsibility for domestic works. There is somehow rational that if one of the spouses is better educated and manage to earn higher income, the other one would spend relatively more time for doing housework. (Becker 1993; Hobson 1990; Presser 1994; Geist 2005) Maximizing the economic power of the household, but also the available time resources (Ross 1987; Presser 1994; Geist 2005) are the main reasons.

Various versions of the relative resource theory argue on the dependency, respectively the bargaining phenomena that may occur. Several scholars point out that husband and wife are dependent on each other, and they will involve in the house chores according to their position: dependent or non-dependent on the resources controlled mainly by the other spouse. (Oppenheimer 1997; Brines 1994; Ross 1987; Ross et al, 1983) However, Brines (1994) points out that this may happen only for women, while the dependent husband will tend to do even less housework as compared with the non-dependent one.

The bargaining version of the theory is similar in its core, but it puts the accent on the negotiations mechanisms that occurs in an imbalanced relation. However, the bargaining power is not relied solely to the level of income, but also on other types of resources, particularly the fulfilling of belonging needs and emotional security. The spouses will do more housework, even if they dislike it, when they will more value on having a family, on its stability, and when they will consider that current marriage is the best alternative that they have. (Breen – Cooke 2005) The resource approaches fail to fully explain the gendered division of housework in countries like Sweden (Hallerod 2005), but also in couples where the women is the main breadwinner, but she continues to be the one doing most of the housework. (Hobson 1990; Brines 1994)

On the other hand, one may note some different effects related to the available resources. In couples where both partners have higher levels of education, the sharing of housework is more equalitarian. (Presser 1994) Education, as well as high income, also captures an effect of more modern social values, with a higher support for the gender equality. (Brines 1994)

This leads to the second stream of theories, which stress the role of the values in explaining the sharing of the domestic duties, focusing mainly on the gender values. In couples sharing more traditional values, women will tend to do more

housework, no matter which is the resources distribution. (Ross 1987; Diefenbach 2002; Geist 2005; Presser 1994; South – Spitze 1994; Voicu et al, 2006) Traditional housework sharing is not only due to the fact that men are too proud and not willing to participate in housework because they see it, with a little disrespect, as woman's duty. Research on the changing men's family roles points out so called maternal gatekeeping. This says that sometimes women are too proud and do not want to interfere their incompetent partners in their traditional monopoly of housework (or childcare), which they see as an important part of their identity. (Chorvát 2006) Religious values may also play a role, people with strong religious beliefs being more likely to live in inequalitarian couples, with the wife performing more housework. (Sherkat – Ellison 1999; Read 2003; Wilcox – Jelen 1991; Peek et al, 1991; Gay et al, 1996; Thornton et al, 1983; Sherkat 2000; Hertel – Hughes, 1987; Verweij – Easter – Nauta, 1997)

Age is also playing a role in this equation (Knudsen – Waerness, 2001), given by the impact of the value change: in Europe, but in other parts of the world as well, younger generations tend to share modern or post-modern values, as compared with the more traditional older generations. (Inglehart 1997; Inglehart – Norris 2003)

Various studies points out other potential factors for explaining the sharing of the housework duties. When children are present in the household, this implies more housework for both partners, but the work load increase mainly for women, even when the time spent for childcare is not counted. (Presser 1984; Cooke 2004) Women friendly policies, including comprehensive childcare facilities, paid maternity leave, after school facilities etc., may reduce the supplementary housework due to the children. (Esping-Andersen 2002; Hobson 1990; Geist 2005; Leon Borja 2002; Randall 2000)

This type of explanation introduces the third stream of theories, considering the cultural context given by the society as a factor in shaping the division of housework. The general level of development of the country may highly influence the couple behaviour. A better developed country means better technology, implying higher productivity and less time spent both at work, but also for housework. Better developed societies are usually more directed towards post-modern values. They tend to consider more than the traditional societies that the women role on the labour market is similar with the one of the man, but also that the domestic roles may be more equally shared. (Voicu 2004) In general, values and commitments promoting gender equality are often included in the official agenda in these societies e.g. EU Directives concerning gender equality. (Čambáliková 2007, Bahna – Kvapilová 2007)

A particular attention may be paid to the post-communist societies. During communism, the mix of social policies has encouraged the presence of women on the labour market, but has not supported gender equality in doing housework. (Brainderd 1997; Pascal – Manning 2000; Zamfir et al, 1999; Lohkamp-Himmighofen – Dienel 2000; Pascall – Kwak 2005; Steinhilber 2006; Pascall – Lewis 2000; Hanson – Wells-Dang 2006; Fodor et al, 2002) The economic recession in the early 90s induced a move back towards more traditional values, which enhanced the relative salience of the wives in doing housework as compared with their husbands.

