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Care credits in European pension systems

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Introduction

There is a broad literature documenting the gradual transformation of pension provision into a policy problem (see for example Banks and Emmerson, 2000, Barr, 2002), however only a small part of this literature considers the reasons why pension provision is a problem for women in particular (Meyer, 1998, Ginn and Arber, 1993, Ginn et al., 2001a). Pension provision has always been a problem for women in that pensions were not designed with them directly in mind, rather women were intended to be *indirect* beneficiaries of the pension system through the marital bond to their husbands (Thane, 2000). Traditionally designed pension systems have been challenged by changes in men's and women's partnership, family and work patterns, however the design of entitlement in pension systems has continued to be problematic (Ginn and Arber, 1996, Leitner, 2001). This is because typical male working patterns, which tend to be full-time, continuous and with increasing incomes throughout the working life, are still the reference point for the calculation of pension entitlements, thereby overlooking the gender differences in work and care duties (Jenson and Sineau, 2001, Lewis, 1998). And it is this continuous 'mirroring' of, and failure to address, the differences and inequalities in the division of paid/unpaid labour, that ultimately constitutes the pension problem from a gender perspective.

Although women's participation rates in the labour market have increased significantly since the mid-1970s, certain important differences in the nature of men's and women's participation patterns have remained unaltered (OECD, 2002, SPC, 2000). For instance, men tend to have continuous working records until retirement, while women tend to interrupt their working lives in order to care for dependants (Ginn et al., 2001b). More women than men also tend to work part-time, which impacts on their earnings throughout the life course and on their pension contributions (Ginn and Arber, 1998, Luckhaus, 1997). Across the EU-25 in 2005, and notwithstanding country variations, only 7 per cent of all working men were in part-time employment compared to one in three women (Eurostat LFS 2nd Quarter, 2005). In addition, part-time work is concentrated among relatively low-paid occupational sectors, such as health provision, education and service provision, and female part-time workers are more likely to spend their whole working life in this type of employment, while men tend to work part-time either at the beginning or at the very end of their working life (Laczko and Phillipson, 1991, EFILWC, 2003). Finally, the impact of women's employment patterns on pension accumulation is also affected by a gendered pay gap that in 2005 still stood at 15% on average for the EU-27 (Eurostat 2005).

Changes in labour markets and their different implications for men and women are only part of the complex challenge that faces modern pension systems. Population ageing and the resultant increase in the cost of pension provision are an integral part of the pressure that has demanded the recalibration of pension systems (Bonoli and Shinkawa, 2005, ISSA, 2003, SPC, 2000). These phenomena too, like changes in labour markets, have distinct gender implications. Women across Europe tend to live longer than men, thereby constituting the majority of older people but also the majority of older people facing the risk of poverty (European Commission, 2006b, European Commission, 2006a, Zaidi et al., 2006). On the other hand, cost-reducing strategies that target rising state pension expenditures are also more likely to disadvantage women than men, because women tend to be more reliant on statutory pension provision due to their tendency to have irregular ties with the labour market (Luckhaus, 1997, Ginn, 2004).

As part of their efforts to adjust to changing demographic, social and economic circumstances, European pension systems have responded with reform packages that combine various adjustments, such as the tightening of eligibility criteria, the changing balance of elements comprising the pension income, the expansion of people's working lives and others (Holzmann et al., 2003). Pension reforms across the European Union have increasingly included the provision of care credits towards the carer's pension contributions in the public pension system in recognition of their caring work. Care credits take the form of an amount of time in months/years that is 'credited' to the carer's working record as if the carer were employed in the labour market. Theoretically, such amounts of time can be credited to a carer's pension contributions irrespective of whether the care is provided to underage children, elderly persons, or sick or disabled persons. In practice, however, and as shown later in this chapter, the concept of care credits has been applied to the provision of childcare to a much greater extent than other types of care.

