

What a Wonderful World of Family Policy Pledges: Analysis of Slovak and Czech Governmental Manifestos

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What a Wonderful World of Family Policy Pledges: Analysis of Slovak and Czech Governmental Manifestos. Family policy represents one of the key elements of the welfare state, shaped by demographic change and debates on gender roles. Yet, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the family policy pledges formulated in governmental manifestos, despite their role as a critical link between political intentions and policy outcomes. Governments across the political spectrum—left, centrist, and right—hold various positions regarding the type and number of such measures. This study examines the relationship between governmental political orientation and post-electoral governmental pledges about family policy in Slovakia and Czechia, two most-similar-system design countries, post-socialist and EU member states. Using quantitative content analysis of governmental manifestos from 1998 to 2021, the study uncovers a low frequency of family policy pledges and an unexpected predominance of degenderizing pledges (eliminating gender roles), irrespective of governmental orientation. This pattern contrasts with the actual implementation of predominantly genderizing measures (promoting gender stereotypes), revealing a substantial pledge–policy gap. Unlike Nordic or Latin American countries, where political orientation visibly shapes family policy pledges, Slovakia and Czechia appear more affected by path dependency in pledged and adopted family policy measures and show the limitations of the theoretical framework of left/centrist/right political orientation in post-socialist countries. *Sociológia* 2026, Vol. 58 (No. 4: 365-400)

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Introduction

Family policy (FP) has become a key element of the modern welfare state, reflecting the ongoing demographic shifts and transformations in the labour market. The European Commission (2023) has already highlighted the growing importance of FP measures, linking them not only to demographic trends but also to broader global challenges such as the green and digital transitions. Similarly, the social affairs ministers of the Visegrad Four (V4) group have reaffirmed the role of FP by signing the Family Declaration, which positions FP measures as key instruments for strengthening the social agenda (Ciobanu et al. 2021). Within academic research, FP has been extensively analysed, particularly regarding the types and effectiveness of policy measures and their potential

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impact on fertility outcomes (Glass – Waldrep 2023; Thomas et al. 2022; Bergsvik et al. 2020).

However, much less attention has been paid to the political processes that precede policy adoption, especially the pledges formulated in governmental manifestos. Post-electoral governmental pledges represent an essential link between political intentions and policy outcomes as they signal governments' priorities and shape public expectations. Governments across the political spectrum—left, centrist, and right—hold divergent positions regarding the type and number of FP measures. For instance, left-oriented governments are more inclined to expand social expenditures (e.g., Herwartz – Theilen 2014; Bove et al. 2017). Elsewhere, authors claim that the explanatory framework of left/centrist/right political orientation is of limited analytical value (Imbeau et al. 2001). These inconsistencies are in line with the argumentation by Tavits and Letki (2009), who claimed that in post-socialist contexts, such as Czechia and Slovakia, governmental policies often deviate from ideological preferences and are instead strongly affected by contextual factors.

This study thus contributes to this scarce literature by examining the relationship between governmental political orientation and FP pledges in post-electoral governmental manifestos and brings novel evidence on the presence of path dependency in FP policymaking. It is a case study of two similar-systems design Central European post-socialist EU member states – Slovakia and Czechia. The examination of FP pledges in these countries has broader theoretical implications, including insights into the path dependency hypothesis and the concept of the pledge-policy gap. I use quantitative content analysis of governmental manifestos covering the period from 1998 to 2021 and aim to answer the following research questions: *(1) Which types of family policy measures are mentioned in the governmental manifestos in Czechia and Slovakia over the period of 1998–2021 and (2) how does governmental political orientation relate to this variance?*

The present study contributes new empirical findings to the debate on the role of political orientations in shaping and understanding FP in two post-socialist democracies and employs an original approach of analysing post-electoral public governmental pledges. It also highlights the explanatory limits of the theoretical left/centrist/right framework and the importance of temporal aspects, including the path dependency hypothesis, in FP transformation. The study is structured as follows: first, it outlines the theoretical background concerning FP in governmental manifestos, the typology of FP, and the role of political orientation. Next, it formulates the research questions and hypotheses and presents the applied methodology. The subsequent sections present the results and provide a discussion leading to the conclusions.

Theoretical background

Family policy in political manifestos

The concept of FP has been conceptually fluid for several decades, with both scholars and policymakers employing the term in a broad and imprecise manner. Gauthier (1999: 32) described FP as a “broad umbrella of policies.” Eydal and Rostgaard (2018: 2) offered a more explicit definition of FP and described it as “the financial and care support for children and their parents in the form of cash and service benefits.” While concise in identifying FP measures and their recipients, this definition overlooks certain cases, such as persons other than parents involved in the care of minor children. It also excludes leave policies (which may not be cash or service benefits) and a temporal dimension (e.g., the age of children, policy changes over time). Moreover, FP always exists within a broader context of the welfare state system, where policies in areas such as childcare, labour market support, cash benefits, and cultural norms shape family strategies and vice versa (Daly 2025). In this study, FP is differentiated from these elements of broader policy and cultural context – such as care for elderly or otherwise dependent family members – which indeed constitute an important dimension of welfare. However, elderly care policies are often institutionally and administratively embedded within long-term care, health, or social assistance systems rather than within the core of FP. FP is therefore defined in a relatively narrow way as *a set of financial and non-financial measures supporting the care of minor children and addressing the needs of caregivers across areas such as the labour market, education, or health care*. This definition is explicit in three ways: 1) from the economic perspective, it recognises various types of FP measures (not only “benefits”) that target various issues such as poverty, fertility decline, or career costs (e.g., maternity leave, kindergartens, or financial incentives); 2) it addresses the gender dimension and integrates any caregivers whose needs may involve educational, labour, or health measures; and 3) it incorporates a temporal dimension, focusing on the evolving needs of caregivers in response to, e.g., a child’s age or career preferences.

This conceptualisation of FP implies substantial variance in the design and implementation of policy measures. To capture and analyse this variance, I apply a typology that integrates two main perspectives of contemporary FP (see Table 1 below). First, the economic perspective – differentiating (non-)financial measures – is grounded in Thévenon (2011), who empirically measured the amount of support provided to families across OECD countries. Second, the gender perspective has been explicitly described by Saxonberg (2013), who built on the concept of (de-)familialisation (proposed by Lister 1994 and popu-

larised by Esping-Andersen 1999) and argues that modern FP is explicitly about gender roles. “Degenderization” of FP thus means the implementation of “policies that promote the elimination of gender roles” (Saxonberg 2013: 6), while “genderization” means the reinforcement of gender stereotypes (expressed, e.g., in long maternity leaves that keep mothers at home). In this sense, Slovakia and Czechia have genderizing FP mainly due to limited access to care for children under 3 years of age (Saxonberg 2013). Also, Dobrotić and Stropnik (2020) explain that in post-socialist countries, childcare policies “remained weak, with many of them still relying on an equality-impeding leave policy design” (ibid.: 16). Similarly, Lutherová et al. (2017) conclude that in both case countries, long parental leave and limited institutional childcare reinforce traditional gender roles and shape parental preferences and actual decisions.

