

## Care policies in Germany and France: a biographical policy evaluation with migrant child minders as an example

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*Summary*

This research project examines how care policies affect the social mobility of child minders with migrant backgrounds in France and (West) Germany. As an element of modern division of labour among women, the child minders' situation influences the issue of care in the European welfare state within society as a whole. Taking biographical-narrative interviews with registered family home-based child minders in both countries as a basis, those actors are considered who enable mothers (and fathers) to go to work within the scope of outsourcing domestic housework and day care duties.

In France and Germany, there is a high level of demand for care, although the state framework conditions differ widely. By working as a child minder, female Maghrebian migrants in France who are lacking in economic and educational resources encounter a policy designed to support them whereby they are able to mobilise their accumulated biographical resources as family carers. However, their place of work in their own home is particularly restrictive of these opportunities for emancipation when it is located in a deprived area. The autonomy they have attained can also be counteracted by the *Complément de libre choix d'activité*, a type of child care subsidy that makes it possible to take time off work following the birth of a child. The highly skilled migrants in Germany who come from the post-Socialist countries encounter a policy that hinders them in constructing their success, in which their educational resources are only of marginal use. Their activity as child minders, which has only been subject to regulation since 2005, is linked to a high degree of social vulnerability. However, in both countries, the orientation towards family home-based childcare in all cases studied arises through the founding of one's own family and is primarily determined by the desire to secure care for one's own children.

It is evident that the socio-political provisions intended to resolve the care issue are doubly enmeshed, since the framework conditions of the working mothers determine those of the

child minders, and vice-versa. The form of labour division between migrant and privileged native women is based on a dialectic between child minders and parents (predominantly mothers) who give their children up for care to these migrant women. The mother who puts her children in the care of a child minder encounters a woman who has made motherhood her profession (or sometimes a father who has made fatherhood his profession). In both countries, the pivotal point of these ambivalent circumstances and relationships is the home, which is simultaneously also a place of work, and which thus evolves into a new interface between the private sphere and public space.