The provision of care credits is an inherently gendered issue of social policy. This is because historically most of the care has been provided by female family members, and this has not changed even as more women have entered the labour market (Bubeck, 1995, EFILWC, 1995, Jenson, 1997). Far from a greater equalisation of caring obligations between men and women, there is evidence that labour market changes have led to a 'modernisation' of the division of paid and unpaid labour (Orloff, 2002), whereby women combine the bulk of unpaid work with work in the labour market, while men's contribution to unpaid and/or care work has largely remained the same (Gershuny et al., 1994, OECD, 2002). Consequently, unless labour markets are able to cater for care providers, and pension systems to compensate carers with alternative ways of building up pension entitlements, caring for dependants -be it children, disabled or elderly persons, indirectly contributes to gender inequalities in the accumulation of lifetime and retirement income (Ginn, 2002, Luckhaus and Ward, 1997).

Care credits can be understood as an example of compensation within a system of pension provision that is inextricably linked with contributions to the paid labour market –what is termed 'gainful employment' in the policy literature, and which is consequently prone to producing gender inequalities in terms of pension accumulation prospects. As a mechanism of compensation within pension systems, care credits are a concept with multi-faceted policy significance. Firstly, like other mechanisms of compensating for time spent outside gainful employment, such as credits for time spent completing military service, care credits recognise the diversity in the individual life course, particularly with regard to work and care patterns. However, and unlike the recognition of military service that is compulsory for men in some countries, care credits also serve to recognise the individual right to make choices throughout the life course for which individuals are not, directly or indirectly, penalised by the welfare state. Such recognition of diversity is particularly important for women whose care and employment patterns are often incompatible with eligibility advantages in social security systems. Secondly, care credits ensure the valorisation of unpaid care work in the context of social insurance, thereby attaching a symbolic value in policy terms to the act or caring for dependants (Jenson, 1997). Thirdly, care credits ensure the valorisation of unpaid care work not just in principle, but also in practice by attaching a temporal value to the credit contribution to the carer's record of employment. Finally, care credits function as a vehicle for promoting greater gender equality in terms of pension accumulation, because across the developed world the majority of care work still tends to be undertaken by women.

As part of efforts to adjust modern pension systems to changing demographic, social and economic circumstances, care credits represent a significant step forward in the promotion of gender equality within pension systems. At the same time, however, we need to consider the *kind* of gender equality that care credits advocate, and it is here –in the application of the concept in practice- where this chapter argues that care credits represent two backwards steps. The rest of this chapter engages with these issues in four steps. The following section reviews the European strategy on gender equality and its application in pension provision, distinguishing between formal and substantive gender equality. Next, the chapter compares the operation of care credits in European pension systems based on a number of parameters, such as the length of time for which they credit a carer's contributions, the type of care for which they are awarded and the extent to which they can be combined with other care-related measures such as parental leave. Following this description is a discussion of the implications of the variety in the provision of care credits for the kind of gender equality pursued. It is argued that, although in principle care credits are an illustration of substantive gender equality in pension provision and thereby represent a step forward for the promotion of gender equality, their practical implementation could be said to represent two backward steps. The concluding section draws together the background and main points of the chapter, emphasising the policy challenge that the current organisation of care credit provision poses for addressing an increasing demand for eldercare in Europe.

The European strategy on gender equality and its application in pension systems

Since its inception, the European strategy for equal opportunities has primarily referred to opportunities provided in the employment sphere as part of Europe's economic goals. Part of the reason for this relates to the development of social policy at the European level more broadly and its characterisation as 'something of a poor cousin' to economic policies (Caporaso and Jupille, 2001). The strategy has three fundamental elements: Article 119 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome (known as Article 141 since the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty), the 1975 Directive on equal pay and the 1976 Directive on equal treatment. Article 119 expresses the fundamental principle that men and women must have equal pay and benefits in employment. The 1975 Directive on equal pay broadened the principle to include equal pay for work of equal value (75/117/EEC, 1975), while the 1976 Directive on equal treatment extended the principle of equal treatment into areas adjacent to employment, such as training programmes and working conditions (76/207/EEC, 1976).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, and through established bodies such as the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights, the Equal Opportunities Unit and the European Women's Lobby, women mobilised to extend the equality discourse to areas beyond the labour market, such as social security, the provision of care, unpaid work, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Some of these areas have been incorporated in the Community's strategy through the extension of the fundamental principle of Article 119. Such examples include the 1979 Directive on Equality on Social Security (79/7/EEC, 1979), the 1986 Directive on equal treatment in occupational pension systems (86/378/EEC, 1986) and the Community Charter of the Fundamental

