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This paper compares the political processes and gendered outcomes of welfare state formation in Hungary and Poland. We find both differences and similarities in the extent to which family and maternity policies in the two countries encourage women's paid work, support women's care giving work in the home, guard women and their families against poverty, and differentiate among women based on ethnic/racial classifications and class status. We argue that while welfare states in Western Europe may be increasingly characterized by a retreat from maternalist policies, Hungarian and Polish welfare policies support distinct forms of maternalism. While maternalism is privatized in Poland, it is publicly supported and subsidized in Hungary. We attempt to explain the divergence between the two countries by pointing to differences in class-based and gender-based political mobilization around family benefits as well as the timing of welfare reforms. Despite differences in the substance of the policies, however, we find that both regimes limit women's labor market opportunities.