



2014 - TWENTIETH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF THE FAMILY

# **Confronting family poverty and social exclusion Ensuring work-family balance Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity In Europe**

**European Expert Group Meeting  
Convened as part of preparations for the  
Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2014)  
In cooperation with the Focal Point on the Family (United Nations DESA)**

Brussels

6-8 June 2012

The International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) is a non-governmental, independent, and non-profit federation, founded in 1978. Its activities consist of family enrichment courses organized in 65 countries of the five continents, with a participative methodology based in the case study method. IFFD collaborates in local, national and international institutions to promote and protect family values. It holds general consultative status with the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations.

The International Institute for Family Research - The Family Watch is a think tank committed to researching the family and finding solutions to the problems it faces. The Institute uses interdisciplinary research to analyze the social context families find themselves in today. Findings are presented in the form of reports, proposals and initiatives that aim to deepen society's knowledge of the family and encourage its fair treatment based on the functions it performs in society. The organization was founded in 2007 under the inspiration of the IFFD.

The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD) was established by the Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development in 2006. Its mandate is based upon the affirmations set forth in the Doha Declaration on the Family. In 2012, it adopted a new strategic direction that will focus its work on the family in the Arab World, while maintaining an international outlook. The Institute has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations.

*"The momentous demographic, social and economic changes occurring around the world that affect families notwithstanding, the family remains the basic societal unit of reproduction, consumption, asset-building and –in many parts of the world– production. Families bear the primary responsibility for the development, education and socialization of children. They provide material and non-material care and support to their members and are the backbone of intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion. The achievement of development goals depends, to a significant extent, on how families are empowered to fulfil their numerous functions. Accordingly, family-oriented policies have a unique role to play in helping families to fulfil their functions and benefit society at large." (Report of the Secretary-General on the 'Preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014', A/68/61-E/2013/3, 28 November 2012).*

*In response to this and other relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, the International Federation for Family Development and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, together with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, organized several events in Brussels last May hosted by the EU Committee of the Regions and convened as part of preparations for the Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, coordinated by the International Institute for Family Research - The Family Watch.*

*A Raise Awareness Meeting was held on the 5th June, with the participation of speakers from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the OECD, among others.*

*Then, a European Expert Group Meeting took place during the following three days, in which 26 experts and observers from 15 countries discussed about family-oriented policies and strategies aiming mainly at the topics suggested for this Anniversary and learned about different good practices from different locations in Europe.*

*This publication contains the main outcomes of it. All the information is also available online at [www.family2014.org](http://www.family2014.org).*





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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Expert Group Meeting on 'Confronting family poverty and social exclusion, ensuring work-family balance and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity in Europe', took place in Brussels from 6 to 9 of June, 2012. It was organized as part of the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014. In response to the United Nations General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development and the International Federation for Family Development, in cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, have organized the Expert Group Meeting in Brussels hosted by the EU Committee of the Regions. A Raise Awareness Meeting was held one day before, on the 5th June, with the participation of speakers from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the OECD, among others.

The Expert Meeting was convened to address family-oriented policies and practices in the areas of poverty and social exclusion, work-family balance and intergenerational relations in Europe. The meeting gathered 26 experts and observers from 15 European countries to discuss family-oriented policies and strategies and to share information on family-oriented good practices in Europe.

At the outset of the meeting, the experts noted that the European Union has no specific competence on family policy. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Member States to formulate policies in support of families. Such policies should incorporate concepts such as family mainstreaming and family empowerment and address family units directly rather than individuals. Moreover, the number one priority in Europe: promotion of sustainable growth cannot be set aside from investing in families. In 2003 the European Parliament encouraged member States to analyze the impact of their policies on families (understood as family mainstreaming), while at the same time calling on them to separate gender mainstreaming and family mainstreaming.

Family policies are difficult to define as they cross many other policies such as gender equality, childcare as well as youth and ageing policies, etc. OECD evaluates the commitment of Governments to family policies using the criterion of the public spending on family benefits as a percentage of GDP. Family benefits considered here include child-related cash transfers to families with children; public spending on services for families with children and financial support through taxation.

Europe's families are changing with declining birth rates, lower marriage rates and union commitments, rising divorce rates and the increasing number of single-headed households. With lower fertility and longer life expectancy, Europe is rapidly ageing. To respond to these trends family policy in Europe aims to (1) help people have the number of children they desire; (2) face the decreasing number of people in the labour market and ageing population. The demographic challenges in Europe have been addressed in the

context of a competitive social market economy aiming at high level of social protection for its citizens, high employment and intergenerational solidarity.

## **A. FAMILY POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Equality is a fundamental right within the EU and other European countries. However, deep-rooted disadvantages faced by certain groups of society, coupled with ingrained attitudes and beliefs of others, means that legislation alone is unlikely to achieve the goal of creating a society which genuinely offers equal opportunities to all and is totally free from discrimination. While severe poverty affects certain groups within the EU, most notably the Roma in some Member States, the more widespread form of poverty within the EU tends to be relative poverty, both in monetary and non-monetary terms.

Social exclusion is closely related to poverty as it translates into not being able to enjoy levels of participation and well-being that most of society takes for granted. It is a complex, multi-dimensional, multi-layered and dynamic concept defined as a process whereby certain individuals live on the margins of society and are prevented from participating fully in the life of a society by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination.

In this context, it is important to note that income poverty measures do not capture all poverty dimensions. Families may have minimal income but still be excluded from the mainstream of society, thus poverty measures should include social exclusion indicators as well. Similarly, more research is needed on intra-household spending habits, the knowledge of which may moderate the definition of poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, there are many families that live below the poverty line that are not included in many of the cross national statistics, such as indigenous and Roma families.

Experts emphasized that Governments should not assume that we have reached acceptable levels of income poverty in Europe, at the same time acknowledging that anti-poverty or income poverty measures have different limits and it is not always easy to monitor them. Although full benefit coverage of the eligible population may not be possible, the level of spending on family benefits can be measured and compared across European countries. Such comparisons can shed light on the effectiveness of family-oriented policies and help to improve them.

Experts agreed that child relative poverty rates have been increasing in Europe despite Governments' overall efforts to reduce poverty. Child poverty is a good indicator of family poverty and can be measured as child-market poverty rate (before taxes and transfers) and child-disposable poverty rate (after taxes and transfers).

Demographic and social changes in Europe have resulted in higher numbers of heterogeneous families, smaller families, higher family instability and increase in single-parent

households. Research indicates that family change is an uneven occurrence across different socio-economic groups. In particular, studies from several European countries indicate that family instability and single parenthood have increased the fastest among women with the lowest level of education. In addition, many studies have increasingly stressed the importance of good economic prospects as a prerequisite for stable family life in modern societies and the lack of them partly explains the trends noted above.

Family instability affects children's living conditions, their development and future life chances. Several research studies have shown that separation and divorce have had negative impact on children. Overall, children of divorced or separated parents experience higher economic difficulties and perform worse in terms of educational achievement than children in intact families. In general, direct causality, however, is difficult to establish, as many factors, such as lower income, have to be taken into account.

Policy interventions have a potential to lessen negative effects of family change on children. Among them, income redistribution policies and policies supporting mothers' employment affect poverty levels and children's outcomes. Such policies have a major role in leveling the playing field between children in different family types.

Challenges faced by families are not limited to income poverty and material deficiencies. Emotional deficiencies, such as lack of relationship and interpersonal skills have a negative impact on family life as well. Some experts noted that divorce and single-parenthood often leading to lower standards of living and higher poverty risk, could be avoided if investments in 'life skills' were made. Programmes supporting intra-family relations help prevent family violence or substance abuse often leading to family breakups. Interpersonal skills help prevent and solve family conflicts and contribute to social cohesion. Quality human relationships are key factors determining the quality of family life. Skills can grow through knowledge and practical experiences. Investment in family skills development is then a key issue to better functioning, more resilient families.

The good practice 'Veilig Thuis' from the Municipality of Rotterdam illustrates the efforts to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on families, such as higher unemployment, poverty and stress sometimes resulting in more, family violence and substance abuse. Recent research in the Netherlands (University of Utrecht, 2010) showed that 9 per cent of Dutch households experience severe violence within the family. Family violence is the physical and/or psychological abuse committed by a family member, a relative or a care taker in the household. There are many types of violence within families, also referred as domestic violence, like partner, child and elder abuse, honour related violence, trafficking of young girls and boys, female mutilation and parents' abuse. The main aim of the Rotterdam approach and its action program 'Veilig Thuis' is to stop and prevent family violence by using a systemic approach, based on prevention, reporting, analysis & diagnosis, risk taxation & qualification, case management & care provision and follow up.

Other good practices for family poverty reduction were presented by civil society organizations. 'Barnablick' ("through the eyes of the child"), a project from the Stockholm City Mission, tries to incorporate children's perspective on poverty and offers child and family-oriented poverty reduction programmes. Another project presented was 'Welfare to work', from Dublin, which provides an integrated response to the aspirations of lone parents who want to take steps to ensure their economic independence. The model is based on international best practice for supporting groups most displaced from the labour market and incorporates proactive community-based recruitment, thorough needs-assessment and mentoring. 'Parler Bambin', from the Centre Communal d'Action Sociale de la Ville de Grenoble in France, focuses on early child development classes to improve learning and to reduce the link between family's low social background and the learning difficulties of children who have limited language skills.