Social Rights of Workers 1989 (known in short as the 'Social Charter'). Nevertheless, in practice the effectiveness of such extensions beyond the strict boundaries of employment has been challenged for two main reasons, which are relevant to the discussion of compensatory mechanisms within modern pension systems. Firstly, the inherent focus of the equal opportunities discourse on employment has undermined the conditions that hamper women's entry in the labour market, particularly the unequal division of labour in the private sphere of the household. And secondly, the diversity of policies with regard to gender and social policy at the national level has acted as a filter for European Directives, thus limiting their scope of implementation in domestic contexts (Williams, 2003).

Traditionally designed pension systems around Europe have since the mid-20th century reflected the gender differences in employment patterns and in wages, in addition to the unequal division of unpaid and care labour in the private sphere (Ginn, 2003, Whiteford, 1996). As a result, the pension problem for women began to surface in Europe when more and more women started to receive a pension in their own right as a result of labour market participation (Ginn et al., 2001a). The adverse effects of women's typical working patterns can be mitigated, or compensated for, in several ways, reflecting the application of substantive equality that takes men's and women's differences into account. The application of substantive equality can be distinguished from the application of formal equality whereby the same rule applies to all cases irrespective of their differences. One such mechanism is the calculation of the pension income according to the best income years of employment rather than the last, which does not advantage men over women (Rake, 1999). Similarly, the pension accumulation prospects of part-time workers are not compromised when the latter are permitted to 'buy' additional pension contributions (for example in France and Germany), or when they are not penalised for transferring their pension rights from one sector to another (for example in Germany and Denmark)(European Commission, 2006b).

The pursuit of greater gender equality within pension systems more specifically, as well as pension adequacy for both men and women, is part of a broader pension policy agenda that developed rapidly at the European level after 2001 (SPC, 2000, EPC, 2001, CEU, 2003). Increasing labour mobility and the need to harmonise occupational pension provision across the Continent provided the stimuli for the establishment of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) for Pensions, which was streamlined in 2006 with social protection and social inclusion more broadly (COM (2005) 706 final, 2005). The common European agenda pledges to 'ensure that pension systems are transparent, well-adapted to the needs and aspirations of women and men and the requirements of modern societies' (COM (2005) 706 final, 2005). However, at the national level the adaptation of the principle of gender equality within pension systems has varied greatly, taking one of two forms.

The first form that gender equality strategies take in European pension systems promote gender equality in the formal sense of the term that is by trying to establish equality between women and men without necessarily taking gender differentiations in work, life and care patterns into account. Given that pension systems tend to reward full-time, continuous and highly-paid employment records, women face a de facto disadvantage in terms of building adequate pension rights. The problem with such strategies goes at the heart of the broader gender equality agenda at the European level, namely it lies with the focus on paid employment as a the fundamental reference principle for establishing equality or 'sameness' between men and women. As Luckhaus and Ward note, 'sameness in this context […] has been taken to mean men and women in paid work: it does not extend to men or women engaged in unpaid work' (Luckhaus and Ward, 1997: 242). An example of promoting this form of gender equality is the abolition of differences between men and women in terms of the retirement age (European Commission, 2006b). The equalisation of retirement ages in the name of gender equality may be taking higher female life expectancy into account and providing women with a longer period in which to build pension contributions, but it does not take into account women's greater tendency to care for dependants in the family.