Considering all the above mentioned approaches, we have elaborated three basic hypotheses, which we will test in this paper:

(H1): Gender continues to have a high impact on the sharing housework in active heterosexual couples, with women having more responsibilities with regard to the house chores (we are referring strictly the housework, not the childcare), even when controlling the rest of explanatory factors, described in the hypotheses H2 and H3.

(H2): The relative resource theories and the gender ideology theories are complementary, not exclusive. Other individual factors, such as age, or number of children add in explaining the time spent for housework.

(H3): The impact of the cultural factors, measured through the country characteristics, complements the one due to the individual factors. However, the individual factors (the characteristics of the couple and of the spouses described in the hypothesis H2) are more important.

### Methodology and Data

In a previous paper (Voicu – Voicu – Strapcová 2006), using data from the second wave of the European Social Survey (ESS02), we have considered the impact of various factors on the difference of housework load between women and men which were part of the same couple. We opt in this paper for a different strategy, adapted to our aim to check which the salience of the gender impact is on the time spent for housework, when controlling for other predictors (hypothesis H1). We test our hypothesis using the data of the European Quality of Life Survey, collected in 2003. The survey has the advantage to cover all the EU 27 societies, plus Turkey, being, as much as we know, the only one that collects data on the time spent for housework and includes all EU countries<sup>7</sup>. The other survey

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<sup>7</sup> Actually, the number of countries that are covered, from our perspective, is 25: in Poland, Spain, and the Czech Republic, the data for time spent for housework are not available.

data available for housework time come from the second wave of the European Social Survey (ESS02). However, the respective survey includes an even more limited number of countries (24)<sup>8</sup>.

For the analysis we have considered only those respondents who live in couples. In order to assess the gendered division of housework we have excluded from the sample the homosexual couples. We have also excluded those couples in which at least one of the partners is retired, since after retirement the available time that might be devoted to housework.

The EQLS 2003 respondents were asked two different questions related to housework. Firstly they had to specify how often, they involve in housework activities, the possible choices being: 1. Every day, 2. Three or four times a week, 3. Once or twice a week, 4. Once or twice a month, 5. Less often, 6. Never. Then, only those who answered “every day”, were asked a second question: how many hours a day are you involved in housework.

There are two possible comparisons. The first one involves using the ordinal variable that was asked to all respondents. It might be recoded into the number of days performing housework within a 30 days month: “every day” would become 30 (days/month), “three/four times a week” became  $(3,5 \times 4 =) 14$ , “once or twice a week” become  $(1,5 \times 4 =) 6$ , “once or twice a month” become 1,5, “less often” become 0,75, while those responding “never” got a value of 0. However, the distribution is not normal, the rounding implied by each of the transformations are not very accurate (for instance, people which spend 4 days for housework monthly, and people which spend 8 days will get the same estimate – 4 – since they would have been answered “once or twice a month”). A better option may be to dichotomize the variable, and to try to explain why some people daily involve in doing housework, while others do this less often.

The second approach is to drop the “less often houseworkers”, to consider only those respondents which are involved in housework on daily basis, and to compare the number of hours that they use for domestic chores. These respondents represent about two thirds of the total sample. The available indicator (the number of hours that they spend for housework) is more accurate since it was not necessary to derived it from an ordinal variable. We decided to focus the analysis on this group of people (those who perform housework every day), but we have also run similar models using as dependent variable the above-described dichotomous indicator that measures the discriminate between “daily houseworkers” and the rest of the couples.

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<sup>8</sup> Despite having data from Ukraine, Island, Norway and Switzerland, ESS02 does not include Italy, and many of the EU new member states (Romania, Bulgaria, Malta, Lithuania, Latvia) and Turkey.

We have designed several multi-level regression models (hierarchical linear models – HLM), both for the “daily houseworkers” (those who spend time for housework every day), as well as for the entire sample of people coming from active heterosexual couples.