Four clusters of the typology (Table 1 below) include measures that are financial or structural and support gender stereotypes or equality. The logic of typology follows the definition of FP from above and the characteristics of two used dimensions. However, it still has its limitations. For example, despite paid paternity and parental leave being categorised as degenderizing measures here, one could argue that only non-transferable leaves with quotas for fathers can be considered as degenderizing (see Szelewa – Polakowski 2023). The classification of parental leave with flat-rate allowances as well as other cash transfers should be interpreted with caution, as such measures may contain both degenderizing and genderizing elements. Following on the definition of degenderization from above also these measures can be understood as the measures reducing individuals’ dependence on traditional gendered family arrangements. From this perspective, universal or gender-neutral cash transfers may support women’s economic autonomy and provide income support without prescribing which household member should perform care work. For instance, the evidence from Czechia demonstrates that while more flexible parental leave arrangements can facilitate work–family reconciliation, extended parental leave has been associated with lower maternal labour-market participation and negative long-term effects on children’s outcomes (Bičáková – Kalíšková 2019, 2024). Similarly, substantial increase in Czech parental allowance encouraged mothers to remain out of the labour market for longer periods, while fathers’ behaviour remained unchanged (Grossmann et al. 2024). Yet, using Saxonberg’s (2013) distinction, when parental leaves are e.g., “open for both parents and are at least nine months long” or “high enough to encourage fathers to go on parental leave even if their salaries are higher than the mother of the child” they can be considered as degenderizing. On the other hand, “a maternity leave that reserves at least 15 weeks only for the mother and pays a high replacement rate

for that period” is explicitly genderizing (ibid.). The present study therefore focuses on the policy design and it does not assess nuanced differences in parameters and miscellaneous effects among various socio-economic groups.

Table 1: **Typology of family policy measures.**

Gender perspective	Economic perspective	
	Structural measures	Financial measures
Degenderizing measures	- labour market measures supporting dual-earner family model - availability of early childhood education and care	- paid paternity and parental leave with increasing allowance - tax credits or reliefs - cash transfers directed to family or household
Genderizing measures	un-paid non-transferable maternity leave	- paid non-transferable maternity leave - cash transfers directed to mothers

Source: Šmeringaiová (2025), amended by the author.

This typology is further used in the empirical analysis of governmental pledges about FP. The public pledges from manifestos and programmes of political parties or governments have already been studied to observe the dynamics of specific public policies in different country contexts. For example, in Slovakia, Sičáková-Beblavá and Beblavý (2016) analysed post-electoral governmental manifestos to investigate the character of anti-corruption policies across various ideologically oriented governments. Dřízová (2011) used Slovak governmental manifestos when researching the dynamics of understanding social policy. Giuliani (2022) analysed the manifestos of conservative parties across European countries to observe the evolution of their FP agendas. Partisan electoral manifestos are also used to categorise and compare parties across countries in the *Manifesto Project Database*. In particular, post-electoral manifestos compress governments' complex political orientations and policy plans into several pages of statements and pledges. Moreover, in some countries such as Poland (and similarly Slovakia), such a document is obligatory and fundamental for each cabinet (Zubek – Klüver 2015).

There are different ways of conceptualisation of the pre- or post-electoral manifesto pledged measures, for example, the “pledges” or “promises” or

a “policy stance”. In this study I use a definition of a political pledge as “a commitment to carry out some action or produce some outcome, where an objective estimation can be made as to whether or not the action was indeed taken, or the outcome produced” (Royed 1996: 79). Hence, the manifesto analysis focused on political pledges contributes also to understanding of the role of political orientation in contemporary policymaking.

In relation to political pledges, I refer to the related and widely discussed concept of the *pledge-policy/promise-performance gap*. The gap denotes a discrepancy of varying extent between pledged policy measures (from either pre- or post-electoral manifestos) and subsequently adopted ones. This occurs for multiple reasons, such as holding only a minority in legislative bodies or facing difficulties in implementing promised measures due to financial constraints. Scholars have observed such gaps in various policy areas and country contexts, such as research and development (R&D) policy in developed countries (Carvalho 2018) or across the policy realm in Italy (Moury 2011). In contrast, data from Czechia suggest that even an opposition party can fulfil its electoral pledges, as was the case for Social Democrats, who had a more significant percentage of enacted pledges – especially those concerning welfare promotion – while they were in opposition (Gregor 2018). Later governments (Topolánek, Nečas I, and Sobotka) fulfilled a maximum of around 40% of coalition parties' pledges, in particular those that were consensual and included in a coalition agreement (Svačinová 2016) or in governmental manifestos (Škvřňák 2015). Pledge fulfilment has thus become a widely discussed topic across different national contexts and governments of varying political orientations. Although this study does not primarily examine pledge fulfilment, it introduces a novel application of this concept to the field of FP in the Central European context, which remains largely underexplored.

Role of political orientation

This study builds on the explanatory framework of the *left/centrist/right political orientation* of parties and governments. However, this trichotomy remains underexplored in the context of FP. In particular, there is limited evidence indicating that governmental political orientation is associated with distinct FP pledges. According to classical political scientists such as Hibbs (1977), this trichotomy helps to distinguish the economic interests and preferences of governments that are reflected in pledged or adopted policies. While right-wing orientation is associated with market liberalisation, left-wing governments promote greater state intervention and more generous welfare policy, as discussed in more detail below. Parties and governments that support elements of both tend to occupy the centre of this spectrum and are labelled as centrist (e.g., the German CDU) (Caprara – Vecchione 2018). Authors have found that party ide-

ology matters especially in FP: secular centre and Christian-Democratic parties tend to expand father-specific leave, while secular right parties are associated with reductions in childcare spending and family allowances (Wiß – Wohlgemuth 2023). The left/centrist/right trichotomy has thus been used to explain policy dynamics, but its ability to account for changes in FP remains limited.

From the economic perspective, scholars have observed that the differences between the OECD countries' left- and right-wing governments were mirrored in different health expenditures; the left-wing governments invested more (Herwartz – Theilen 2014). The same applies to social spending (Bove et al. 2017). On the other hand, the market economic liberalisation was typical for right-wing parties. Yet, this pattern was interrupted in post-socialist countries, where the left parties needed to untie themselves from former socialist governance, so they contributed to market liberalisation (Tavits – Letki 2009). Such transformation of communist totalitarian parties towards less radical versions has been visible, e.g., in V4 countries.

Looking at the values promoted by governments of various political orientations, left-oriented governments are inclined toward liberal and gender-equality policies, in contrast to conservative right-oriented ones. For example, only liberal left governments of industrialised countries invested in childcare services, as this FP measure is in line with feminist values (Hieda 2013). Similarly, in the Latin American context, left governments provided an opportunity for advancing gender equality; in particular, the liberalisation and legalisation of abortions were furthered by established left governments compared to their right-wing counterparts (Blofield – Ewig 2017). Drawing on the examples of Sweden and Germany, other authors show that left-liberal governments tend to introduce more degenderizing policies (eliminating gender roles) to promote a balance between family and career (Rosenbluth et al. 2004). It has also been the left or left-centrist cabinets that raised the question of more gender-equal parental leave and later stood behind the reform of this legislation in Finland and Sweden (Nygård – Duvander 2021). On the other hand, the findings by Giuliani (2024) show that among mainstream right-oriented political parties in European countries, variation exists both over time and across countries, shaped by differences in party strategies or existing welfare state contexts; so the right-partisan FP agenda is not monolithic. In the case of radical-right parties, however, they consistently adopt a male-breadwinner policy agenda, giving stronger support to measures promoting traditional gender roles (Giuliani 2023). There is also cross-country variance showing that tendencies towards genderizing FP measures vary according to the types of existing FP in each country (ibid.). The left/centrist/right political orientation is thus reflected in the economic and value preferences of parties and governments.