The second form of gender equality strategies have a compensatory character, which means that they account for the origins of the pension problem for women and the gender differences in typical working/caring patterns. The existence of differentiated retirement ages for men and women before these were deemed illegal by Community legislation is an illustration of such a compensatory mechanism. In many developed countries, albeit not always explicitly, the establishment of different retirement ages reflected the state's assumptions about women's and men's roles in society. Because of women's greater life expectancy, rather than in spite of it, earlier retirement was granted to women so that, firstly, the couple would enjoy their retirement simultaneously because women were usually younger than their husbands, and secondly, widows would receive social protection earlier (Fredman, 1996). In this way the state could claim to recognise women's contribution to the household, which was more likely than their contribution to the labour market. In reality, the policy intention behind this measure was not entirely benign, as the difference in retirement ages also compensated for the relatively low wages of women that were engaged in paid employment *in addition* to their unpaid work in the household (Arber and Ginn, 1995). The age of retirement is an area where equal treatment is not immediately applicable under Community Law, rather Member States are obliged to examine their legislation periodically and establish whether the derogation from the equality principle is still justified in each case (79/7/EEC, 1979). For the time being certain Member States still have different retirement ages for men and women (for example Poland, Italy, Slovenia, Austria until 2024), but are in the process of gradually abolishing them (European Commission, 2006b).

The principle compensatory measure in pension systems, and another application of equality of a substantive nature, remains the provision of care credits that count towards the carer's basic state pension contributions. The provision of such credits for childcare varies considerably between Member States, while the provision of such credits for family care or eldercare is a far rarer practice. The following section reviews the operation of care credits in the European Member States, drawing contrasts that are further discussed in this chapter.

Care credits in European pension systems

Drawing on the most recent information supplied to the European Commission by national governments (except for Bulgaria), Table 1 summarises the operation of care credits in the European countries (MISSOC, 2006). The table reflects the variation in policy assumptions about the symbolic and monetary value of care credits in each country context, as well as their role in each country's broader framework of social security. Three kinds of variation are discussed in this chapter: first, variations according to the type of care credits provided; secondly, variations according to the specific characteristics of such provisions; and thirdly, variations according to the assumptions behind the provision of credits for childcare.

In the first instance, there are European countries that do not provide any explicit credits for carers of either children, disabled or elderly persons (such as Denmark, The Netherlands and Slovenia), countries that provide one type of credits but not another (for example Cyprus and Lithuania provide credits for childcare but not for family/eldercare, whereas Finland provides credits for family/eldercare but not for childcare), and countries that provide credits for care provided to all kinds of dependent persons within the household (such as Germany, Poland and Switzerland). With the exception of Finland, all of the countries that offer care credits for the provision of one type of care but not for another, provide credits for periods spent caring for children (including disabled children), but not for periods spent caring for other dependent persons within the household, whether disabled or elderly. It should be noted that the analysis here solely depends on MISSOC data and that some countries may operate additional mechanisms of care valorisation that are integrated in their broader welfare system and that would be evidence in a more detailed case-by-case investigation. There are a couple of implications of this kind of variation. The first implication is that where care credits are not provided for any type of care, this does not necessarily mean that the activity of caring per se is not recognised elsewhere within the social security system. The second implication, evident in the majority of European countries, is the selective valorisation of care by recognising childcare but not recognising care for long-term sick or elderly dependants. The discussion in this chapter will return to this point.

The second kind of variation, in terms of the nature and the generosity of care credit provision is more widespread across Europe. In certain countries credits for childcare are provided for parts or for the whole of the periods that maternity and/or parental benefits are received (for example Spain, Hungary and Poland). Other countries exhibit greater generosity by extending the covered period beyond such leave, for instance Austria and Sweden provide (up to) 4 years of contributions to carers for every child, while France and Luxembourg provide 2 years for every child. Finally, in some countries the provision of care credits contributes to pronatalist policies, as the number of contribution years per child increases with the number of children (for example Austria and Greece). For the countries that provide care credits based on the period for which parental/maternity benefits can be received, this kind of variation also reflects the different value attached to different types of care provided, as leave to care for dependants other than children is always shorter. The third kind of variation specifically to do with childcare relates to policy assumptions about the age at which a child is assumed to require less intense care and supervision, the point at which a child's carer is presumed available and able to enter or re-enter the labour market. For example, Latvia provides credits for the period up to a child is 8 years old, Estonia until the child is 10 years old, Ireland and Cyprus until the child is 12 years old, while Switzerland takes into account the period of care up until a child is 16 years old.