Among the individual level predictors, we are using gender, age, the relative income (the ratio between the income of the household and the mean household income in the respective country), the age difference between the respondent and his/her spouse, the number of children aged 12 or less within the household. For the level of education, the best measure provided by the data set is only an ordinal scale (none, primary, secondary, university), which, at limit, may be considered an interval variable of levels of education that one can get. Dummy variables were produced for the responded, respectively the spouse being employed.

For each responded we have also computed the number of hours that she/he is spending at job weekly, summing up the answers to the following questions: “How many hours do/did you normally work per week (in your main job), including any paid or unpaid overtime?”, respectively, “About how many hours per week did you work in this additional job or business or in agriculture? Please give an average figure for the last 4 working weeks.”

The EQLS questionnaire does not provide information about the respondent values, neither general or gender values. Age, education and income are usually related to the gender values: younger, better educated, better off people tend to be more in favour of gender equality, and more (post-)modern, putting more value on leisure time and self-fulfilment and self-expressing. The effect of this indicators (age, education, income) probably also capture some of the impact of the values.

At macro (country) level, we use several indicators coming from official sources, mainly from Eurostat, completed when needed with data from the National Statistics Offices. GDP per capita, the percentage of women in the national parliament, and the women employment rate are computed for 2003, being already included in the EQLS 2003 data set that CEPS/INSTEAD provided. The employment rate ratio was computed by us as the ration between the employment rate for women and men. The Gini indicators are computed for 1999-2002, the percentage of urban population is estimated for 2001, and the percentage of the population aged 25-64 who attained tertiary education is computed for 2000, all this three indicators being already included in the data set, too.

For the “pay-gap” (the average difference between the hourly wage of women and men) we have used the data series for 2004, since it was the most complete. As measure for the social policy we have employed the percentage of the family/children benefits in the total of the social benefits, computed for 2003. For

the religious structure of the population we were using multiple sources: the National Statistics Offices, the CIA Worldfactbook 2004 data collection<sup>9</sup>, the estimates based on survey data. (EVS 1999-2001, ESS02) At least two concordant sources were considered for having a valid estimator for each country.

The Innovation Index (European Commission 2005) reflects the technological development of the respective society. The secular/rational value orientations is computed based on the EVS/WVS 1999-2001 data set, and follows Inglehart (1997), describing the orientations of the respective society towards modern values<sup>10</sup>.

### A first look at the data

EQLS 2003 sample included 26245 respondents. 41% (10810) were living in heterosexual couples, in which none of the partners have retired yet. They constitute our sample, scattered in 25 European societies<sup>11</sup>.

As Table 1 shows, there is some notable variation across the European societies with respect to the daily involving in housework. Considering both genders, the Nordic couples, as well as some of the Eastern societies (Romania, Hungary, Slovakia) are more likely to do perform domestic duties every day than those countries where the gender policies and the gender values are more traditional<sup>12</sup>. The differences are due almost exclusively to the inequalities between the genders. Women perform more daily housework in all societies, as compared with their spouses. However, the differences between the partners are lower in the North and in the East of the continent.

A different picture is available if considering only those people who daily involve in housework. (Figure 1) The Nordic people are this time spending, on average, less time for housework than the rest of the Europe. On the other hand, in most of the countries where men do not perform housework so often (Table 1), those people who daily perform housework are quite hard working. This cluster includes Malta, Cyprus or Ireland, particularly the wives who live in such societies. The Eastern Europeans, are not only among those who perform more often daily housework, but also the number of hours daily devoted to such activities is quite high. The highest figures come from Romania<sup>13</sup>. Gender

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>.

<sup>10</sup> The index is already computed in the official release of the data set, available online at [www.worldvalues.org](http://www.worldvalues.org).

<sup>11</sup> In Czech Republic, Poland and Spain, the questionnaire did not include the questions about the housework time.

<sup>12</sup> See Voicu (2004) for a discussion around the fit between gender values and gender (policy) regimes.