However, the relationship between governmental political orientation and the policies it promises and implements is not always straightforward. For example, novel findings on the European context suggest that left–right orientation does not uniformly structure partisan narratives and positions across policy domains, but is conditional and depends on the characteristics of the policy area (Gingrich – Giudici 2025). Moreover, economic constraints at the local level can limit the implementation of certain FP measures such as the expansion of childcare services, even where political actors are ideologically supportive, highlighting the interaction between partisan policy preferences and structural local economic conditions (Debus et al. 2026). Earlier evidence also shows that regardless of political orientations, governments of European countries over several decades have successfully introduced a large number of FP measures (McIntosh 1986). In some cases, patterns contrary to intuitive expectations have been observed, such as in post-socialist countries like Hungary and Poland, where left-wing governments have exhibited spending patterns inconsistent with their ideological preferences, suggesting that “a party’s policies do not always reflect its ideological preferences and are significantly conditioned by contextual factors” (Tavits – Letki 2009: 564). Elsewhere, authors have argued that the liberal-conservative or left-right political orientation dichotomy is overly simplistic, reducing the complexity of preferences and often being misunderstood by citizens (Feldman – Johnston 2014). The association between governmental political orientation and pledges is thus open to question.

Temporal aspects related to policymaking processes

Drawing on academic literature, time is not considered a static backdrop for policy changes but rather an active factor shaping different types of policy transformations. Scholars most often use path dependency hypothesis, incrementalism, and the stochastic models to explain temporal policy changes (see, e.g., Howlett 2019; Howlett – Rayner 2006; Baumgartner – Jones 2010).

First, *path dependency hypothesis* explains that the earlier implemented measures and the entire institutional setting have so strongly determined the current system that it is challenging to implement any major changes despite the changing cabinets (Pollack 2007). This relates to the concept of institutional resilience, which refers to the ability of an institution to resist and recover from a disturbance (Carlson et al. 2012). For instance, Bohle and Greskovits (2012), building on Hall and Soskice’s (2001) “varieties of capitalism,” suggest the presence of path dependency in the context of economic and welfare regimes in the Central and Eastern European region of post-communist countries. In particular, Hašková and Saxonberg (2016) have already described path dependency of the adopted FP measures in post-socialist countries. Also, Saxonberg and Sirovátka (2006) contended that the ideological, economic, and historical

legacies of the socialist era in V4 have significantly shaped the present forms of FP. These countries tend to share genderizing FP, which often pressures women to exit the labour market due to the provision of childcare. Notably, Slovakia and Czechia continue to exhibit similar FP characteristics – such as extended leave periods with lower allowances – more than 30 years after their separation (ibid.). In contrast, Mitchell (2009) argues that whereas both countries began the post-1989 transition with similar welfare structures, their policies diverged during the 1990s in terms of who and how families are financially supported: Slovakia's FP resembles that of conservative Continental European countries, prioritising support for working couples and dual-earner families, while showing relatively low support for lone parents; while Czech FP aligns more closely with Austria in providing support across multiple family types. Moreover, contrary to Czechia, in Slovakia, only minor insignificant changes in FP occurred recently (Šťastná et al. 2020). The path dependency hypothesis in both countries' FP pledges and adopted measures thus deserves further attention.

Second, *incrementalism*: it has been described as a “generator” of path dependency, emphasising that institutions are not simply “locked in” but can change gradually (Sorensen 2015; Pierson 2004). Lindblom (1959) describes this process as “muddling through,” emphasising that policy changes typically occur in minor, stepwise adjustments. Policymakers tend to favour the status quo and only make incremental change (Lindblom 1979). For example, FP in Central European countries exhibits institutional path dependency while evolving through gradual adjustments (Szelewa – Polakowski 2008). In Czechia, despite several visible changes of FP after 1989, many features remained unchanged because “in general, the government has shown no interest in formulating explicit population policies.” (Sobotka et al. 2008: 441; see also Šťastná et al. 2020).

Third, *stochastic models* suggest that policy changes follow a fundamentally random pattern in which events closer in time are more closely related. Howlett and Rayner (2006) describe this approach as “ahistoric” and as a “general linear reality model” because, from the stochastic perspective, “there is an implicit notion that history, per se, does not matter”. This view implies that history is merely a sequence of isolated events rather than a driver of change. Stochastic models are widely applied across various disciplines, from mathematics and computer science to public debt analysis and investment forecasting (Ferrari 2018; Maggi 2023).

In conclusion, political orientation offers insights into ideological influences on policy design and implementation, while temporal aspects highlight the constraints and patterns shaping policy continuity and change over time. The interplay between these factors suggests that FP measures are not only shaped

by immediate political preferences but also by long-term institutional trajectories.

Research questions and hypotheses

Building on the theoretical background, political orientation can influence various forms of policy dynamics (e.g., Giuliani 2022; Sičáková-Beblavá – Beblavý 2016; Dřízová 2011). More specifically, political orientation can shape both the formulation and implementation of policy measures. However, it remains unclear whether different governmental political orientations can account for the variation in pledged FP measures—and their respective types—within the post-socialist Central European context. To address this gap, I seek to answer the following research questions and test the associated hypotheses:

(RQ1) Which types of family policy measures are mentioned in the governmental manifestos in Czechia and Slovakia over the period of 1998–2021 and (RQ2) how does governmental political orientation relate to this variance?

H1: FP measures mentioned in the manifestos of Slovak and Czech governments remain similar and show signs of path dependency over the observed period of 1998–2021. Several authors (e.g., Hašková – Saxonberg 2016; Saxonberg – Sirovátka 2006; Bohle – Greskovits 2012) have noted the persisting legacy of paternalist welfare states: long leaves with lower allowances continued to determine the present types of FP after the fall of the socialist regime and the separation of Czechoslovakia.

H2: There are more genderizing than degenderizing FP measures in the manifestos of Slovak and Czech governments in 1998–2021. Based on Saxonberg (2013) and Lutherová et al. (2017), in both Slovakia and Czechia genderizing childcare policies – such as long leaves entitled to mothers that enforce gender stereotypes – prevail, and both countries lack degenderizing policies such as childcare services (Thévenon 2011; Szelewa – Polakowski 2008).

H3: Left-oriented governments in Slovakia and Czechia mentioned financial FP measures in their governmental manifestos more often than right-oriented ones during 1998–2021. Herwartz and Theilen (2014) found that left-wing governments incurred higher health expenditures, and according to Bove et al. (2017), the same is true for social spending. Therefore, left-oriented governments could be expected to pledge more financial measures in contrast to their right-oriented counterparts.

