

Finland as an Example of Nordic Child Maintenance Regime

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Child Maintenance

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Abstract

Child maintenance schemes differ substantially in terms of underlying philosophy, structures, rules and organization and in particular by outcomes. There is large variation across western welfare states on how parental obligations after separation or divorce have been carried out. This is reflected for example in the levels of single parent poverty. In the Nordic countries, the principle is that every child has a right to be adequately provided for and that child maintenance is the right of the child. Both parents are responsible for the child's maintenance in accordance with their abilities, regardless of custody and residence arrangements. Furthermore, supporting children is seen as a collective responsibility and this means that at least a portion of the maintenance is regularly ensured by the state if the non-resident parent does not pay maintenance. Guaranteed maintenance covers also those children without non-resident parents. We describe and discuss the policy goals and principles of the child maintenance system in Finland. We also analyze the latest policy arrangements, made to further ensure the possibilities of both parents to care and provide for their children after separation or divorce. The aim is to consider how child maintenance system addresses the problem with rising demand and changes in parental roles regarding caring and earning, and with more complex family structures. With the latest statistics we are able to evaluate the outcomes of the Finnish child maintenance scheme in terms of coverage and level of child maintenance payments. Finally, we discuss the Finnish systems vis-à-vis maintenance schemes in other Nordic countries.

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