<sup>13</sup> The Romanian EQLS 2003 sample is obviously biased. It includes better educated people than expected, the number of respondents that own a car, an automatic washing machine, or a personal computer is between two and three times higher than the official figures, which, at their turn, were confirmed by other surveys carried out in the respective period of time (2003). Due to the very few variable available in the data set (for instance: type of locality and appropriate measurement of education), there was not possible to find a much better weighting system than the already existing one. However, as we will show in the next

continues to be very important. The average differences between wives and husbands range from 2,5 hours/day in Ireland and Portugal, to less than half an hour in Finland and Estonia. From this point of view, the Nordic and the Eastern countries also tend to be much more equalitarian than the rest of the continent.

Table 1: The percentage of people daily involving in housework across Europe

Country			Total	Female-Male difference
	Male	Female		
Finland	64%	95%	79%	31%
Sweden	65%	90%	77%	25%
Romania	60%	93%	76%	33%
Denmark	65%	86%	74%	21%
Hungary	46%	93%	70%	47%
Slovakia	47%	92%	70%	45%
Luxembourg	44%	92%	69%	48%
Belgium	44%	91%	68%	47%
Estonia	53%	84%	68%	31%
Bulgaria	33%	95%	66%	62%
Lithuania	44%	90%	66%	46%
Netherlands	47%	86%	66%	39%
Germany	36%	90%	64%	54%
Latvia	43%	85%	64%	42%
Portugal	27%	96%	62%	69%
France	32%	86%	61%	54%
Slovenia	30%	96%	61%	66%
Austria	28%	89%	59%	61%
Greece	18%	94%	59%	76%
UK	36%	80%	58%	44%
Italy	26%	88%	57%	62%
Turkey	15%	91%	57%	76%
Ireland	33%	78%	56%	45%
Malta	21%	91%	54%	70%
Cyprus	19%	80%	53%	61%
European average*	35%	88%	62%	53%

\*the sample was weighted according to the population size of each country.

### Explaining the variance: several regression models

The multivariate analyses confirm (Table 2, Table 3) our basic hypotheses about the factors that may determine the housework load in each couple. At individual level, gender, age, income, occupation status and the number of children prove to have significant impact on housework, no matter if discussing about the number

section, since the sample is composed of better off people, one may expect that the number of hours devoted to housework is underestimated. Therefore, Romanians are likely to perform even more housework than this biased sample shows. This keeps unchanged the above argumentation.

of daily hours devoted to domestic chores (Table 2), or about the daily spending time for housework.

Figure 1: The time spent for housework by those who daily perform housework



No matter in which society, no matter on which education or income level one is, no matter the occupation status, being a women highly increase the probability to spend more time and more often for housework. However, being employed reduces the housework load, particularly when spending more time working. The more children a couple have, the more time the spouses will spend for housework (not including childcare): besides the childcare, various activities add. For instance, when children are present within a household, there is a higher need for cooking, vacuum cleaning, making order, etc. Better off couples may afford some help in this direction. They also may eat more often in restaurants, may access better home appliances (dishwashers, better vacuum cleaners, tumble dryers etc.), or may spend more time outside home. All these contribute to reducing the time spent for housework.

Education plays an important role for those who daily involve in housework. Better educated people spend less time for the house chores. However, the impact is negligible when considering the difference between those who daily involve in housework and the rest of the couples. In the absence of information about the respondent values, education also partly captures the effect of the preference scale

– better educated people are usually more modern. This may say that daily involving in housework is not necessary a matter of preferences or abilities, but a matter of possibilities and objective constraints, such as having children.

Age also captures some of the values impact. Older people use to be more traditional. This shows in the higher amount of time that they spend for housework. Gender values are strongly related to age, education and income. In the absence of information about the respondent values, the impact of these indicators, particularly the age, provide a weak evidence for supporting the complementary between the resources approaches and the gender ideology approach as stated by the hypothesis (H2).

The age difference within the couple proves to have no effect on sharing the housework, the other factors being more important.

As we have already noticed, being employed decrease the probability to spend much time for housework. The impact of the partner's employment status is somehow different. For those who daily perform housework, the partner's employment does not matter. However, as expected, when comparing the ones that daily perform housework with the others, having an employed partner increase the housework load, which fully confirms the relative resource theory.