## **B. ENSURING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE**

Excessive workload, often due to a combination of professional and family obligations leads to a substantial reduction in life satisfaction. According to the Second European Quality of Life Survey, women who work outside home and experience work-family conflict tend to be less satisfied with life than women who work solely at home. It is unemployment; however, that has the most negative impact on life satisfaction: even those who report a high level of work-family conflict are far more satisfied with life than those unemployed.

Overall, Europeans are more dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with their family than with the amount of time spent at work, family life being more adapted to employment requirements than work arrangements are to family life. There are substantial differences between countries as far as the reasons for unsatisfactory work-family balance are concerned. In the Nordic countries, as well as in the Benelux countries and France, failure to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance is due to a shortage of time parents are able to devote to family activities. In Central and Eastern European countries and the candidate countries, work-family balance is above all negatively affected by fatigue due to poor working conditions in addition to long working hours. Balancing work and family seems to be easier in German and English speaking countries: this may be explained by a lower proportion of dual-earner couples and working single mothers in those countries.

The lack of work-family balance is assumed to have a negative impact on demographic trends in Europe, leading to the postponement of family formation and overall lower fertility rates. Research indicates, however, that although the average desired number of children in Europe is more than 2.0, fertility rates remain lower. This so called 'fertility gap' is then considered to indicate the need for policy action. Notably, although fertility

can be postponed and total fertility rates do fluctuate due to that postponement, the overall fertility rates in most European countries are below the replacement levels.

In some countries fertility declines led to policies alleviating barriers to family formation and childbearing. Most prenatal policies aiming strictly at fertility increases, such as allowances upon the birth of the child, have not been very effective. Instead, policies in Europe may need to focus on helping individuals not to postpone family formation.

The reasons for postponement vary from employment insecurity, lack of housing or personal life choices. The work-family dilemma is by and large a problem of time-use as young adults must take decisions about a sequence of important life events such as completion of education, starting work, leaving parental home and starting their own family. Different social policies aim to alleviate the work-family conflict along these events by helping individuals not to postpone family formation to later age. These so called 'tempo' policies aim to achieve compatibility among events in terms of time use, in order for individuals to have more choices to parallel courses in life. For instance, kindergartens and crèches are offered in universities and in large-scale working enterprises to facilitate education or work with childrearing. Tempo policies have a potential to significantly alleviate the work-family dilemma.

Experts noted that the rising female labour force participation in Europe has been negatively correlated with fertility until 0-15 years ago but recently it has turned non-negative if not positive. Research indicates that this change is linked to the rise in services and support provided to families and other social policies which helped alleviate the conflict in time use of the family and for work. One reason for this positive correlation is the high level of part-time employment available to women who find it easier to care for children with fewer working hours. In 2007, 31.2 per cent of women in the EU 27 were working part time. Investments in quality and affordable childcare also contribute to higher fertility. Notably, the biggest birth rates in Europe are in Ireland, France, Norway, UK and Sweden where overall public spending on family benefits is higher.

Governments in Europe have supported equitable division of labour at work and in the household with the legal systems mostly facilitating gender mainstreaming. Gender equity, however, is difficult to achieve where women take up the bulk of household responsibilities. A conflict between the legal system and traditional social norms on family care are more visible in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, which may explain low fertility there.

Civil society representatives emphasized that both NGOs' and the private sector initiatives have an impact on work-family balance. Más Familia Foundation from Spain is an independent, nonprofit and charitable organization seeking innovative and highly professional solutions for the protection and support of families, especially those with dependent members (children, older persons, those with disabilities, etc.). Its Family Responsible Certificate for Corporations or Municipalities helps identify companies with

best work-family balance practices. Similarly, the project 'Audit', from the Regional Observatory for Social Policies in the Veneto Region (Italy) promotes family friendly working environment in enterprises by awarding 'Audit Family & Work' certificates.

Turning to parental leave entitlement, well established policies promoting work-family balance in Europe include: maternity leave, intended to protect the health of the mother and new born child.; paternity leave, compulsory only in a few countries, aiming at enabling the father to spend time with his newborn child; and parental leave which is available equally to mothers and fathers, either as a non-transferable individual right (both parents have an entitlement to an equal amount of leave) or as an individual right that can be transferred to the other parent. It is understood to be a care measure, intended to give parents the opportunity to spend time caring for a young child. It is taken usually after the end of the maternity leave. Sometimes, parents can choose to take all or part of their parental leave on a part-time basis. There are other measures such as leave to care for children.

In the context of leave entitlements, experts noted that there was still insufficient support for working father's with caring responsibilities. Examples of this support are parental leave and flexible working provisions targeted at fathers, especially in the Nordic countries which have been global pioneers in work-family policy innovation.

There are also other entitlements such as childcare leave, and leave entitlement granted for a variety of reasons. The Belgian Time Credit System initially designed to tackle raising unemployment levels, rapidly developed over the years into a valuable tool for work-family balance. Under this career break system employees can reduce their working time in order to cope with their multiple work and family obligations. The leave can be taken for a variety of reasons and has been found to help balance family and personal life. It got an increasing take up rate and was especially successful among young mothers as it was far ahead of the EU Directive on Parental Leave.

### **C. ADVANCING SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

The European population is rapidly ageing. A steady increase in life expectancy across Europe during the last century led to increased longevity, while in more recent decades – from the 1970s onwards– Europe has experienced falling fertility rates. These two developments impact upon demographic ageing, a process that has become established in the EU in the last 30 or 40 years and which is expected to become further entrenched during the next half century, as the absolute number and the relative importance of the population of older persons continues to grow. These demographic changes will lead to significant challenges for families and individuals. For example, it could become commonplace for people to move into retirement while still having one or both of their parents alive.



There are many challenges arising from population ageing, such as pressure on public budgets and fiscal systems; strains on pension and social security systems; adjusting the economy and in particular workplaces to an ageing labor force; possible labor market shortages as the number of working age persons decreases; the likely need for increased numbers of trained healthcare professionals; higher demand for healthcare services and long-term (institutionalized) care; and potential conflict between generations over the distribution of resources.

Positive parenting has been recognized as a cornerstone of children education worldwide and as a way to potentially reduce public costs related to poor social integration and intergenerational relations. The case method used by IFFD helps parents improve their childrearing skills through the use of practical examples. The case method was first implemented at Harvard Law School. Nowadays the case method is adopted by many prestigious Business Schools. A case is a narrative account of a situation, problem or decision usually derived from actual experience and in which people promote active learning, team-based activities and the ability to deal with real-life problems. Moreover, all universities have available data on assurance of learning validated by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the method has been used beyond business and law, in, environments such as communication or engineering.

Investing in good parenting contributes to better outcomes in children. Supporting parenting programmes is an example of paying now and paying less principle since it helps preventing conflicts that would imply higher costs later. IFFD courses, carried out in 65 countries, are designed to suit the different stages of child development. A good practice from Lithuania was showcased to illustrate the fact that all courses are structured on the participant-based case study method and use cases involving real situations. Cases are first analyzed by small teams formed by few couples, and then discussed in larger groups at general sessions moderated by experts in family development. The courses differ depending on children's age.

One of the most important changes for children today is rapidly evolving family structures. Although it is not a new development, its consequences can be seen more clearly now. In the EU, divorce rates rose by 250 per cent in forty years. Moreover, the number of cohabitating couples with children is also increasing in all OECD countries.

Concerning the consequences of divorce for children's well-being, for some researchers such as Simons (1996), divorces and separations were seen as healthy for adults and children because when troubled marriages ended, children escaped the burden of being raised in an atmosphere of parental conflict. Since, 1980s, however, research on the effects of parental divorce on children's well-being has grown demonstrating that although evidence shows that in the long term negative effect of divorce disappear, there are negative adult outcomes such as lower educational attainment, poor adult psychological well-being as well as intergenerational transmission of divorce. However, the causality of the divorce effect is more difficult and sometimes even impossible to establish. Overall,

however, family breakdown has negative impacts not only on children but intergenerational relations within families as well.

Experts noted that more research is needed to determine the long-term impact of parental divorce on children (e.g. low-conflict families vs. high-conflict families). In light of existing research indicating that parental conflict is often linked to poor parent-child relationship and negatively impacts children's long-term well-being, new policies and programmes aiming at preventing these problems should be developed. Such new policies should be based on good knowledge about various challenges facing European families. In general, programmes promoting parents' relationships quality tend to improve children's well-being and should have a wider use.

The good practice from the Hungarian Association of Large Families demonstrated that the legal system to support families is beneficial when it includes universal direct financial support, income tax exemptions, social and cultural services (education, healthcare, reduced rate transportation, childcare, nursing of ill and elderly people, etc.), supports and subsidies from local authorities in cash and in kind, as well as compulsory and optional fringe benefits from employers (extra vacation days, schooling aid, etc).

#### **D. OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The primary objective of the Meeting was to provide Member States and other stakeholders with expert opinion and recommendations regarding confronting family poverty and social exclusion; ensuring work-family balance and advancing social integration.

