

Breastfeeding is the most optimal way of feeding infants. Due to many health-related advantages of it, both for the mother and the baby, many countries, not only European, provides solutions supporting parents in decision to breastfeed their babies instead of formula feeding them. That way, this private practice gains public dimension. However, even in those countries, where public policies supporting breastfeeding are most developed, not all the infants can be feed with their mother's milk. Human milk banks - professional laboratories dedicated to the collection from donors, processing, testing and distribution among infants in need of human milk - are becoming more popular. Also practices such as informal milk-sharing and selling milk, often via social media, gains more popularity.

How the state and public institutions respond to such practices varies around the world and in European Union. Human milk in different countries is regulated as a food, as a medicine or as a substance of human origin (similar to blood or tissues) - and the way it is regulated implies e.g. legality of practices such as informal milk-sharing or selling, and the catalogue of persons entitled to obtain milk from human milk banks. The aim of this project is to analyze how this regulatory and public policies level influence the sphere of social practices. To do so, analyses of the documents related to the breastfeeding and human milk in 5 european countries with different institutional approach to human milk and in-depth interviews with experts and practitioners - among medical staff, human milk banks personnel, but also activists and persons engaged in supporting parents involved in different forms of human milk exchanges in those countries, will be conducted. This project asks questions of what social problems emerge, when different models are applied, and what social and cultural values underlie their implementation.

The project addresses the problem of institutionalization of practices regarding human milk exchanges in Europe, exploring the tension between private and public character of such and placing them in the wider context of medicalization and institutionalization of motherhood. Using the unique possibility to observe negotiations of new institutions in practice - as the project will be held during implementation of EU-level regulation regarding human milk - this project aims to explore the lines of argumentation that will emerge, strategies of stakeholders and people's reaction to the regulation adopted. To do so, legislative and political discourse analyses will be conducted, as well as interviews with experts, including representatives of EU's institutions.

By conducting analyses both on the national level and observation how different institutional and regulatory approaches influence the social practice sphere, how practical problems are connected to them and how practices of human milk exchanges are perceived by social actors in different systems, but also on the transnational level, by analyzing what model will prevail and how the process of its negotiation will take place, project aims to explore from sociological perspective how human milk is institutionalized and what practical social outcomes are related to that. Moreover, conducted analyses aim to deconstruct social and cultural values, that are connected to human milk in different European countries, and which will be recognized as common to the whole European Union.