H4: The left-oriented governments in Slovakia and Czechia mentioned degenderizing FP measures in their governmental manifestos more often than the right-oriented ones in 1998-2021. Scholars also found that left governments promoted more policies of gender equality (Rosenbluth et al. 2004) and the liberalisation of abortions in comparison to their right counterparts (Blofield – Ewig 2017; Blofield et al. 2017). Similarly, the left or left-centrist cabinets stood behind more gender-equal parental leave in Finland and Sweden (Nygård – Duvander 2021).

Methodology

The case countries – Czechia and Slovakia

This study focuses on the cases of Czechia and Slovakia, once part of Czechoslovakia until their separation in 1993. Both countries are now members of several international organisations, including the EU, UN, and OECD. Despite over three decades of independence, both countries still exhibit FP patterns shaped by their common socialist past (Hašková – Saxonberg 2016). The historical institutional framework established during communism continues to influence FP, leading to gendered, familialising policies that often push women out of the labour market (Saxonberg – Sirovátka 2006). Their shared post-socialist legacy thus makes them particularly relevant for examining FP change and its drivers.

Both countries are often classified within similar welfare and FP regime clusters. Thévenon (2011) grouped them with Central and Southern European countries with long leaves, low cash benefits, and limited childcare for children under three. From a gender perspective, Szelewa and Polakowski (2008), applying Leitner's (2003) framework, categorised both as explicit familialist states supporting the male-breadwinner model. Later, Javorník (2014) distinguished between explicit familialism in Czechia and implicit familialism in Slovakia, outlining greater childcare availability and higher maternal employment rates in Czechia. On the other hand, Kalitová (2025) argues that despite high female employment in Czechia, Czech family and labour policies reinforce traditional gender roles, placing a disproportionate caregiving burden on mothers. Similarly, Saxonberg (2013) argued that both countries maintain genderized childcare policies due to limited access to early childcare services. Both countries are often classified as having highly genderizing FP and rank among the lowest in terms of overall financial support across European OECD countries (Šmeringaiová 2025). Also Dobrotić and Stropnik (2020) see only small variance between the two countries from the gender view: Slovakia is categorised as fully equality-impeding while Czechia lies at the interface of equality-promoting and equality-impeding. Both countries as EU members have implemented Directive 2010/18/EU promoting more gender-equal child-

care and provide paid transferable or non-transferable leaves for both parents. Nevertheless, generally, FP in both countries consists of a combination of long leaves and financial incentives entitled mainly to mothers with the exception of a maternity leave entitled to fathers in Slovakia, that is, however, not much popularised and used (summarised in Table 2 below).

Table 2: Summary of key characteristics of FP of Slovakia and Czechia as the most similar systems design case countries (2025).

		<i>Czechia</i>	<i>Slovakia</i>
<i>Existing clusters:</i>	<i>Thévenon (2011)</i>	Extended leave but low cash benefits and childcare for children under age 3	Extended leave but low cash benefits and childcare for children under age 3
	<i>Javorník (2014)</i>	explicit familialism	implicit familialism
	<i>Saxonberg (2013)</i>	Genderizing FP	Genderizing FP
	<i>Dobrotić and Stropnik (2020)</i>	At the interface of equality-promoting and equality-impeding	Fully equality-impeding
<i>Family policy:</i>	<i>Length of standard maternity leave</i>	28 weeks	28 weeks
	<i>Amount of standard maternity leave</i>	70% of income	75% of income
	<i>Maternity leave is available for other caring person</i>	Yes, if mother cannot take care of the child or based on an agreement	Yes, if mother cannot take care of the child or based on an agreement
	<i>Non-transferable paid paternity leave</i>	2 paid weeks	2+26 paid weeks
	<i>Compulsory paternity leave</i>	No	No
	<i>Maximum length of standard parental leave</i>	Until a child reaches 3 years	Until a child reaches 3 years
	<i>Parental leave payment</i>	Flexible	Flat-rate
	<i>Parental leave available for fathers</i>	Yes	Yes
	<i>Tax benefits</i>	Dependant of income	Dependant of income

Source: author, for details see Kocourková (2025) for Czechia and Dančíková (2025) for Slovakia.

To conclude this section, I present the categorisation of the governments of the two case countries—Czechia and Slovakia—according to their political

orientation (Table 3 below). This categorisation forms the basis for the analysis of post-electoral governmental manifestos and the examination of the relationship between left/centrist/right-oriented governments and the types of pledged FP measures. The classification builds on the framework by Sičáková-Beblavá and Beblavý (2016), which has been updated and refined using the established V-Party scores (fully described in Supplement 1). The analysis covers the period from 1998 to 2021, encompassing nine Slovak and ten Czech cabinets representing diverse political orientations. Overall, left-oriented governments prevail over right-oriented ones in both countries. Two Czech caretaker governments were excluded from the analysis, as they were not democratically elected and did not produce regular governmental manifestos. Nonetheless, additional dimensions, such as the level of populism or corruption, could be incorporated in future research to enrich the analysis.

Table 3: Categorisation of governments in Slovakia and Czechia based on their political orientation (1998-2021).

Slovakia	Czechia
1998–2002 Dzurinda I: centrist	1998–2002 Zeman: left
2002–2006 Dzurinda II: right	2002–2004 Špidla: left
2006–2010 Fico I: left	2004–2005 Gross: left
2010–2012 Radičová: right	2005–2006 Paroubek: left
2012–2016 Fico II: left	2006–2007 Topolánek I: right
2016–2018 Fico III: left	2007–2009 Topolánek II: right
2018–2020 Pellegrini: left	2009–2010 Fischer: caretaker
2020–2021 Matovič: centrist	2010–2013 Nečas: right
2021 Heger: centrist	2013–2014 Rusnok: caretaker
	2014–2017 Sobotka: left
	2017–2018 Babiš I.: left
	2018–2021 Babiš II: left

Source: author (for details see Supplement 1).

Data and Temporal Scope

I utilised official post-electoral governmental manifestos from Slovakia and Czechia, which are publicly accessible through the respective national government and parliamentary websites (www.vlada.cz for Czechia and www.nrsr.sk for Slovakia). These documents are particularly relevant in both contexts due to their strong legal status and formal significance, which is greater than in many other countries (Sičáková-Beblavá – Beblavý 2016). The

analysed post-electoral governmental pledges are official public statements of each new government and therefore warrant adequate scholarly attention.

In addition, the study provides a comparison between pledged and implemented measures, which highlights the extent of the pledge–policy gap. Identified pledges from governmental manifestos were compared with adopted measures, which are publicly available through the national parliamentary websites (www.e-sbirka.cz for Czechia and www.nrsr.sk for Slovakia).

The temporal scope of the analysis includes ten Czech and nine Slovak cabinet manifestos from 1998 to 2021. Due to data unavailability, the study omits the very first years after the separation of Czechoslovakia (1993–1997). The analysed period nonetheless encompasses major political and socio-economic developments, including the countries’ accession to the EU, NATO, and OECD, the 2008 economic crisis, the migration crisis peaking in 2015, and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The 23-year scope thus provides a robust basis for examining the evolution of FP pledges across governments of different political orientations and for testing the path dependency hypothesis.