Experts dealing with various aspects of family policy were invited from a broad geographical distribution to participate in the meeting in their personal capacities. They were asked to provide a paper, participate in group discussions and give their expert opinion and policy recommendations on the best ways of integrating family perspective into overall policy making and developing family policies in the areas of poverty reduction, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity in Europe. The experts are also expected to provide specific recommendations and examples of good practices in the three areas mentioned above.

Among the outcomes, papers by experts focused on the proposed issues, explained their relevance, provided quantitative and qualitative evidence, analyzed the roles of social institutions, summarized conclusions and provided policy recommendations. In as much as possible, an emphasis was placed on policy actions at the local, national, regional and international levels. This final report of the expert group meeting as well as expert papers will be used as an input for the 2012 Report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (cfr. A/68/61–E/2013/3).

The report and experts' papers have been also posted on the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family website [www.family2014.org](http://www.family2014.org).

## **E. RESEARCH AND EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES**

Experts agreed that more research on families should be conducted in Europe. Although there are different family-focused policies and actions, the family perspective in overall policy making is not fully developed in Europe. Mainstreaming of family perspective in overall policy making is needed to analyze and improve existing socio-economic policies and make them more family-friendly.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the experts discussed the importance of collecting and disseminating the information on good practices in family policy making in Europe. The good practice presented was that of the European Alliance for Families, a portal which is devoted to family policies in the European Union. It aims to encourage more family-friendly policies through the exchanges of ideas and experience in various EU Member States. The Alliance was founded in 2007 by the Council of Europe with a view to improving the living conditions of Europeans who have children or would like to start a family. It also focuses on child poverty and on equal opportunities for women in the workplace. The Alliance website serves as a medium for exchanging good practice, ideas and experiences among the different EU Member States.<sup>1</sup>

## **F. CONCLUSIONS**

Experts agreed on some general recommendations that could improve the situation of families in Europe. They suggested different recommendations for each of the three main topics of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Regarding family poverty and social exclusion, in Europe there is a need for developing family friendly policies aimed at providing sustainable and affordable quality living conditions for families as well as ending child poverty and promoting family-friendly taxation policies. Avoiding economic and income traps is a good way to be more efficient in policy-making so large and low-income families can receive the necessary support.

Regarding work-family balance it is very useful to first recognize the high value of work-family balance in the economy and society. Such recognition should lead to the development of more flexible parental leave entitlements throughout the life course of the family and in periods of transition as well as family-care leave arrangements and part-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/families/index.cfm?langId=en&id=10>

time working arrangements not just for couples but for lone parents as well. The provision of affordable quality childcare would also promote work life balance.

Programmes strengthening social integration and intergenerational solidarity, like those based on the case method, should focus on investing in parenting and family communications as a good way to prevent conflicts and to reduce public costs. More investments should also be made in programmes that support the reintegration of parents into work and professional life after periods of parental and family leave as well as for older people in order to reduce intergenerational transfer of poverty.

Finally, the experts recommended wider exchange of good practices in family policies and programmes so that Governments, civil society and other stakeholders can learn from one another. Such exchange of good practices is currently under way through the European Alliance for Families which should be strengthened.

## **2. POVERTY ERADICATION: CONFRONTING FAMILY POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

### **CHILD POVERTY**

*Dominic Richardson*

The failure in developed countries over recent years to reduce income poverty has been elaborated many times over (Förster and Richardson, 2010, OECD, 2011). Despite innovations in spending and policies on families and children – and new efforts over recent decades to encourage more families into work – poverty rates have been creeping up.

This paper introduces good practices in anti-poverty family-focused policies and programmes in this context.

After addressing the general question ‘why should developed countries continue to concentrate on income poverty reduction?’, this paper looks at who spends what on family policies in OECD countries, and how income poverty in families and particularly sole parent families has evolved over recent years. It then goes on to look at three types of family policy in detail. First, overall tax and benefit packages and their poverty reduction effects are introduced; second, a focus on childcare policy is used to highlight its role in enabling families to work, and how in-kind benefits protect families from poverty by reducing private costs they otherwise might have to face; and finally, the role of child support policies for reducing income poverty in sole parent families is explored.

#### **A. WHY CONCENTRATE ON INCOME POVERTY REDUCTION?**

To begin with, it is worth asking – particularly in light of recent efforts to move the measurement of social progress from growth (GDP) and income (poverty) in to area of well-being – if poverty reduction should remain the priority for families in developed economies in the 21st century. What makes for a happy and productive family life? How important is measuring poverty today when we can measure outcomes like well-being, happiness, and stability? And perhaps more acutely, given the inability of many governments to reduce poverty over recent decades, have we reached a point where income poverty, as we see it today, is an acceptable level of income poverty in developed countries?

Partly a continued focus on poverty is acceptable because it is a prominent and agreed international measure of family living standards. It can be used to monitor how families fare now, and due to its comparability across countries over time, it is a powerful outcome measure for detailed policy evaluations of the success of government efforts to support families, which facilitates lesson-drawing between countries in terms of what works.

There is also a good deal of evidence on the links between a range of negative family outcomes and experiences of poverty. Evidence across developed countries generally agrees that children from poor households are more likely to grow up poor, experience unemployment, to have lower levels of education, and to experience a range of poor health outcomes and engage more often in many risk factors (see Box 1). Poverty has been linked to family breakdown, parental (particularly maternal) depression, social exclusion, and the take up of publically provided family services.

Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the limits of the income poverty measure. First, the relative poverty line used to measure income poverty in developed countries<sup>2</sup> can split families between 'non-poor' and 'poor' categories on the basis of a single dollar's difference. Second, poverty only increases the risks outlined above, it does not guarantee these experiences – there are more factors that need to be accounted for. Third, it is not fully known how non-poor families share/spend their money, intra-household spending will moderate any success associated with living in a non-poor household. Fourth, if we aspire to lives of equality of opportunity (or outcomes in and from childhood), and healthy functioning families, interventions should focus on building capacities and resilience, rather than making up differences in income.

Moreover, there are many families that live in extreme poverty that are not included in many of the cross national statistics. Indigenous families or Roma families, homeless families, or families where the parents or children are institutionalized often do not make it into the household surveys. Often, these families are at the most acute risk of poverty. For instance, evidence would suggest that risk of poverty and deprivation in Roma families in Europe can be 4 to 6 times higher than that of the general population (Frazier and Marlier, 2011).

Have we reached a point where present levels of income poverty in developed countries are acceptable levels of income poverty? What might be an effective level of child poverty eradication; a rate below 5% measured at 50% or 60% of the median household income?<sup>3</sup> Five percent still means one in 20 children living in poverty; the most recent figures show that at the moment child poverty on this measure stands at nearer 1-in-5 in Europe (60% threshold), and on the basis of the OECD measure (50%) the number is nearer 1-in-8 children in poverty.

Although it is inappropriate to suggest any number of families or children should live in poverty, in light of the limitations of the measure, truly eradicating poverty will not mean much if all it achieves is to leave families living in the same conditions, but just above an

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<sup>2</sup> 50 or 60 percent of the median equivalised household income.

<sup>3</sup> The UK government, in the late 1990's, stated a goal to eradicate child poverty by 2020. A European Commission report states that by 'eradicate' the UK government said this could be interpreted as being at a level amongst the lowest in Europe (see EC, 2008: 120). In 2010 the country with the lowest income poverty rate for households with dependent children, as reported by EUROSTAT, was Norway at 9.2%.

arbitrary line of acceptable income standards (for thoughts on the limitations of child income poverty measures see Richardson & Bradshaw, 2012). On the other hand, many would acknowledge that because we know that income poverty measured in this way links to so many other poor outcomes in developed economies, a rate of 1-in-5 to 1-in-8 children living in poverty is unacceptably high.

**NEW EVIDENCE ON FAMILY AFFLUENCE AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH  
AND BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

HBSC's 2012 report, looking at results from the 2009/10 survey wave, reports both descriptive statistics of child well-being indicators (such as subjective well-being, children liking school, bullying and obesity) for 11, 13 and 15 year olds, and the statically significant differences across these measures in terms of gender and family wealth at the country level (using the HBSC family affluence scale).

A quick summary of the social gradient results makes for pretty grim reading. There are only a handful of cases where poorer children are not reporting significantly worse outcomes (both boys and girls) than richer children across all countries in the study (there are 41 countries in total, 28 of which are OECD countries). Bucking this miserable trend (although results are mixed at best) are indicators of: whether children like school, whether children are feeling pressured at school, whether children are undertaking weight loss behavior, whether children are watching more than 2 hours of TV per day (in poorer European countries richer kids are more likely to do this, in Germany the US and France poorer kids watch more TV), and risk behaviors of drunkenness and cannabis use.