For testing the impact of the country level indicators, due to colinearity reasons, we had to design several different models. They confirm the importance of the development indicators. A better developed society (with higher economic output, better educated people better technological development, etc.) is a society where people do less housework, no matter their individual characteristics. Such societies are better equipped with facilities that reduce the need for housework or decrease the time needed for performing similar tasks. Home appliances, but also other facilities (such as availability of semi-prepared food, for instance) contribute in this respect. Such societies also use to be cleaner, including, for instance, less dust/mud on the streets, which, at its turn, means less cleaning duties inside the house, as well as cleaner clothes etc.

The cultural background also proves to be important. Couples from a more secular/rational society are likely to spend less time for housework. Ex-communist past seems to have an opposite effect, increasing the housework load, but this is likely to be actually due to the lower development level (the colinearity with the development indicators impede us to use both types of indicators in the regression models).

**Table 2: Multilevel linear regression models of the number of hours daily used for housework (by the respondents who daily involve in housework)**

	model 0	model 0+	model 1	model 2a	model 2b	model 2c	model 2d	model 4a	model 4b	model 5a	model 5b
GDP/capita (thou)				- 0,019 ***		- 0,018 ***	- 0,022 ***	- 0,009			- 0,019 ***
Innovation index					- 0,993 **				- 0,229	0,070	
% pop. with tertiary education				- 0,011 **	- 0,011	- 0,013 **	- 0,005 **	- 0,007	- 0,019		- 0,003
Urban population					- 0,001				0,004		
Gini index						0,015	0,000				
% catholic population										0,002	
% orthodox population										0,005	
ex-communist country										0,294 *	
Rational/Secular index											- 0,276 **
Gender equality in employment				- 0,001	- 0,008	- 0,003	- 0,004	0,002	- 0,003	0,001	
Gender Pay Gap				0,007	0,020 **	0,009			0,012		
Women Seats in Parliament				0,005 *		0,008 **					0,011 ***
Part time employment							0,007				
% of family/children benefits								0,015	0,017		
female	0,504 ***	0,415 ***	0,413 ***	0,414 ***	0,414 ***	0,413 ***	0,413 ***	0,432 ***	0,433 ***	0,425 ***	0,425 ***
age		0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***	0,005 ***
age difference <subject-partner>		0,001	0,001	0,001	0,001	0,001	0,001	0,002	0,002	0,001	0,001
relative income		- 0,087 ***	- 0,087 ***	- 0,087 ***	- 0,087 ***	- 0,088 ***	- 0,087 ***	- 0,105 ***	- 0,105 ***	- 0,115 ***	- 0,116 ***
education		- 0,059 ***	- 0,057 ***	- 0,058 ***	- 0,057 ***	- 0,057 ***	- 0,057 ***	- 0,044 ***	- 0,045 ***	- 0,060 ***	- 0,059 ***
respondent is employed		- 0,341 ***	- 0,343 ***	- 0,341 ***	- 0,341 ***	- 0,343 ***	- 0,343 ***	- 0,327 ***	- 0,325 ***	- 0,375 ***	- 0,376 ***
partner is employed		- 0,040	- 0,039	- 0,039	- 0,039	- 0,039	- 0,039	- 0,025	- 0,024	- 0,031	- 0,031
respondent's # of working hours/week		- 0,002	- 0,002	- 0,002	- 0,002	- 0,002	- 0,002	- 0,003 ***	- 0,003 ***	- 0,001	- 0,001
# of children aged 12 or less		0,069 ***	0,069 ***	0,070 ***	0,070 ***	0,070 ***	0,069 ***	0,071 ***	0,072 ***	0,070 **	0,070 **
N	5947	5947	4166	4166	4166	4166	4166	2638	2638	3656	3656

	model 0	model 0+	model 1	model 2a	model 2b	model 2c	model 2d	model 4a	model 4b	model 5a	model 5b
likelihood function	- 5596	- 5133	- 3182	- 3196	- 3189	- 3193	- 3197	- 1975	- 1971	- 2615	- 2617
$R_1^2$		0,130	0,287	0,357	0,329	0,359	0,342	0,323	0,315	0,354	0,392
$R_2^2$	0,052	0,021	0,097	0,719	0,535	0,738	0,633	0,444	0,409	0,519	0,759

**Table 2:** \*\*\*p<0,01; \*\*p<0,05; \*p<0,10;  $R_1^2$  is the proportional reduction of error for predicting an individual outcome;  $R_2^2$  is the proportional reduction of error for predicting a group mean. (See Snijders – Bosker 2002; 1999) The figures represent unstandardized regression coefficients. The dependent variable is the logarithm of the number of daily hours spent for housework, by those who daily involve in housework. Due to the lack of information for some countries, the models 4a, 4b and 5a, 5b include fewer societies.