Methods

The study provides an original analysis of post-electoral manifesto pledges about FP; namely, it uses quantitative text content analysis (e.g., Krippendorff 2018) conducted in MIRO software. The aim is to find and compare the types of FP measures pledged in each governmental manifesto. In the process of the text analysis, I identified and coded the pledges about FP measures as quasi-sentences as defined previously by Royed (1996). First, I processed a pilot study to observe the appearance of FP measures in governmental manifestos. The average share of manifesto content devoted to FP is very low, which corresponds to the average proportion of welfare-state content identified also by the *Manifesto Project Database*.

The analysis was conducted in two rounds of manual coding. The FP measures listed in Table 1 served as the main coding categories. Pledges referring to other or vaguely formulated FP measures were coded as “other.” Each pledge was assigned according to the political orientation (left/centrist/right) of the respective government. The coded data were then quantified by counting the number of pledges (quasi-sentences, as defined above) per manifesto within each country and overall. I also calculated the number of pages that included FP pledges to estimate the share of overall manifesto content devoted to FP. Finally, I compared pledged and implemented measures for each governmental period to assess the existence of a pledge–policy gap, which provides a more comprehensive picture across governments of different political orientations.

Additionally, I examine temporal aspects, specifically whether FP pledges have evolved over time, assessing if new measures have emerged or if pledges have been repeated across manifestos. I also analyse the continuity and consistency of FP pledges within and between the two selected case countries during periods of similarly and differently politically oriented governments. H3 and H4 posit that similarly oriented governments promote similar types of FP in their manifestos.

Limits

This case study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the trichotomous classification of governmental political orientation (left/centrist/right) may be considered too simplistic. However, as previously noted, this categorisation is well-established in political science and has not yet been systematically applied to FP area.

Second, the study employs quantitative text analysis rather than discourse analysis or qualitative coding methods that uncover latent and hidden content. Qualitative content analysis would certainly provide additional analytical depth, but conducting such an analysis would substantially broaden the research scope. However, the primary objective of this study is to identify broader patterns of pledge formulation related to policy orientation rather than to examine discursive framing in detail. The chosen quantitative approach may overlook this; however, it is well-suited to address the research questions and test the hypotheses in an objective manner.

Furthermore, this study does not account for exogenous variables like economic conditions (e.g., the need for additional social support through FP measures) or political situation (e.g., time of crisis), both of which could influence manifesto content and the type and extent of FP measures implemented. I assume that economic conditions were relatively comparable in both case countries (e.g., the 2010–2012 economic crisis).

Results: A Wonderful World of Pledged Family Policy

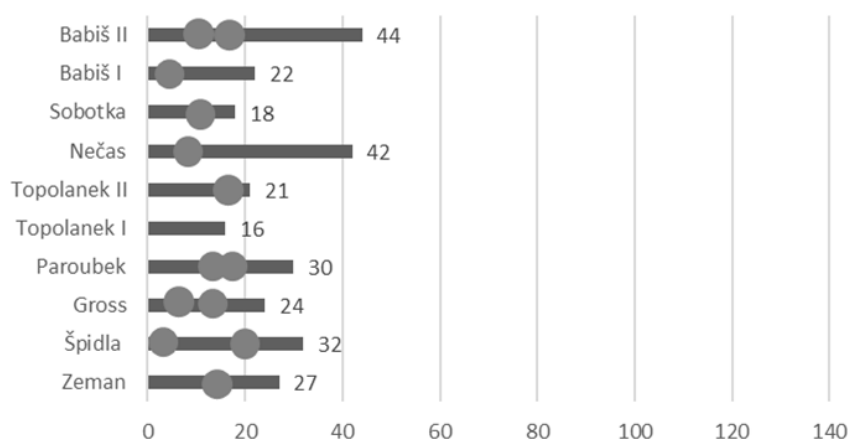
First, this section presents general findings on manifesto length, the placement of FP pledges, and the share of content devoted to FP. Slovak governmental manifestos have a median length of 65 pages, whereas Czech manifestos are considerably shorter, with a median of 25.5 pages. The longest documents were produced by the Slovak centrist governments led by Matovič and Heger, and manifesto length shows a general upward trend over time (see Figures 1 and 2). In two cases, a follow-up government adopted the manifesto of its predecessor because it was formed through governmental reconstruction rather than regular

elections. This applies to the two centrist Slovak governments and to the left-oriented Fico III government and its successor led by Pellegrini.

Regarding the position of FP pledges, in the Slovak manifestos the pledges were placed in the latter half of the documents, while in the Czech ones they were placed in the first half. In the manifestos of centrist-oriented and some left-oriented governments, the pledges appeared in two separate places. Only one manifesto – that of the right-oriented Topolánek I government – did not include any FP measures; it is also the shortest manifesto in the sample.

The average amount of codes (absolute numbers of FP pledges as quasi-sentences) shows that all three Slovak centrist governments mentioned FP measures in their manifestos the most frequently and in both countries, left-oriented governments mentioned FP measures more frequently than right-oriented ones, while the difference is more visible in Czechia (Figure 3).

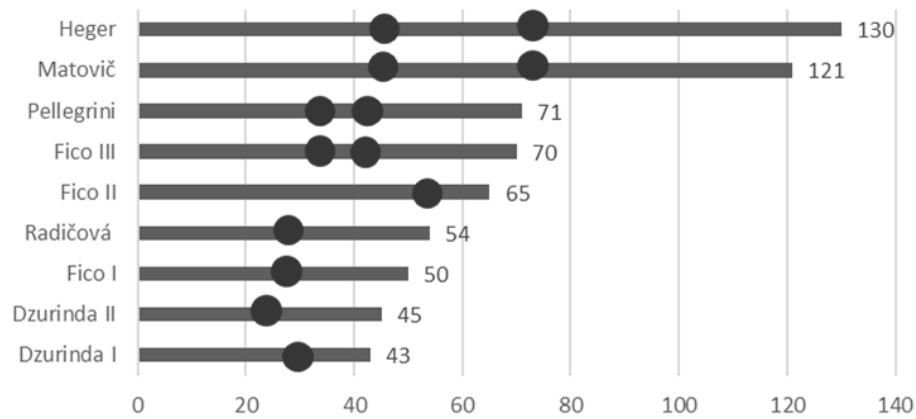
Figure 1: Length of governmental manifestos (number of pages) and position of FP pledges in the manifestos in Czechia.



Source: Author.

Note: dots show the actual position of the pledges about FP.

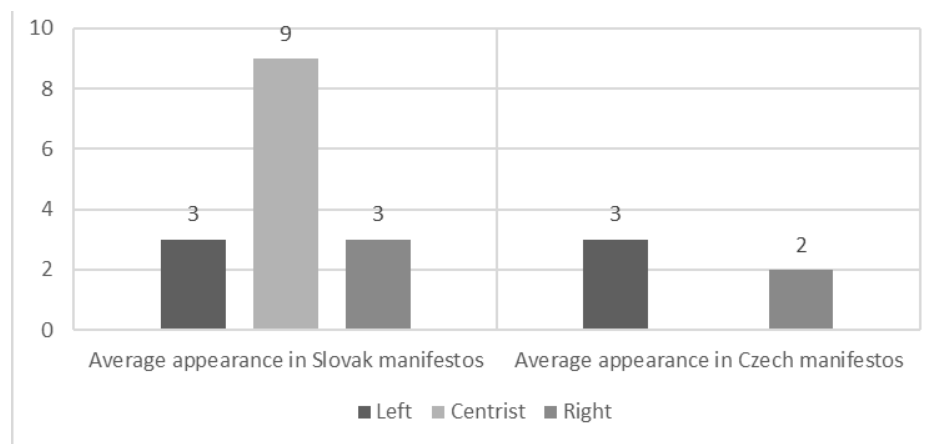
Figure 2: **Length of governmental manifestos (number of pages) and position of FP pledges in the manifestos in Slovakia.**



Source: Author.