A different kind of variation, which is equally important but less readily observable from the table below, relates to the policy intention behind the introduction of care credits, which -as with any policy measure, is difficult to disentangle from the final policy outcome. For instance, the German welfare state that pioneered the concept of care credits, was said to have introduced credits in order to recognise women's contribution to the provision of care for dependants (Hohnerlein, 2000). But there can be several intentions behind the introduction of care credits, relating to the different elements they are comprised of, such as the temporal value of the credit or the extent to which it is explicitly targeted at female carers, which can encourage a more equal division of paid/ unpaid labour, facilitate the re-entrance or entrance of the carer in the labour market, facilitate the individual accumulation of pension contributions, encourage women to have more children and/or contribute to the amelioration of poverty in old age. We would expect, for example, that a carer is under greater pressure to enter the labour market in order to make up for years 'lost' to care in terms of pension contributions where the temporal and monetary value of care credits is low. By contrast, where care credits are generous contributions towards a carer's pension record we would expect that the carer can exercise greater choice between continuing to provide care or (re-) joining the labour force to add to their individual or their household's income.

Although these variations can tell us a great deal about the differences between countries in terms of the provision of care credits and the kind of gender equality they promote, the real value and effect of care credits on a carer's pension contributions must be assessed in the context of the broader pension system in which the credits operate. In this respect categorisations of pension systems that go beyond the widely-used Beveridgean/ Bismarckian dichotomy are useful reference points. For example, Ginn and Arber have categorised the pension systems of Western Europe according to the extent to which they provide opportunities for women to build pension rights (Ginn and Arber, 1992), and along the lines of these groups of countries Leitner has stressed the importance of looking at women's particular social and economic roles when assessing pension systems from a gender perspective (Leitner, 2001). The 'basic security model', exemplified by Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, provides a citizen's pension that is not determined by a person's employment (or caring) record, and which is combined with state earnings-related and occupational pension protection to provide adequate income security in old age. In the 'income security model', exemplified by Continental and to a lesser extent by Southern European countries, earnings-related pension schemes provide the bulk of income security in old age, thereby disadvantaging those with weak ties to the labour market (Ginn and Arber, 1994). Here the financial importance of care credits is greater than in Scandinavian countries, because the link between pension contributions and the labour market is much closer. Finally, in the 'residual model', exemplified by the UK and Ireland, the minimum pension has to be supplemented by earnings-related and/or private pension provision in order to provide income security in old age, and it is therefore in this model that care credits probably matter the most for the pension income of carers.

Care credits in practice: one step forward and two steps back?

In principle, the provision of care credits towards pension contributions is a mechanism that compensates carers for the time they have spent outside the primary locus for accumulating pension entitlements. In this sense, they represent a step forward for gender equality in three distinct ways. Firstly, in so far as they recognise the existence of differentiated life courses for the purpose of pension accumulation, care credits are consistent with the application of substantive gender equality. This is a significant departure from gender equalisation efforts that often result in 'downward' equalisation for women's entitlements, a loss in other words of additional rights that women had in recognition of their differentiated contribution to society (Fredman, 1996).

Given the continuing differences between typical male and female life, care and work patterns, a substantive perspective on gender equality is more likely to be beneficial for women in pension accumulation terms.

Secondly, the idea of providing care credits towards pension records departs from the conventional link in European-level social policy between paid employment and the promotion of gender equality. This departure represents a forward step in that it is an important recognition that any policy strategy aimed at the further application of gender equality must also take men's and women's contribution in the private sphere into account. Considering the development to-date of gender equality strategies at the European level, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the greater incorporation of private-sphere activities in discussions of gender equality is a considerable change of direction, reflecting also the different ways that Member States choose to combine employment and family policies (see Kaufmann, 2002).