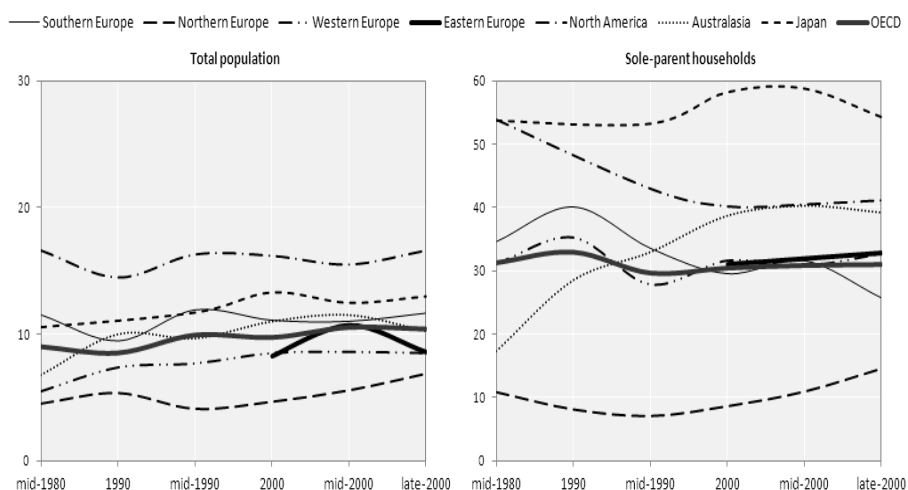
Interesting gender results are shown for fighting, bullying others and early sexual activity. The cross-country picture for these indicators shows that in most countries either rich boys or poor girls are significantly more likely to undertake these activities. Moreover, and more generally, girls see a much quicker drop-off in terms of positive behaviours and outcomes across a range of indicators, including subjective life satisfaction and subjective health complaints, than boys between the age cohorts across the majority of countries.

For more information see: Currie et al (2012).

Figure 1 outlines the trends in income poverty rates in all families with children (left-hand chart) and in sole parent families. With the exception of Eastern Europe, and in the OECD as a whole, poverty rates among all families have been creeping up. The picture is mixed

for sole parent families, with rates in Australasia and Northern Europe rising from low levels over the period, and above average rates in North America and southern Europe showing falls. Note however, the scales on both graphs, around 1 in 3 sole parents in the OECD live in poverty (rates are around 30%), in all families the average is less than one in ten.

**FIGURE 1: TRENDS IN POVERTY RATES IN OECD REGIONS, MID-1980 TO LATE-2000**



Data refers to the unweighted average of all countries in the region for which data are available. The regions are defined as follows: Southern Europe includes Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain; Northern Europe includes Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden; Western Europe includes Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom; Eastern Europe includes the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Poland; Australasia includes Australia and New Zealand.

Source: OECD Income distribution and poverty database ([www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality)).

Income poverty remains a focus in 21st century developed economies because it remains a problem despite many efforts to reduce it, and will continue to be a focus even if a change in direction (in terms of policy goals) takes place. For one, income poverty in families reduces the efficiency of efforts put into services – such as education or health – to improve the living standards of families in developed economies. Moreover, building capacities and resilience takes time, and for many families the window of optimal opportunity may already have passed. For future families, there is time to reconsider the priorities, in the meantime reducing income poverty remains an important social goal, and a priority for many of today's families.



## B. WHAT POLICIES ARE AVAILABLE TO REDUCE FAMILY POVERTY?

At the national level, comparisons of spending on family specific policies in developed countries categorize policies into:

1. *Cash benefits* including: family allowances, designed to support families with the costs of raising children, which can vary on the age of their children, family size and the income of the family (universal or mean-tested). In some countries both universal family benefits and working family tax credits (or another work or income conditional benefit) are available. Parental leave benefits to support families to care for the youngest children, such as maternity, paternity and extended home care leave benefits (e.g. child raising allowances) are paid either on the basis of social contributions, or universally for a limited number of weeks or months most often at a percentage of earned income (sometimes to a cap). Parental leave benefits are sometimes conditional on health checks or meeting residency conditions. Birth grants in one-off or multiple payments (such as in France), can also be paid conditionally on the basis of health checks at or around the time of birth. And finally, other cash benefits can be paid – separately from those above – to help meet specific needs of groups such as sole parent families or families with disabled children (child support/maintenance, travel, food, accommodation costs, and household items). These benefits can be paid either periodically or in grant form.

2. *Family specific tax breaks or allowances* are relatively new forms of family intervention for reducing poverty, gaining in popularity since the early 2000's across OECD countries as welfare to work schemes became more popular. They are received by working families in the form of reductions in their income tax bill. Sometimes 'non-wastable' – that is the difference in cash is paid to working families whose tax bill is lower than amount of the tax break – and on rare occasions (as in Japan) paid at different levels depending on the age of the child dependent.

3. *Services delivered in kind* including: childcare and afterschool care services delivered free at the point of consumption or subsidized, with families becoming eligible on the basis of children's ages, family income or parental employment status. Other benefits in-kind can include home help or accommodation services, and services for transport, holidays or child protection purposes. These contribute to subsidizing family costs, combating forms of deprivation and exclusion, and in extreme cases housing or re-housing families or children at risk. Services, unlike most family cash benefits, have capacity considerations and time considerations (opening hours), and are often delivered at the local authority/municipality level.

Other benefits that form part of the anti-poverty package, but are not paid solely to families with children, include: pensions, housing benefits, social assistance benefits, unemployment allowances, and general earned income tax breaks or allowances. In a number

of cases these will include supplements for children, which can vary in amount by age or family size, and in some cases be subject to means-tests which can include or exclude income earned by children in the household. Active labour market policies, for parents and young people (sometimes targeted), could also be included here.

The inclusion of services such as education and health in the family package is also necessary to appropriately review the impact of anti-policies in the broadest public welfare context. In Japan for instance, the birth grant is sometimes needed to pay the hospital costs around birth because they are not provided for free. In the United Kingdom the compulsory school day ends at least an hour before it does in France, meaning out-of-school care is in greater demand (although in France Wednesday is not a school day, in the UK it is). Moreover when adding education and health concerns, spending on families with children increases dramatically, and mainly through the costs of providing for public education (on average across the OECD, 3 in every 5 dollars spent on the average child goes through the education system – see OECD, 2011, Chapter 2).

On occasion, due to limited budgets or places, full coverage of the eligible population of any benefit may not be possible. Under-optimal levels of coverage can restrict the anti-poverty effects of these benefits, and should be considered when assessing the overall value of the policy. Childcare services can be oversubscribed, for instance, or cash benefits may be paid out of block grants meaning that later applicants, though eligible, may not receive the benefit (although the latter is rarely seen in mainstream family benefits and not in those paid on the basis of social contributions). Moreover, due to error, stigma or lack of information, take-up rates of these benefits may be less than optimal also. Though not discussed in detail here, these issues reflect on the more complex considerations of what makes for a good anti-poverty policy beyond discussions of 'how much', 'how often', 'how' and 'for who'.

How these policies interact to reduce family poverty should also be considered. Families in receipt of certain benefits may be 'passported' directly to another benefit (in the UK receipt of housing benefit makes a family eligible for Council Tax Benefit). In some cases income from one benefit can be treated as applicable income in the means-test for another benefit. The results of these types of interactions can be compared using poverty estimates before and after tax, or by comparing the net incomes for different model family at different earnings levels (see section 5.1).

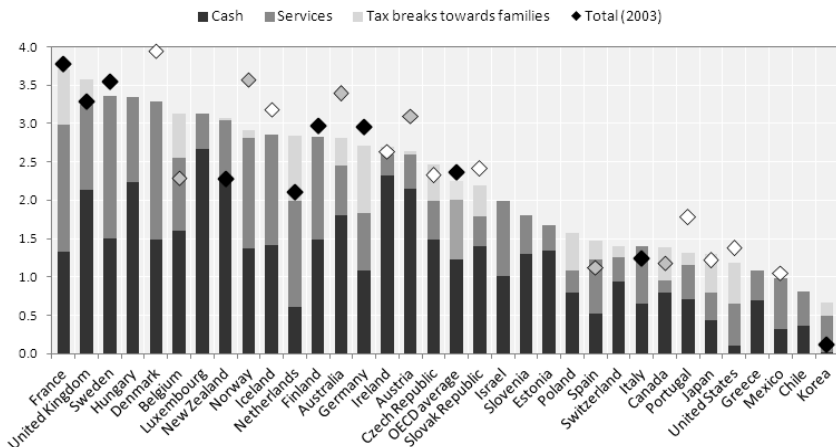
Figure 2 shows the spending on policies for families with children in OECD countries in 2003 and 2007 (the latter broken down by spending type). OECD countries spend around 2.3% of GDP on family policies on average,<sup>4</sup> around two thirds of which is delivered in cash benefits and tax breaks. There is not much consensus in terms of spending patterns in either the high or low spending range; for instance Sweden spends over 3% GDP on

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<sup>4</sup> To put this in context average education spending is around twice as high, and total social spending – including pensions, social assistance and so on – is around ten times as high (OECD, 2011).

family benefits, a similar amount to the UK and France, but concentrates more effort on in-kind benefits, as oppose to cash or tax break interventions. Low spenders, such as the US, Greece and Mexico spend around 1% of GDP on families, but do so in different ways.