Note: dots show the actual position of the pledges about FP.

Figure 3: **Average appearance of family policy measures in Slovak and Czech manifestos (absolute numbers).**

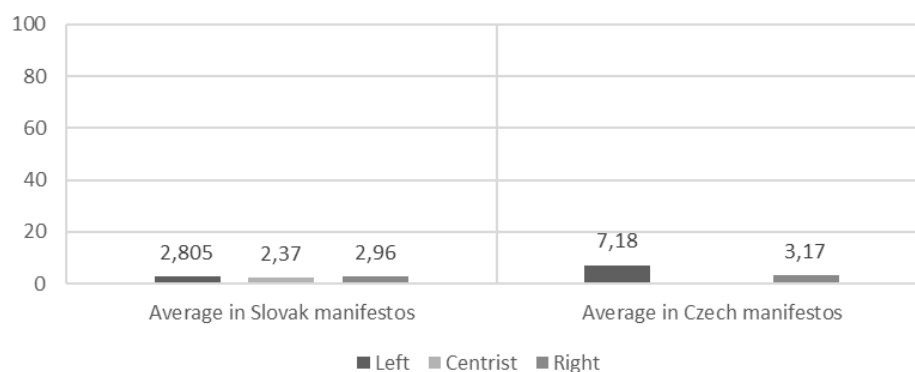


Source: Author.

However, the average share of manifesto content devoted to FP is very low (percentage of manifestos content, see Figure 4 below). This finding is consistent with the average proportion of welfare-state-related content identified

by the *Manifesto Project Database*. Among the analysed countries, centrist parties include the highest number of FP pledges in absolute numbers, however, their manifestos are also the longest (as discussed above), which reduces the salience of FP when measured as a percentage of total content (Figure 4). With respect to the left/centrist/right trichotomy, clearer differences between left- and right-oriented governments are observable only in Czechia, where left-oriented governments devoted more than twice as much manifesto content to FP as right-oriented governments.

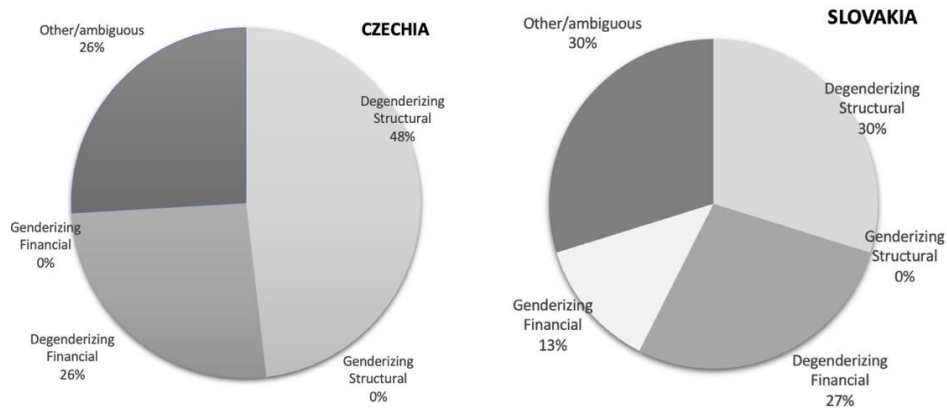
Figure 4: Average percentage of governmental manifestos content related to the family policy measures (number of pages, which included family policy pledges).



Source: Author.

Finally, the analysis researched the types of FP pledges (see typology, Table 1 above). As Figure 5 below shows, the percentage ratios of FP types vary between the countries. The most frequently appearing measures were categorised as degenderizing structural ones, and more than half of all pledges were of “degenderizing” type, which is valid for both countries. Therefore, I have not found support for H2 on the prevalence of genderizing over degenderizing FP pledges. Besides the given four types of FP measures, I identified a relatively high number of “other/ambiguous” pledged FP measures in the manifestos of both countries. Most of these measures – about housing, reduced prices, or children's rights protection, etc. – were found in the manifestos of two Slovak centrist governments. These pledges can be considered as an example of implicit and latent type of FP (see Zimmerman 1995) due to their unclear policy goal as well as ex-post effects related to families in terms of (de-)genderization.

Figure 5: Types of family policy pledges in Czech and Slovak manifestos (percentage of all family policy pledges).



Source: Author.

Focusing on the temporal dimension, the findings show that several measures repeated unchanged across the governmental periods in both countries (Table 4 and 5 below). The pledges about the availability of kindergartens or “flexible working forms/alternatives” are included in nearly all manifestos in both countries. Similarly, a pledge about tax benefits is repeated quite often. In the case of Slovakia, a pledge about higher maternity leave allowance appeared in four manifestos regardless of political orientation. In the manifestos of Czech governments, several financial measures were mentioned mainly during earlier left-oriented governments, e.g., higher parental allowance. The Slovak governments – in contrast to Czech ones – mentioned many financial measures.

The findings suggest inconsistencies and discontinuities in the researched relationship between governmental political orientation and the types of pledged FP measures. For instance, earlier Czech left-oriented governments (Špidla and Gross) typically pledged financial FP. In contrast, later left-oriented governments (Sobotka, Babiš I, II) rarely mentioned this type of FP measures, except for the tax benefit pledged in the Babiš I manifesto. Conversely, all three right-oriented governments were consistent, mentioning fewer FP measures. Similarly, in Slovakia, the left-oriented governments have varied in FP pledges significantly. For example, all three Fico’s governments pledged quite different FP measures in their manifestos, specifically presenting three distinct types of measures or even none. And interestingly, the earlier centrist government (Dzurinda I) made vastly different pledges compared to the last

centrist governments (Matovič, Heger), which mentioned a greater number and variety of FP measures.

Nevertheless, H3 on the prevalence of financial measures mentioned by left-oriented governments is supported only for earlier Czech left governments. And it is rejected for Slovakia because the financial measures are not typical only for left-oriented governments, and not all left governments mentioned such type of FP. The discontinuity of the political actors (Pierson 2004) seems to be reflected in the discontinuity in pledges, and even in the case of the continual governments of the left, the pledges vary significantly.

Surprisingly, pledges about degenderizing measures such as kindergartens or work-family reconciliation prevail in most manifestos regardless of governmental orientation. In contrast, no right-oriented government mentioned genderizing measures, and in Czechia, such measures have never been mentioned (Table 4). H4 on the relationship between left-oriented governments and the prevalence of degenderizing FP measures can therefore be rejected for both case countries.