Thirdly, care credits also depart from the inherent link in traditional pension systems between pension accumulation and paid employment. The implications, and benefits, of this departure are particularly important for women in country contexts where the combination of work and care is more difficult, resulting in a higher care penalty in terms of pension accumulation. The value of care credits, both symbolically and in financial terms, is also higher in contexts where female labour in the informal labour market is more prevalent and also more likely to go unnoticed for the purposes of social security, for example in Southern European countries (Kilpelainen, 2004).

For these reasons, care credits undoubtedly represent a step forward for carers but also for individuals (male or female) who tend to follow less typical life courses that may not be rewarded through traditional pension system structures. The recognition of care as an activity that is worthy of valorisation within pension provision should also be regarded as a sign that social policy is more responsive to societal norms. In addition, and as long as women tend to perform the majority of (unpaid) caring within households, care credits represent a step forward particularly for women. Nevertheless, in terms of their practical implementation care credits present a number of challenges, and as such they also represent two backwards steps for three reasons, at least in the manner they are currently organised.

The first reason relates to the wide variation in the provision of care credits across European Member States as illustrated in Table 1. This variation reflects the lack of a uniform approach to the valorisation of care provision for the purpose of pension accumulation that creates inequalities between European Member States. Admittedly, the variation between different pension systems in the degree to which they 'mirror' and perpetuate gender inequalities in the labour market is difficult to eliminate, particularly given the strength of the principle of subsidiarity that protects nation-states' freedom in terms of domestic social policy reforms. Such variations in the degree to which redistributive and non-redistributive elements are combined in the entitlement structure can make a difference for women's pension accumulation prospects (Leitner, 2001). For example, the closer the link between earnings and the pension income, the more are women disadvantaged, because female employment records tend to be shorter, interrupted and in lower-paid jobs. Women are also more likely to be disadvantaged when occupational pension schemes place high thresholds of eligibility in terms of one's years of service, earnings or the level of their contributions (Ginn et al., 2001a). In addition, if greater homogeneity in the provision of care credits in Europe is deemed desirable, a question remains about the appropriate policy instrument to implement and monitor it, particularly as co-ordination efforts in fields of social policy across the Community are always subject to subsequent adjustment at the national level (Natali and de la Porte, 2004).

Secondly, as long as periods of time spent caring for dependants are valued to a lesser extent than periods of time spent working in the labour market, the provision of care credits remains an inadequate mechanism of compensation. As a result, and in their current form, care credits are an instrument that partly mitigates but also partly maintains different kinds of inequalities in modern pension systems. One kind of inequality refers to the type of contribution individuals make to society, distinguishing fundamentally between productive and reproductive contributions, but also different combinations of the two that allow the combination of work and family obligations by both men and women. If women continue to provide most of the care for dependants, then they will continue to be in a relatively worse-off position within pension systems.

The third reason why care credits could be considered to represent two steps backwards vis-à-vis the promotion of gender equality in pension provision relates to whether modern welfare states actually promote female emancipation by recognising gender differences or rather they perpetuate existing structures of gender inequalities and female subordination. In other words, do care credits serve, at least in part, to preserve women's and men's traditional roles in society, which carry specific advantages/ disadvantages within current pension entitlement structures? As Luckhaus and Ward point out this is a drawback only as long as women tend to use care credits more than men for the purpose of building pension contributions (Luckhaus and Ward, 1997). Where only female carers (and often only carers of children rather than of other dependants) are encouraged to make use of care credits, the net benefit of compensatory mechanisms for women's pension security remains unclear.