**FIGURE 2. PUBLIC SPENDING ON FAMILY BENEFITS IN CASH, SERVICES AND TAX MEASURES, AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP, 2003\* AND 2007**



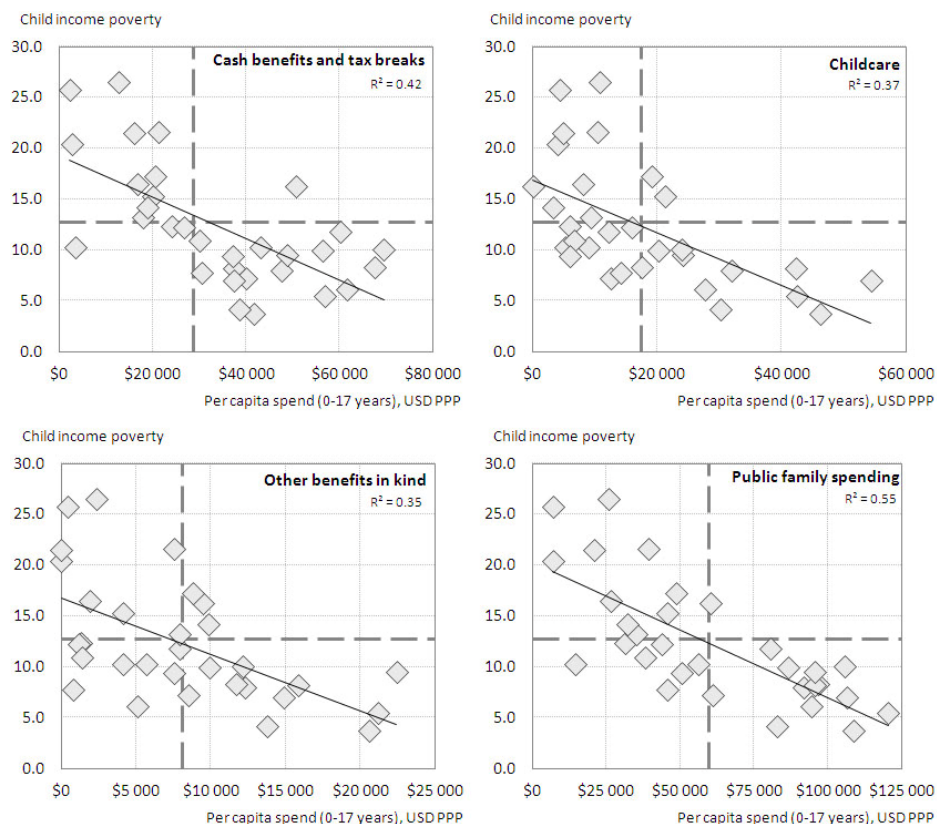
*Note: \* White diamonds = largest increase/smallest decrease in spending in Cash transfers from 2003 to 2007; Black diamonds = largest increase/smallest decrease in spending in Services from 2003 to 2007; Grey diamonds = largest increase/smallest decrease in spending in Tax breaks for families from 2003 to 2007. Cash benefits include family allowance, maternity and paternity leave and other cash benefits. Services include day-care / home-care help service and other benefits in kind. Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending in other social policy areas such as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here. Data on tax breaks towards families is not available for Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel and Slovenia. Coverage of spending on family services (including child-care) may be limited as such services are often provided, and/or co-financed, by local governments. This can make it difficult to get an accurate view of public support for families across, especially but not exclusively, in federal countries.*

*Source: OECD Social Expenditure Database ([www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/expenditure)).*

There is more of a consensus in terms of how spending has changed in recent years. The diamonds on the charts show spending rates in 2003, and are colour coded to show which policies have seen the biggest shifts in spending. Low spending countries on the right-hand side of the chart are experimenting with cash policies, the high spenders are ex-

perimenting with changes to services policies. Australia, Austria and Norway, have all substantially lowered family spending, with cuts to tax break policies leading the way. New Zealand, the Netherlands and Belgium, are now above average spenders, for the former two countries this expansion favoured service expansion, for the latter, tax breaks made the gains.

**FIGURE 3: ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SPENDING TYPES AND RISKS OF POVERTY DURING CHILDHOOD**



Source: OECD 2011.

Figure 3 shows how the raw level of investment on families matters for reducing poverty rates. Increasing levels of cash payments, childcare and benefits in-kind in dollar terms

per child, all associate with lower child income poverty rates in OECD countries. The differences in the association strengths can be explained, in part, by the nature of these transfers, and importantly how income poverty is calculated. For instance, cash benefits directly affect measureable income in all families, whereas families with low incomes before benefits cannot free-up disposable income by accessing services that they would otherwise not take-up because of lack of money (childcare, accommodation etc.). Because of this, the poverty reduction impact of these measures is not directly (but rather, broadly) comparable, and so cautious interpretation of the result is required.<sup>5</sup>

### **C. EXAMPLES OF POLICIES THAT REDUCE FAMILY POVERTY**

This section looks at the combined effect of tax and benefit policies on child poverty rates in OECD countries, before moving on to look at childcare policies and then child support policies. The latter sub-sections will provide a short description of good practice at the national level.

#### **TAXES AND BENEFITS IN OECD COUNTRIES**

There are two possible ways to explore the role of the entire family tax benefit and package on income poverty rates (the package does not include education, health or other services). First, by looking at the difference between market and disposable income poverty rates, and second, by looking at benefit package generosity across countries relative to poverty risk. This sub-section does both in turn, looking at poverty reduction overall, and generosity in family benefit packages by age.

Figure 4 reports child income poverty rates in OECD countries based on market (before taxes and transfers) and disposable (after taxes and transfers) income, in the mid to late 2000's. The figure compares family poverty (represented by rates of child poverty) with poverty rates in the general population on average across the OECD (the horizontal lines).

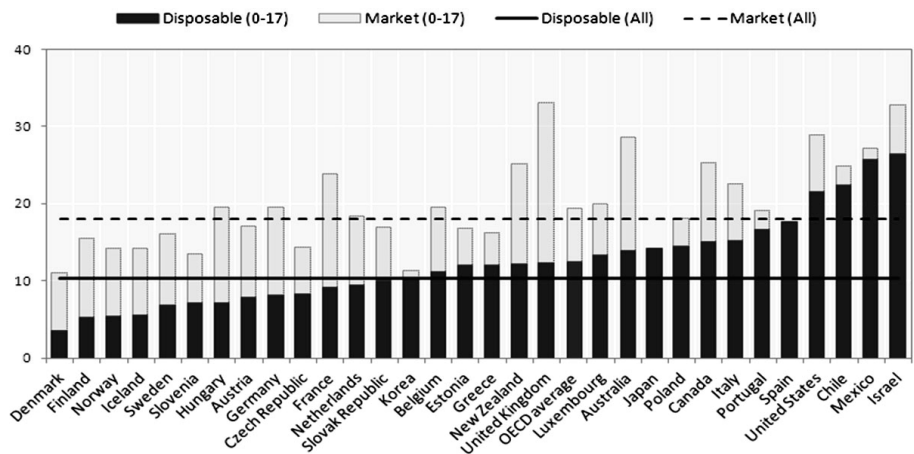
In the OECD on average, the market poverty rate for children is higher than that in the overall population (at 19.5% in comparison to 18%). The gap between the horizontal line and the OECD bar grows for the disposable income poverty rate (12.6% compared to

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<sup>5</sup> Add to this that these associations say nothing about causality, nor about the long-term impact of the service provision on poverty rates, moreover they do not indicate the extent to which these types of interventions can impact on other measures of living standards such as deprivation or subjective perceptions of poverty

10.4%), showing that overall benefits for families with children are less effective at reducing income poverty than benefits designed for the general population.<sup>6</sup>

FIGURE 4. CHILD POVERTY RATES BASED ON MARKET (BEFORE TAXES AND TRANSFERS) AND DISPOSABLE (AFTER TAXES AND TRANSFERS) INCOME, MID TO LATE 2000S



Note: The poverty rate is defined as the proportion of the given demographic that lives in households with equivalised disposable incomes that are less than 50% of the median equivalised disposable income of the entire population. The total height of the bar is based, reflects the difference and is not cumulative. In couple of cases (Japan and Spain), the market income poverty is lower than disposable income poverty, and this is likely to be due to redistribution occurring above the threshold of half of the median market income in that country.

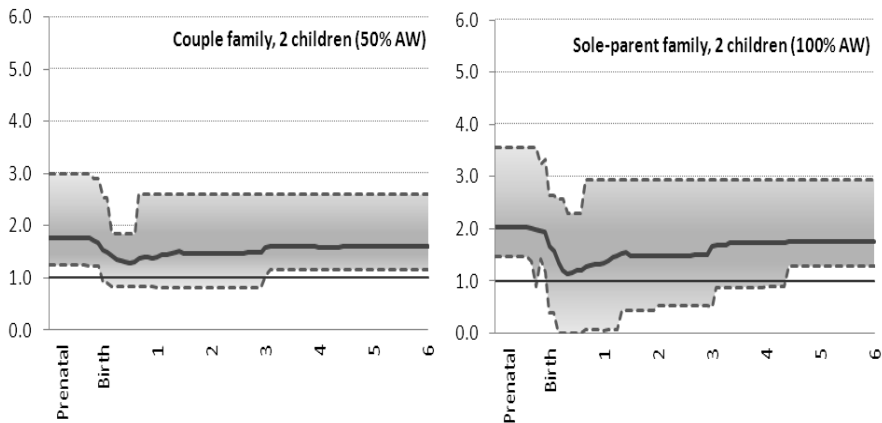
Source: OECD Income distribution and poverty database ([www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality)).