Table 4: **Family policy pledges mentioned in the manifestos of Czech governments (1998-2021).**

Government	Orientation	Degenderizing	Degenderizing	Gender-izing	Gender-izing	Other/ ambiguous
		Structural	Financial	Struc- tural	Finan- cial	
Zeman	left		Higher parental allowance			
Špidla	left	Kindergartens Harmonisation of family and work life	Higher parental allowance Tax benefits			One-off benefit for first graders
Gross	left	Part-time jobs Kindergartens	Higher parental allowance Availability of maternity leave for fathers Tax benefits			Children's rights protection One-off benefit for first graders
Paroubek	left	Part-time jobs Kindergartens Harmonisation of family and work life				
Topolánek I	right					Support for families with children Favouring families in pension system
Topolánek II	right	Part-time jobs, Flexible maternity and father leave				
Nečas	right	Part-time jobs				Reduction of birth benefit and maternity leave allowance
Sobotka	left	Part-time jobs				-
Babiš I	left		Tax benefits			Support of family or institutional care
Babiš II	left	Part-time jobs, Kindergartens				
SUM		13	7	0	0	7

Source: Author.

Table 5: **Family policy pledges mentioned in the manifestos of Slovak governments (1998-2021).**

Government	Orientation	Degenderizing	Degenderizing	Gender-izing	Gender-izing	Other/ ambiguous
		Structural	Financial			
Dzurinda I	centrist	Part-time jobs				Children's rights protection Reduced transportation prices
Dzurinda II	right		Tax benefits			Children's rights protection
Fico I	left	Kindergartens	Higher parental allowance Availability of maternity leave for fathers Tax benefits			Children's rights protection Housing support Higher child-birth allowance
Radičová	right	Part-time jobs Flexible parental leave	Higher parental allowance			Subsidies for services for parents
Fico II	left					To adopt the conception of family policy
Fico III	left	Kindergartens Harmonisation of family and work life			Higher maternity leave	
Pellegrini	left	Kindergartens Harmonisation of family and work life			Higher maternity leave	
Matovič	centrist	Part-time jobs Kindergartens Flexible parental leave	Mother-wage compensations Tax benefits Higher parental allowance Implementation of paternity leave		Universal child-birth allowance Higher maternity leave	Reduced prices for families Housing allowance One-off benefit for first graders
Heger	centrist	Part-time jobs Kindergartens Flexible parental leave	Tax benefits Higher parental allowance Implementation of paternity leave Mother-wage compensations		Universal child-birth allowance Higher maternity leave	Reduced prices for families Housing allowance One-off benefit for first graders
SUM		14	13	0	6	14

Source: Author.

Discussion and Conclusions

Like other areas of public policy, FP—including its design and implementation—is shaped by multiple factors, among them the political orientation of policymakers. This orientation may be reflected both in the content of governmental manifestos and in subsequently adopted policies. The present study empirically tests whether the left/centre/right orientation of governments helps to explain variation in FP pledges in post-electoral manifestos. The findings reveal considerable inconsistency and temporal discontinuity across different types of pledged FP measures. Overall, the results provide only partial support for theoretical expectations linking governmental political orientation to FP pledges. For example, Czech left-oriented governments pledged more financial measures in their manifestos in contrast to right-oriented ones. This is in line with, e.g., Herwartz and Theilen (2014) and Bove et al. (2017), who found that left governments make higher expenditures. Yet, in the case of Slovakia, the outcomes do not show such pattern and are consistent with literature arguing that the explanatory framework of left/centrist/right political orientation is not much effective and shows only very nuanced discrepancies (see, e.g., Imbeau et al. 2001; Giuliani 2024). In this sense, provided evidence is in line with Mitchell (2009), who found differences between both countries regarding the financial support of families; and with Tavits and Letki (2009), who explain that – especially in post-socialist countries including two case countries – the partisan policies do not reflect their ideological preferences and are significantly determined by contextual factors.

An unclear link between political orientation and the pledged policy measures is evident, especially when adopting a gender perspective. I have not found evidence supporting theoretical assumption (H4) that left-oriented governments would pledge degenderizing FP measures more than their right counterparts. Surprisingly, regardless of the governmental political orientation, the pledges about kindergarten availability and work-family reconciliation prevail in most manifestos. The outcomes thus suggest a stochastic disorder, a fundamentally random pattern (see Howlett – Rayner 2006) of types of FP pledges formulated in manifestos across the governments of different orientation. In this sense, there is a visible difference between the case countries, Czechia and Slovakia, and Nordic countries or Latin America, where the left-oriented governments promoted more policies leading to gender equality (Rosenbluth et al. 2004; Blofield – Ewig 2017; Blofield et al. 2017; Nygård – Duvander 2021). Similarly, right-oriented governments in Czechia and Slovakia differ significantly from the populist right especially radical right-oriented governments in Western Europe, which tend to promote traditional

paternalistic policies (Giuliani 2022; 2023; Meardi – Guardiancich 2021). I did not find similar patterns in the case countries.²

The results also have implications for understanding temporal dynamics in post-socialist Central European countries. At first glance, the pattern of FP pledges appears fragmented, with measures appearing across governments of different political orientations in a seemingly stochastic manner. However, the findings are partially consistent with the path dependency literature. As Bohle and Greskovits (2012) have argued, political actors in the V4 countries did not fully break with the legacy of paternalistic welfare states following the collapse of the socialist regime and subsequent state transformations. This continuity is also reflected in the present analysis, which reveals a strong emphasis on financial FP pledges as well as on adopted FP measures.

This situation can be described using the words of former Polish Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Jacek Kuron: “I believe that you cannot take away certain social rights from people; you can modify them, change the method of implementation, make them more rational ... but to simply say you are not entitled to them anymore cannot be done.” (Bohle – Greskovits 2012: 154) In this sense, I agree with Hašková and Saxonberg (2016), describing the path dependency of adopted FP on the example of post-socialist countries and with Saxonberg and Sirovátka (2006), which argued that the historical legacy of socialist long leaves with lower allowances determined the present type of FP in respective countries. FP in the case countries also seems to be changing in an ad hoc style of “emergency” policy making, which is a part of a complex path dependent institutional systems (Inglot 2008). This was observed in FP when governments, instead of fulfilling repeated pledges, implemented other ad hoc measures. This study thus supports the path dependency hypothesis in FP policymaking and the incremental FP transformation in both studied countries.

Comparing the pledges with adopted FP measures, only some of the FP pledges were really implemented. For example, in Czechia, the left cabinet Babiš I. and II. increased pledged child tax bonus in 2018 and again in 2021. Similarly, in Slovakia, the child tax bonus increased significantly at the end of Heger’s cabinet in 2022, together with the monthly child allowance, which explicitly supports large families (that has been, however, canceled in 2025). In Slovakia, a pledge about higher maternity leave allowance appeared in four manifestos regardless of the political orientation, and it has increased several times, mainly during Fico’s left governments (in 2013, 2015, and 2016). In that period, the birth bonus also increased. Moreover, in Slovakia (since 2011),

² Indeed, my assumptions are based on the evidence about proposed or adopted public policies or the party manifestos, not the governmental policy pledges. But, to my best knowledge, there is no available literature closer to these research aims.

fathers are entitled to take a maternity leave after the mother has used her 28 weeks of leave for the same child. In Czechia, by contrast, paid maternity leave can be taken by only one parent per child, which makes the Czech system more genderizing in contrast to the Slovak one in this particular domain. Finally, in two Slovak manifestos of the centrist governments of Matovič and Heger, the pledges about paid paternity leave and the one-off benefit for the first-graders appeared, while both measures have been implemented within these two governmental periods.

