



Newsletter 2019, No. 39

Newsletter of the Global Network: “Child Support Worldwide”
Dear network members and child support experts
all over the world,

European Platform for access to personal and family rights



FEMMES INFORMATIONS
JURIDIQUES INTERNATIONALES
AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES



Europe-wide survey

Since November 2017, the German Institute for Youth Human Services and Family Law (DIJuF) is participating in the EU-funded project “European Platform for Access to Personal and Family Rights (EPAPFR)” carried out under the auspices of the French project coordinator FIJI (Femmes Informations Juridiques Internationales) along with other partners from Italy, Belgium and Bulgaria (cf. *Newsletter No 37 from April 2018*).

The aim of the project is to make specialised information and contact data of the relevant agents in the field of cross-border family law disputes (government agencies, freelancers and counselling centres) available to practitioners and citizens. For this purpose, a practitioners’ survey is currently being conducted in order to analyse the obstacles to implementation of the European instruments regulating private international family law.

We would like to cordially invite you to participate in this Europe-wide survey.

Returning the completed questionnaire (or even selected parts thereof) will also give you the possibility to participate in a workshop scheduled for the first semester of 2019 and to engage in a personal exchange with colleagues from other EU member states and representatives from other professional groups. For further information, please visit www.dijuf.de/epapfr.html.

At the end of the project, the results of the survey and the workshops will be presented on the above-mentioned website.

The questionnaire drawn up by the project partners is available [here](#). For the part of the questionnaire regarding the European Maintenance Regulation (Regulation (EC) No. 4/2009), please click [here](#).



Child Poverty, Child Maintenance and Interactions with Social Assistance Benefits among Lone Parent Families

A group of academics composed of Mia Hakovirta, Christine Skinner, Heikki Hiilamo and Merita Jokela has recently carried out a comparative analysis of the interactions of child poverty and child maintenance with social assistance benefits among lone parent families (cf. Newsletter No 34 from November 2017). The study will be published in the Journal of Social Policy.



The results of this research are determined as follows:

In many developed countries, lone parent families face high rates of child poverty. Among those lone parents who do get child maintenance, there is a hidden problem. States may retain all, or a proportion, of the maintenance that is paid in order to offset other fiscal costs. Thus, the potential of child maintenance to alleviate poverty among lone parent families may not be fully realised, especially if the families are also receiving social assistance benefits.

This situation is unsatisfactory as underscored by the OECD in the following statement:

In the absence of a system of advance maintenance payments, at least some part of the payment by the non-resident parents should go directly to the child. Currently, in some countries if the resident parent receives income support, the payment collected effectively goes to the government to offset the cost of income support being paid to the family in question. This may create disincentives for the non-resident parent to meet his/her commitments. Therefore, some portion of child-support payments should always go to the child for which support is being paid.

The research team explored the effectiveness of child maintenance in reducing child poverty among lone parent families in receipt of social assistance in four countries – Australia, Finland, Germany and the UK. They argued that the effectiveness of child maintenance policies to reduce lone parent poverty is curtailed in some countries due to interaction effects, leaving lone parents no better off even if child maintenance is paid. This is in contradiction to the OECD recommendation above.

The findings show that child maintenance has almost no effect in reducing child poverty for the poorest lone parents on social assistance benefits in Germany and Finland. Even if child maintenance is paid, it does not reduce poverty because it is not disregarded when calculating benefit amounts. In Australia and the UK, child poverty is reduced, not just because of the pass-through mechanism but because of the disregard. This means that child maintenance is treated, in whole or in part, as a complement to the incomes of lone parent families in receipt of social assistance benefits helping to reduce their poverty.

We must be wary of making universal assumptions that child maintenance is a complement to income and that, just because it is paid, it can help reduce poverty. The analysis shows that this is unlikely to be the case.



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