Going on to look specifically at changing support to families as children age – and in the early years of life when family’s labour market attachment is at its weakest – the upper, lower and average support of families in the OECD relative to the income poverty line will be reviewed. Figure 5 does just this, with the y-axis reporting net income relative to the income poverty rate (1 on the scale) and reporting the child’s age on the x-axis. The solid

<sup>6</sup> Strikingly, in 2009, Norway with the lowest dependent child poverty rate in 2010 was the only European country whose social security package reduced family poverty at a rate higher than poverty reduction the general population. There are likely to be lessons for competing public interests, balancing public spending, and intergenerational solidarity here.

line is the OECD average, and the dotted lines show the maximum and minimum net incomes in the OECD over the early life cycle (benefits and tax breaks plus the family's net earnings). In both households (couple families on the left, sole parents on the right) total gross income is equivalent to one average national wage.

**FIGURE 5: THE RANGE OF OECD FAMILY BENEFIT PACKAGES FOR AVERAGE EARNING FAMILY BY TYPE, AS CHILDREN AGE (DATA FOR 2008)**



*Source: Author's calculations of OECD Tax and Benefit Models for 2008.*

The results have important similarities that can elucidate some anti-poverty policy lessons. First, family income falls permanently following the birth of a child in both households because of additional costs (no OECD country fully makes up for that cost); second, there is a tendency for tax and benefit support to be at its lowest immediately following birth for up to a year; third, it can take up to three or four years for all families to live out of poverty if full leave entitlements are taken up (sole parents have longer leave entitlements in some countries); and fourth the position of the OECD average in relation to the limits, show that there is more consensus on 'floor' than on 'ceiling' limits in benefit payments.

In terms of differences, there are more lessons for anti-poverty policies. First, the range of incomes experienced by sole parents are higher than couple families because of the stability associated with an additional earner (this 'second earner stability' is not recreated in all systems). Second, net income for couples starts and finishes lower on average because across the OECD joint tax burdens for a couple on average wages are higher

than on a sole parent earner on average wages. And third, in some countries (including the United States) unpaid or low paid leave means average-earning sole parents with newborns can experience having no or low incomes during the leave period following the birth of a child.

A final comment at this stage, is that across the OECD, employment is (and so employment policies are likely to be) the best defense against poverty.<sup>7</sup> Across the OECD, jobless households have a poverty rate (at around 50%) almost three times higher than families with one earner (at around 17%). The risk of living in poverty in two earner households is lower still, at 4% (OECD, 2011: 41). The figures hide a wide range of outcomes: in Germany and Norway dual earner families have poverty rates of less than 1% (0.6% and 0.2% respectively); whereas as jobless couple families in Israel and the United States have poverty rates of over 80% (86% and 84% respectively).

As shown above, market income poverty can predispose some countries to high disposable income poverty rates (market income poverty is also growing in many countries; see OECD, 2008). Employment, particularly of second earners, has an important impact on market inequality which drives market income poverty rates. In particular, increasing the labour force participation of women has the general effect of reducing household earnings inequality (see OECD, 2102).<sup>8</sup> To reduce market poverty, bringing underrepresented groups, such as mothers, into the labour market will increase family earnings and household income, and reduce poverty risks. However, if labour market participation is limited to short-hours or precarious jobs without career possibilities, income poverty cannot be reduced sustainably (or income poverty just becomes in-work income poverty).

## **CHILDCARE POLICIES AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

One way of helping families take on work, and to be secure in that work, is childcare. Childcare is often considered a panacea for the multiple goals of family policy, reducing gendered burdens of home care responsibilities, supporting child development, and freeing up parents to work and reduce poverty (the following analysis will concentrate on the latter). In contrast, opposition to extensive childcare is raised using the opposite arguments, that an expectation of families to use childcare gets in the way of home-caring for

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<sup>7</sup> It is appropriate to mention here that periods of low income (if not defined as poverty) can contribute to the depreciation of household goods, and use of credit options and savings, that can increase future costs and future poverty risks. And that, although some 'non-poor' jobless households might not be officially defined as in poverty, their incomes will be low, and future income risks and insecurity are likely to be similar to those experienced by 'poor' families.

<sup>8</sup> A debate on how unpaid work is shared by gender, and childcare provision, is needed to fully understand the how realistic increasing women's labour market participation.



children, or that child development is hindered by early access to childcare or settings of low quality.

Concentrating on poverty reduction aspects of childcare (and building on the evidence of figure 3) a test for comparing the poverty-reduction effect of cash transfers with that of childcare services is introduced. Förster and Verbist (2011) show how both cash and childcare can substantially lower poverty risks, both together and separately, in households with children aged under 7. Comparisons of the distributive impact of these two policy instruments can be a guiding element when it comes to make choices of shifting parts of the budgets from one instrument to the other, for the purposes of combating family poverty.

Figure 6 presents the estimates for four EU countries – France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom – as well as the unweighted EU average. Cash family transfers and childcare services taken together reduce the poverty risk among families with under-7s by more than half on EU average: from around 17% to around 8%. On EU average, family cash transfers reduce poverty among young children to a somewhat larger extent than childcare services (by 37% versus 26%). The respective strength of poverty reduction effects of cash transfers versus childcare services differs across countries. Compared to cash transfers, the impact of childcare on poverty is weakest in the United Kingdom (childcare costs are high in the UK), whereas in France and Germany the poverty reducing affect of childcare is similar to cash benefit outcomes, and in Sweden childcare services have a stronger impact on poverty rates than cash benefits.

A concern for this type of evidence is that often lower income families are not using childcare as much as higher income groups (OECD, 2011: 144). One explanation for this trend – particularly in countries like the United Kingdom and Ireland – is the high cost of childcare. In Portugal, the reasons for this trend are different, and due to capacity constraints in subsidised care, whereas in Belgium and the Netherlands the difference is due to low-income migrant families caring for children at home (ibid).

Of the countries shown above, and in comparison the European average, the Swedish childcare system has a much stronger independent impact on poverty reduction than its cash benefits for families with children below the age of 7 (it is notable however that the combined effect of French cash and kind interventions has a similar final outcome).

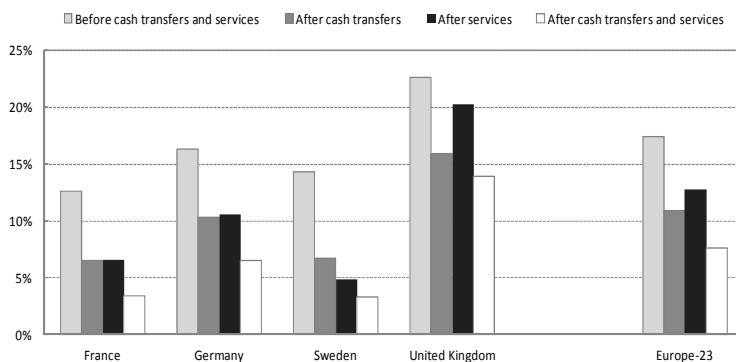
One reason for this is that access to childcare does not show any income-level bias – meaning poorer families in Sweden are equally covered by the service; and via increased earning or reduced private costs for this group, or both, increased disposable income reduces their overall poverty risks.

But how come Sweden manages to support the access of low income families to childcare when other countries have problems? For one, Sweden is the third highest spender on childcare in the OECD, investing more of its overall family purse on childcare (and other services) than high cash and tax spenders like the UK and France (as shown in Fig-

ure 1, spending similar amounts overall). Because of this investment, childcare fees in Sweden are amongst the lowest in the OECD (for both couples and sole parents – see OECD 2011, chapters 4 and 6) and the additional 'effective tax' burden on second earners and sole parents entering work is low. Moreover, capacity in the childcare system is high, and enrolment is above the OECD average (around 70% compared to 58% on average – OECD, 2011: 143).