In contrast, the data include many examples of the so-called pledge-policy gap. For instance, promised degenderizing FP measures such as higher availability of kindergartens or part-time jobs repeatedly appeared in nearly all manifestos of both countries. Despite the repeated mention of these measures in manifestos, not much has been done in either country. In Slovakia, the finances from the Recovery and Resilience Plans of the European Commission were partially allocated for raising the capacity of kindergartens (*Výzva na zvýšenie kapacít materských škôl* 2024). In Czechia, thanks to earlier implemented “children's groups” (Act no. 247/2014³) as alternative institutional care to public or private nurseries and kindergartens, a place for a child is already guaranteed for all children aged three and over. Nevertheless, as I described earlier, the number of children under 3 years enrolled in institutional care remains low. Regarding the dual-earner family model, during the observed period, neither of the two countries has introduced any measures supporting mothers' labour market participation (except for the introduced flexible leave system in Czechia that, however, supports labour market participation only indirectly). Nečas's right-oriented government also failed to fulfill the promised reduction of birth benefits and maternity leave allowance. A visible pledge-policy gap in the FP area thus remains in both countries.

The most visible pledge-policy gap concerns degenderizing FP measures. Although these were the most frequently pledged measures in both countries, their implementation has remained limited. This finding is consistent with previous research by Kalitová (2025) and Lutherová et al. (2017), who highlight persistent difficulties in work-family reconciliation and the continued prevalence of genderizing FP, while also showing how recent reforms – such as the flexibilisation of parental benefits – have contributed to gradual degenderizing changes. The reforms have aimed to improve work-family reconciliation through more flexible parental leave arrangements and related financial benefits (Šťastná et al. 2020). However, their effects remain contested. Bičáková and Kalíšková (2019, 2024) show that extended parental leave may

³ In Slovakia, the “childrens' groups” were implemented only in a law about social services (Act no. 448/2008) and are not much popular or used.

increase mothers' labour-market inactivity (see also Grossmann et al. 2024) and delay children's entry into kindergarten, with negative long-term consequences. Overall, the pledge–policy gap in degenderizing FP remains substantial in Slovakia, while Czechia appears to be gradually moving towards more degenderizing policy arrangements. Nevertheless, these reforms may also generate unintended negative consequences.

The results thus suggest an unexpected dynamic in the FP measures pledged in post-electoral governmental manifestos. I concluded that these dynamics can only be partially explained by the left/centrist/right political orientation of governments. For example, I identified common patterns in FP pledges of the right-oriented governments in both countries over time. There is a visible difference in the number and types of FP pledges between Czech left- and right-oriented governments. Yet, this association is not clear in the case of Slovakia. Interestingly, a substantial number of degenderizing FP pledges (e.g., increasing availability of kindergartens) were identified across governments of the entire political spectrum. This pattern suggests the presence of path dependency in adopted and pledged FP measures and the inconsistency between shifts in governmental political orientation and the types of both governmental pledges and adopted FP measures.

For future research, I recommend examining the observed discontinuities and inconsistencies in FP pledges, particularly during the three Slovak left-oriented governments led by Róbert Fico. Beyond the scope of the posed research questions, a qualitative analysis of post-electoral manifestos could provide additional evidence on the discourse and contextual framing of FP. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a persistent pledge–policy gap in both countries, most notably regarding the repeated pledges about degenderizing FP. This finding raises a key question: why have genderizing FP measures continued to dominate in both Slovakia and Czechia for years, despite frequent governmental commitments to introduce more degenderizing FP?

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Declarations

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Supplement 1

The categorisation of Czech and Slovak governments based on their political orientation, 1998-2021.

<i>Slovakia</i>	V-Party score
	Counted score (score of prime ministers' party; score of party having social affairs ministerial portfolio and the years of measurements)
1998–2002 Dzurinda I: centrist	3,08 (SDKÚ-DS 4,49 (2002); SDL 1,66 (1998))
2002–2006 Dzurinda II: right	4,49 (SDKÚ-DS (2002))
2006–2010 Fico I: left	2,02 (Smer-SD (2006))
2010–2012 Radičová: right	4,39 (SDKÚ-DS 4,18 (2010); SaS 4,6 (2010))
2012–2016 Fico II: left	1,88 (Smer-SD (2012))
2016–2018 Fico III: left	1,88 (Smer-SD (2016))
2018–2020 Pellegrini: left	1,8 (Smer-SD (2021))
2020–2021 Matovič: centrist	3,3 (OLaNO 3,8 (2021); Sme Rodina 2,8 (2021))
2021– Heger: centrist	3,3 (OLaNO 3,8 (2021); Sme Rodina 2,8 (2021))
<i>Czechia</i>	
1998–2002 Zeman: left	1,81 (ČSSD (1998))
2002–2004 Špidla: left	1,81 (ČSSD (2002))
2004–2005 Gross: left	1,81 (ČSSD (2004))
2005–2006 Paroubek: left	1,81 (ČSSD (2006))
2006–2007 Topolánek I: right	4,37 (ODS (2006))
2007–2009 Topolánek II: right	4,37 (ODS (2006))
2009–2010: Fischer: caretaker	X
2010–2013 Nečas: right	4,14 (ODS 4,23 (2010); TOP-09 4,04 (2010))
2013–2014 Rusnok: caretaker	X
2014–2017 Sobotka: left	1,81 (ČSSD (2017))
2017–2018 Babiš I.: left	2,47 (ANO (2017))
2018–2021 Babiš II: left	2,07 (ANO 2,57 (2021); ČSSD 1,57 (2021))

Source: Based on Sičáková-Beblová and Beblavý (2016) amended and updated by the author based on V-Dem project, particularly, the V-Party time-series data.

Note: The governmental political orientation is assessed based on the prime-ministers' party orientation and orientation of the party, which administers the social affairs ministerial portfolio. If the parties differ, the average score is counted and taken in consideration. The score is not counted for all years in the database, therefore I use the

closest years reported (the years of the used score are in the brackets in the table). The V-Party score means "overall ideological stance on economic issues". It is an established measurement of political orientation and uses the following scale: 0 - Far-left; 1 – Left; 2 - Center-left; 3 – Center; 4 - Center-right; 5 – Right; 6 - Far-right.

V-Party is an expert-coded assessments of party organization and identity. Country experts rate the policy positions and organizational capacity of political parties across elections in a given country. Specifically, as a general rule, experts coded data for all parties that reached more than 5% of the vote share at a given election. The expert-coded data are then aggregated using V-Dem's Bayesian Item Response Theory measurement model (for more details see Coppedge et al., 2024).

The lowest found score is 1,57 (CSSD 2021) and the highest 4,6 (SaS 2010). No far-oriented governments and parties were thus included. For the purposes of this study I compress the categories, which makes them more consistent with the theoretical assumptions about left/centrist/right orientation. I use the following scale: <2,5 Left; 2,5-3,5 Centrist; >3,5 Right.

Note that elsewhere Radičová's government has been labelled as center-right and Fico III as left-right coalition (Staroňová – Rybář 2021). And winning parties OĽANO (Matovič and Heger) and ANO (Babiš I) were labelled as centrist because their orientation is rather antiestablishment-populist ideological (Engler et al. 2019).