**Table 3:** \*\*\*p<0,01; \*\*p<0,05; \*p<0,10;  $R^2$  is computed according to Snijders – Bosker (2002; 1999). The figures represent unstandardized regression coefficients. The dependent variable is dichotomous: 1= the respondent daily performs housework; 0 = the respondent does not perform housework daily. Due to the lack of information for some countries, the models 4a, 4b and 5a, 5b include fewer societies.

Table 3: Multilevel logistic regression models of performing housework on daily basis

	model 0	model 0+	model 1	model 2a	model 2b	model 2c	model 2d	model 5a	model 5b
GDP/capita (thou)				- 0,045 ***		- 0,046 ***	- 0,047 ***		- 0,040 ***
Innovation index					0,161			0,921	
% pop. with tertiary education				0,006	0,004	0,011	0,012		0,014
Urban population					- 0,022				
Gini index						- 0,032 **	- 0,064 ***		
% catholic population								- 0,008	
% orthodox population								0,001	
ex-communist country								0,846 **	
Rational/Secular index									- 0,251
Gender equality in employment				0,015	0,011	0,020	0,020	0,013	
Gender Pay Gap				- 0,013	0,027	- 0,016			
Women Seats in Parliament				0,032 ***		0,026 ***			0,030 ***
Part time employment							0,007		
% of family/children benefits									
female		2,467 ***	2,173 ***	2,247 ***	2,205 ***	2,241 ***	2,236 ***	2,379 ***	2,366 ***
age			0,012 ***	0,012 ***	0,012 ***	0,012 ***	0,012 ***	0,011 **	0,010 **
age difference <subject-partner>			0,007	0,008	0,007	0,007	0,007	0,000	0,001
relative income			- 0,239 ***	- 0,249 ***	- 0,245 ***	- 0,247 ***	- 0,242 ***	- 0,253 **	- 0,257 **
education			- 0,010	- 0,003	- 0,006	- 0,010	- 0,013	- 0,074	- 0,063
respondent is employed			- 0,795 ***	- 0,815 ***	- 0,811 ***	- 0,807 ***	- 0,810 ***	- 0,718 ***	- 0,710 ***
partner is employed			0,560 ***	0,581 ***	0,566 ***	0,569 ***	0,574 ***	0,588 ***	0,593 ***
respondent's # of working hours/week			- 0,024 ***	- 0,024 ***	- 0,024 ***	- 0,025 ***	- 0,024 ***	- 0,021 ***	- 0,021 ***
# of children aged 12 or less			0,189 ***	0,188 ***	0,191 ***	0,193 ***	0,193 ***	0,150 **	0,152 **
N	8797	8797	6179	6179	6179	6179	6179	5298	5298
Value of the likelihood function	- 12852	- 14771	- 8755	- 10364	- 10329	- 8878	- 10357	- 8865	- 8857
R <sup>2</sup>		0,305	0,357	0,406	0,365	0,409	0,411	0,406	0,408



The gender-related and the policy-related indicators have no, or very small impact. There is only one exception: the proportion of seats in the Parliament which are held by women. The relation is – at the first view – unexpected: the more women are within the country's legislative body, the higher the average housework is. Actually, this holds true for the housework involvement of men, which, at its turn, contributes to increasing the total average. On the hand, as Rosebluth et al (2006) shows, the women's seat shares is partly determined by the welfare state policies, which “free women to enter the paid workforce, provide public sector jobs that disproportionately employ women, and change the political interests of working women enough to create an ideological gender gap”. This means that having more women in the Parliament, also capture a small effect of the welfare policies that stimulates women employment and more housework for the men.

Otherwise, the gender related policies and differences (provision and percentage of part-time jobs, the pay gap, the equal employment, and the children/family benefits) prove to be have almost no impact when controlling for the other factors. The finding should be however considered with cautions: the available indicators may be not the best possible. For instance, a higher share of part-time jobs, would offer more working opportunities for women, but, on the other hand, would also maintain their salient share of the house chores. The family/children benefits may also have a perverse effect, stimulating people, particularly women, to spend more time at home, caring for children and doing housework, benefits in this way from the help provided by the children support benefits.