**FIGURE 6: CASH TRANSFERS REDUCE POVERTY AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN TO A SLIGHTLY LARGER EXTENT THAN SERVICES – BUT NOT EVERYWHERE**

*Poverty rates among young children before and after accounting for cash transfers and early childhood and early education services*



*Note: Young children defined as children below age of 7. The poverty threshold is set at 50% of median equivalised disposable income of the entire population.*

*Source: Förster and Verbist (2011).*

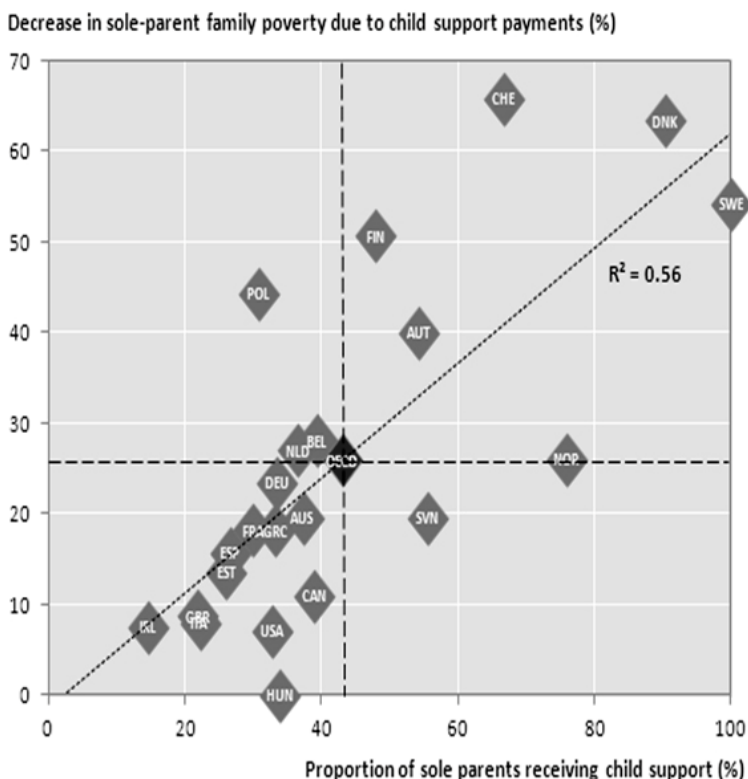
## CHILD SUPPORT POLICIES

In contrast to benefits packages, and supports to enable families to earn income, are benefits designed specifically to support at-risk families. Child support is one such policy, and is of particular interest for efforts to sustainably combat poverty due to increasing rates of family breakdown, and sole parenthood, in developed countries. Child support policies can take various forms, though generally they are either advanced public child support payments or publically-assisted private payments systems.

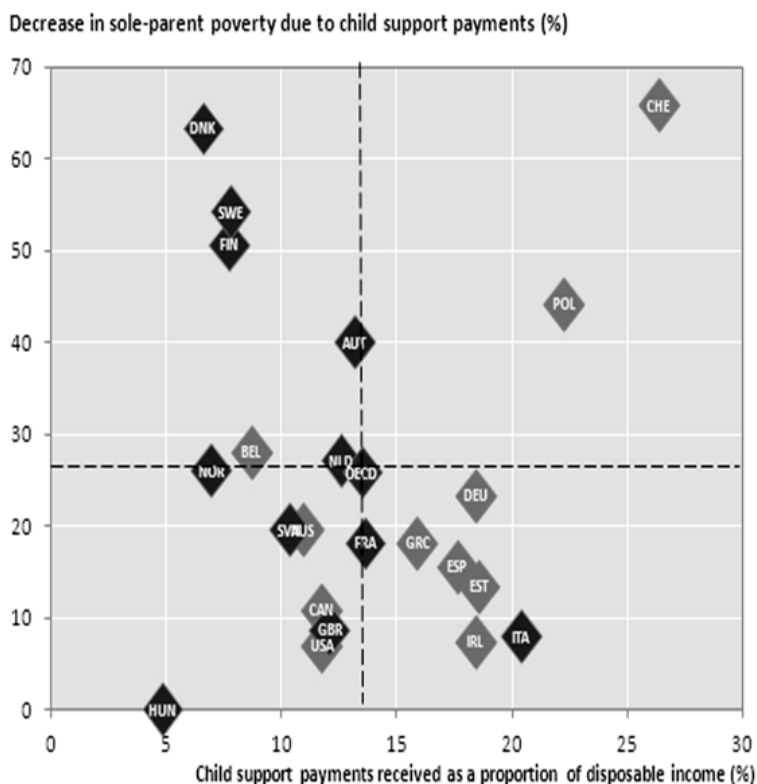
Figure 7 reviews the anti-poverty impact of child support policies using associations between the coverage of sole parents achieved by the policy and amounts received by sole parents, and reductions in sole parent poverty rates.<sup>9</sup>

The above chart of the figures shows a positive and strong association between the reduction in sole parent poverty rates achieved by the child support policy and the reciprocity rate in the sole parent population (the benefit coverage).

**FIGURE 7: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REDUCTION IN CHILD INCOME POVERTY IN SOLE-PARENT FAMILIES DUE TO CHILD SUPPORT COVERAGE AND THE AMOUNT OF CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS**



<sup>9</sup> Step-families may also be eligible for payments, as well as payers of child support. This fact, and the fact that the final impact of child support should be considered net of any child support outgoings from the family in receipt, means that the results presented here should be interpreted with caution.



Source: OECD's Secretariat estimates based on data from the Luxembourg Income Study.

The higher the coverage of sole parents (top right hand quadrant) the less uniform the relationship. Slovenia is an example of a country with above average coverage but below average poverty reduction (relative generosity of the benefit is low – see the right hand chart). Poland on the other hand, is an example of a country with below average coverage, but with a higher than average anti-poverty impact.

The below chart plots the fall in the sole-parent poverty rate after child support payments against the value of the average payment as a proportion of disposable income (the plots are colour coded, darker plots are countries with below average sole parent poverty rates to start with, and lighter plots have above average sole parent poverty rates). Trends in the data show that in most countries with low poverty and high benefit coverage, small amounts can make big differences – when coverage is low (Italy) low

payments make little difference. The Polish example shows that in countries with low coverage, a high level of child support (above 20% of disposable income) is needed. Countries with low coverage and spending below 20% do not see similar falls in their sole-parent poverty rates. The country with the second highest poverty reduction rate, with the second highest coverage, and the second lowest relative payment level is Denmark. The Danish system ensures regular payments are made to the parent with care responsibilities through publically provided advance payments that are later recouped from the non-resident parent obligated to provide financial help.

The reason for advancing the benefit is to ensure that all children receive child maintenance without regard to the behaviour or means of the non-resident parent. Resident parents can request the municipal social welfare office to make advance payments for children up to age 18 when the non-resident parent misses payment – the public office will then follow the non-resident parent to recoup the costs. Importantly, when the non-resident parent makes payments this is off-set against the maintenance payment, and not against income support payments (as in some other countries). This means applying for this support does not lead to reductions in other benefits, and associated increases in poverty risks.

Concerns with the Danish system include: the potential disincentives of the system for non-resident parents to meet their financial obligations; a flat rate which does not account for individual circumstances of children, and/or resident and non-resident parents (this may work in low poverty countries, this is unlikely to be as effective in high-poverty settings); and the lack of incentives for shared parenting (see OECD, 2011).

#### **D. WHERE NEXT FOR BROAD AND SUSTAINABLE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN TIMES OF CONTINUING ECONOMIC CRISIS?**

Given recent developments in policy and family outcomes, and the continuing fiscal consolidation, some of the ways in which the financial crisis may affect overall poverty reduction strategies in developed countries are worth reiterating:<sup>10</sup>

1. economic stability and reductions in public budgets deficits are being prioritized over family income policies in the short-term (this is seen via public salary cuts, and family benefit cuts/freezes);
2. austerity efforts are likely to affect certain family types over others, and increase poverty, and poverty risks, for different populations in the short- and long-term creating new future policy challenges (cuts to supports for mothers with newborns for instance);

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<sup>10</sup> See Richardson (2011) for a slightly longer list of considerations.

3. stimulus efforts, or limiting the impact of austerity measures, conditional on employment in times of low vacancies are unlikely sub-optimal. In some cases, real income poverty risks are likely to increase in jobless families compared to pre-crisis years;

4. employment markets remain insecure, effecting the ability working families – that may be subject to changes in work conditions (including place) – to make investments in their futures and children's futures

5. in many countries youth unemployment is particularly high. Youth is the period of career, skills and importantly family formation, and is likely to create future challenges for both family and anti-policy policies;

By no means an exclusive list of the relationship between poverty risk, poverty reduction and the state of the economy, the points above shed some light on the potential for the poverty challenge and the family policy challenge in future years.

## **E. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Family policy in developed countries is relatively slow moving with amendments at the margins of established policies being more common than overhauls of systems (this is true even during times of fiscal consolidation). For this reason, and because it remains important to maintain a broad appreciation of the changes needed in public family welfare systems – despite the focus taken in this paper – recommendations have not changed a great deal since last year's EGM meeting (see Richardson, 2011).

- Investment in family policies should start during the early childhood years and continue throughout childhood: such a strategy potentially has high social rates of return and helps avoiding more costly interventions later in life.
- Countries need to ensure that financial transfers, care supports and flexible working-time arrangements for families with young children fit together into a continuum of support without gaps in income or care replacements.
- Public spending on family benefits and in-kind services should be seen as investment for the future. If, for example as part of a fiscal consolidation package, cuts in family support budgets are necessary, it would be best to make temporary or targeted changes to family policies.
- Countries should review options for progressive universalism/cascaded service delivery to improve efficiency without leaving families or children behind. Systems of family service delivery that provide universal services with more intensive delivery to targeted populations (to maximise coverage by ensuring take-up in low income populations for instance), enhance social fairness and social integration of all the children, in the most cost-effective manner.