Conclusion

Care credits are increasingly part of pension reform packages across European countries, and as such, they represent the most important compensatory mechanism for people who devote a considerable part of their life caring for dependants, be it children, elderly or long-term sick or disabled persons. Since women tend to do the majority of caring across the Continent, the provision of care credits is also a policy tool promoting greater gender equality in the provision of social security. This chapter has argued that in theory care credits represent an application of a substantive kind of gender equality in that they recognise differentiated life courses for the purpose of pension accumulation. Therefore, in terms of promoting gender equality the provision of care credits is a step in the right direction. However, this chapter also pointed to a number of drawbacks in the way care credits are currently organised, such as the recognition of childcare over other types of care, which make for an application of the concept that raises further policy challenges.

The more profound reason why care credits represent two backward steps instead of one forward in the manner that they are currently applied across the Continent relates to the increasing demand for eldercare as a result of demographic change and population ageing (Pavolini and Ranci, 2008). The current emphasis of care credits on childcare over other types of care, combined with the lack of a European-wide, uniform strategy to valorise care provision per se suggest an underestimation of this demand at a critical time for the provision of long-term care. European policy-makers are drawing attention to the impact of population ageing on the prevalence of chronic diseases, disability and dependence among older people, the concomitant increase in demand on formal care as more women enter the labour market and the shift in the responsibility for providing care away from institutional care and towards home care (European Commission, 2008). Against the background of these developments, the further expansion of the concept of care credits could be at the centre of a strategy to address this demand effectively via a top-down Community initiative and the equal recognition of different types of care provided.

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Table 1: Credits for childcare and for family/eldercare in European countries

	Credits for childcare	Credits for family/eldercare
Austria	• Child raising periods (maximum of 4 years per child, 5 years for multiple birth) • Period receiving maternity benefit	None
Belgium	Child raising periods (2 years maximum)	None
Cyprus	• Child raising periods (maximum 156 weeks per child up to 12 years old to women entitled to pension after 01/01/1993) • Period receiving maternity and parental benefits	None
Czech Republic	Child raising periods (for child up to 4 years old)	Periods caring for a close relative who is incapacitated
Denmark	None	None
Estonia	Child raising periods (child up to 8 years old)	None
Finland	None	Periods caring for dependants
France	• Child raising periods (2 years per child – for mothers) • Period receiving maternity benefit and parental leave (within a limit of 3 years)	None
Germany	Child raising period (3 years for every child up to 10 years old)	Period caring for dependants
Greece	Child raising period for mothers of children born after 01/01/2003: 1 year for 1st child, 1 ½ years for 2nd child, 2 years for 3rd child and thereafter (maximum 4 ½ years)	None
Hungary	Period receiving the pregnancy-confinement benefit and child care fee	None
Ireland	Child raising period (full basic pension if up to 20 years caring for children under 12 years old)	Full basic pension if up to 20 years providing care to incapacitated persons of any age
Italy	Period receiving maternity benefit Additional optional buy-out of up to 6 months per child	Period caring for dependants (1 month per year maximum)
Latvia	Child raising period (child up to 8 years old)	None
Lithuania	Period receiving maternity benefit	None
Luxembourg	Child-raising period (2 years per child)	Periods caring for dependant
Malta	None	None
Poland	Period receiving parental leave	Periods caring for a dependent person
Portugal	Child raising period (2 years per child) Period receiving maternity benefit	None
Slovakia	• Child raising periods (children up to 6 years old or up to 7 years old if the child is long-term severely disabled) • Periods receiving maternity and parental benefits	Period receiving the benefit for care for a sick relative
Slovenia	None	None
Spain	First year of parental leave for child-rearing up to 3 years old.	None
Sweden	Child raising period (4 years for each child, longer	None

	for disabled child)	
The Netherlands	None	None
UK	• Child raising period (for children up to 16 years old) (towards basic pension and for carers with 20 years of contributions - 1978 Home Responsibilities Protection) • Periods receiving Carer's Allowance, Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay.	• Period caring for dependants (towards basic pension and for carers with 20 years of contributions - 1978 Home Responsibilities Protection) • Period receiving Carer's Allowance

Source: MISSOC Tables 2006

Note: Data for Romania and Bulgaria were not available.