Inspecting the explained variation ( $R^2$ ) for all the models in the Table 2 and Table 3 there is obvious that the factors that count the most are the ones included in Model 1. That means that the individual factors are the most important when considering the housework load of each individual. The country level indicators complement the explanation, as stated in the Hypothesis H3, but they are less salient when explaining the behaviour of the individual couples. On the other hand, examining the  $R^2$  indexes, there is clear that the differences between the country averages come rather from the country characteristics, then from the distributions of the couples' characteristics within the respective countries.

This means that, for each couple, the society provides a certain background that influences its pattern of housework. However, the characteristics of the spouses and of the couple as such are the most important in determining how much housework activities will be done. On the other hand, when considering the general trend of a country with regard to housework, the development indicators of that country are the main responsible for explaining its behaviour.

Finally, if comparing the effects of each of the factors<sup>14</sup>, one may notice that gender (being a women), the employment status (being employed), and the economic development (GDP/capita) are, in this order, the main determinants of the housework load. The salience of gender is somehow impressive, only the employment status competing with it in being the main determinant for housework load. This means that no matter which are the characteristics of the individuals and of the societies were they live, the wife is the spouse that is more likely to perform more housework. Our (H1) hypothesis is therefore confirmed.

## Conclusions

We have noticed various housework patterns across Europe: In the Nordic countries, people use to daily involve in housework, using not so much time for this, and sharing quite equally the time between men and women. In the Southern countries, as well as in Ireland and the UK, wives spend daily a lot of time for the domestic chores, while men tend to avoid such activities. In most of the ex-communist countries, both spouses spend many hours, daily, for housework. In the Western-Central Europe, the daily housework load is higher than in Scandinavia but lower than in the Eastern and Southern countries. However, most of the Western couples involve less often in housework than the Nordic and ex-communist countries, and they display higher gender inequalities.

At individual level, education, income, employment status, age, the presence of children in the household, and the partners' employment status are important factors that shape the housework behaviour. However, gender remains salient and, on average, women take care of more house chores, no matter how educated, rich, young, employed they are, or in which type of society they live.

The traditional division of the duties within the household is still present, no matter how much changes we have noticed in past centuries with respect to the shape of the family. However, it is likely that the trend goes towards equality.

On the other hand, the salience of the housework itself in the time budget of the individuals is likely to change, particularly in the less developed parts of Europe. Social and economic development already brings more possibilities to diminish the time needed for housework, both through the more efficient technology, but also through the changes in the life style (for instance more frequent dinning out, or having a meal break at job). Cultural change towards modernity and late modernity values come together with a higher importance of the leisure time, which increases the pressure to reduce the time used for housework. The continuous increase in access to tertiary education is also part of

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<sup>14</sup> We base the conclusions for this paragraph on not shown findings, which consisted in running nested models, with fewer indicators, and on inspecting the values of the t-ratios.

the game, especially due to the fact that the incidence of university studies nowadays is higher among women as compared with men. However, we also have to mention the fact that horizontal segregation exist in education (women and men are choosing typically feminine and masculine fields of study) which consequently means higher level of occupational gender segregation. (Valentová et al, 2007)

In the Eastern part of Europe, the communist regimes left an important heritage with respect to gender issues. They were encouraging, even forcing women to enter the labour market, and promote a quite fair equality in this domain. Even if the pattern supported in the housework was quite traditional, the higher employment rates for women create the prerequisites for a certain level of equality in sharing the housework. In the Western Europe, the evolution towards equality is also likely to continue. The shrinkage of the available jobs, due to the new technologies, may negatively affect the presence of women on the labour market. However, there is an opposite tendency given by the increasing importance of the leisure time. The employees put started to more value on having free time, which decrease the number of hours that they would like to spend working. The immediate effect may be to compensate for the above-mentioned deficit of jobs. Also, more people, no matter the gender, will opt for part-time jobs, creating a sort of equality in available time within the couple, and probably, on medium term, contributing to decreasing the gender inequalities, too.

However, today, as it used to be in the past, and as it will probably remain for some decades from now on, the feminization of the housework is one of the defining norms of the European societies.

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