- Work should pay for both parents, it should be secure and sustainable; and so government policy should help reduce childcare cost where necessary. Policy should ensure good-quality childcare to assure parents that their children are being looked after properly and enhance child development. Public childcare service supports should be conditional on quality standards. Most OECD countries need to further develop their out-of-school-hours care supports.
- To ensure employment opportunities are accessible to all families, including those with young children or without partners, and to complement good childcare policies, governments should encourage all employers to offer part-time employment opportunities as well as flexible working hours.
- Maximising child support coverage helps to reduce child poverty in sole-parent families. Public child support or maintenance programmes are important tools in reducing child poverty, and are likely to become more so in the future. From the child perspective, advance payments systems are best because they maximise coverage and ensure regular support for the parent with childcare responsibilities, although they do promote disincentives for non-resident parent payment, and impose larger budgetary costs.
- In the absence of a system of advance maintenance payments, at least some part of the payment by the non-resident parents should directly go the child. In some countries if the resident parent receives income support, the payment collected effectively goes to the government to offset the cost of this support. This can create disincentives to non-resident parents to pay, and undermine the anti-poverty effect of child support.
- Child support systems should have simple payment formulae and procedures. Greater compliance (and so greater coverage in non-advanced systems) may also be achieved by: setting payment rates that account for the income position of non-resident parents.

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### 3. POVERTY ERADICATION: CONFRONTING FAMILY POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

## FAMILY RESILIENCE

*Juho Härkönen*

This paper examines what we know about the role of family change for children's living conditions and inequalities in their life chances. Families in Europe and beyond have become increasingly heterogeneous. From children's perspective, important demographic changes are decreases in family sizes, increases in family instability and single-parent households and increases in the age of the parents. All these changes have the potential to affect children's well-being and future life chances, and the extent to which they do has been a focus of active research.

I will, first, provide an overview to these main changes in the Western countries. Second, I will discuss to what extent these changes have been uneven and occurred faster in some (socioeconomic) groups than in others. Third, I look into the evidence on the effects of family structures and dynamics on children's well-being and future life chances. Fourth, I ask whether these effects can strengthen existing socioeconomic inequalities in child well-being and thus act as a pathway for intergenerational reproduction of inequalities. I also briefly discuss a related theme, namely whether family demography can account for differences in child well-being over time and between countries.

Last, I summarize the evidence and provide a discussion of their policy implications. Overall, family change has been rapid and in many Western countries uneven, as those family dynamics and forms that have the most potential for detrimental effects have increased the fastest among the weakest socioeconomic groups.

Children's well-being can be compromised by experiences of family dissolution and single parenthood. At the same time, children can potentially benefit from smaller family sizes and postponed parenthood. To what extent family demography contributes to existing socioeconomic inequalities, to cross-national and period differences in children's well-being and life chances remains an open question, even though the available evidence suggests that its role is likely to be more limited than expected.

The power of policies to ameliorate any negative effects depends on the well-being outcome one is interested in. The playing field is most easily evened in the case of economic well-being, with income transfer policies and policies that support (female) employment being particularly efficient. Existing policies may have weaker effects on non-economic aspects of well-being.

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Family change of the recent decades has attracted major attention among researchers and the public alike. For some, the main concern is the moral implications of 'family breakdown' and the withdrawal from co-residential and reproductive arrangements that were built around marriage. For others, these changes are a reflection of other major cultural and socioeconomic changes, and yet for others, the main concern is the changing living conditions and inequalities among adults and children (cf. Ellwood and Jencks 2004).

In this paper, I focus on the latter and examine how family change has shaped children's living conditions and life chances, and inequalities in them. The study is structured as follows. First, I describe major patterns of family change in recent decades, especially focusing on what this means from children's point of view. Second, I examine recent research concerning whether these developments have been more rapid among some socioeconomic groups (separated by education and class, in particular) than in others. Third, I look into what is known about the effects of different family forms and dynamics on children's economic well-being and life chances (and educational attainment in particular). The purpose of these latter two parts is to look at two sides of the inequality-family change nexus: whether socioeconomic differences and inequalities affect family forms and dynamics, and whether these, in turn, affect the well-being and life chances of children. Fourth, I move on to analyzing whether socioeconomic differences in family dynamics and forms can actually explain links between the socioeconomic features of parents and their children, that is, the intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantage / social (im)mobility. Finally, I sum up and provide a brief discussion on policy alternatives.

The focus of this study is on Europe. However, much of the research on the topic comes from the United States, and thus I draw heavily on American research when appropriate.

## **B. CHANGES IN FAMILY STRUCTURES AND DYNAMICS**

The main aspects of family change—often labeled under the 'second demographic transition' (Lesthaeghe 1995; Van de Kaa 2001)—have been well documented (e.g., Sobotka 2008). The general 'withdrawal from marriage', with the associated increases in divorce, cohabitation and non-marital childbearing together with declines in and postponement of fertility and marriage are among its most visible features. Despite common trends in most Western countries, cross-national differences remain visible (Sobotka 2008; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). Nordic countries, for example, led the way to postponed and often foregone marriage, and together with the United States, they have for long had high divorce rates. Other countries, such as Southern European ones, have experienced increases in divorce rates only later and for the most part continue to have more

stable marriages than the Nordic ones, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Not only did family change start later in some countries than in others, it has also stabilized in some countries. For example, fertility postponement has slowed down in most of the 'lowest-low' fertility countries, leading to recent increases in total fertility rates (Goldstein, Sobotka and Jasilionene 2009). Likewise, family instability has plateaued, and even decreased, at least in some high-divorce countries (Goldstein 1999; Andersson and Kolk 2011). In other words, family change need not follow the same path and continue indefinitely, but varies cross-nationally and begins and slows down at different times.

From children's point of view, major family demographic changes include the decrease in the number of biological siblings, increase in the number of half-siblings, increase in the occurrence of parental separation and single parenthood, and the increase in parental age. Other changes that have captured the attention of academics and non-academics alike include the increase in non-marital childbearing and the access to grandparents. Regarding the former, non-marital childbearing and children's life outside marriage has been a topic of active research and concern in the United States. However, in other countries non-marital childbearing is not as directly linked to socioeconomic disadvantage and single parenthood (the latter decreasingly so in the US as well) (Andersson and Philipov 2002). Unless one is worried with children's experience of living with unwed parents per se, the growth in the number of children born to unwed parents (e.g., Perelli-Harris 2010) is of less concern. Regarding the latter, increases in life expectancy increase the (at least potential) presence of grand-parents (Uhlenberg 1996), although little is known about factual trends across countries.

Decreasing fertility rates have often meant that children have fewer (biological) siblings. This is the clearest in the case of developing countries going through the Demographic Transition, in which declines in mortality rates are followed by a fall in fertility rates. As a result, children have fewer siblings (even though the chances of each of them surviving might be improved) and families become smaller (Lam and Marteleto 2008). Although the fertility declines in the 'Second Demographic Transition' are less dramatic, the (in many countries) decreasing number of children ever born of women means fewer siblings for their children. Due to increasing union instability, this trend is likely to be more pronounced for the number of biological siblings children have. The same increases in family instability together with re-partnering (e.g., Prskawetz et al. 2003; Holland and Thomson 2011) also mean that more children will have half-siblings.

Children's experiences of single parenthood due to parental separation vary greatly between Western countries and they have generally increased over time. By the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, there were major cross-national differences in children's likelihood of experiencing single motherhood at some point during their childhoods (Andersson and Philipov 2002). Similar differences were still visible at the turn of the millennium (Härkönen 2012). Countries also differ markedly in what share of single parenthood is accounted for by births to single women compared to union dissolution

(Heuveline, Timberlake and Furstenberg 2003) with the former being much more common in the United States and United Kingdom than elsewhere in Europe (with the partial exception of Germany and Austria). Regarding trends over time, it comes as no surprise that children born in later cohorts are more likely to have experienced parental separation and single parenthood during their childhoods. For example, in Sweden, which long has been the European forerunner in family changes associated with the Second Demographic Transition, between 15 and 20 percent of children experienced parental separation by age 15 in the late 1960s, whereas that share increased to approximately 35 percent by the turn of the millennium (Thomson and Eriksson 2010). The share of Swedish children born out of union has, however, remained stable at just above 5 percent. Interestingly enough, the share of children experiencing parental separation by age 15 has modestly declined after its peak, again suggesting that period of rapid increase in family instability might be coming to a close, at least in some countries. Worth noting, also, is that mortality declines have meant that fewer children have experienced single parenthood due to parental death (Bygren, Gähler and Neramo 2004).

Women have been having their first children at increasingly older ages (e.g., Sobotka 2008). From children's point of view, a natural implication of this is an increase in age of the parents. This, of course, only applies directly to first-born children as the age of the parents at the birth of the later-born children depends additionally on the spacing of births (how soon after their first child parents have their second one, and so forth), and, of course, whether parents continue to have second children or more in the first place. Since women have been bearing fewer children in the more recent cohorts, there are fewer children born who have older parents than would otherwise be the case. However, fertility postponement has tended to dominate this counteracting effect (Martin 2004), and therefore children born in the more recent cohorts tend to have older parents.

### **C. HAS THE CHANGE BEEN UNEVEN?**

One of the findings of recent research on family change is the uneven occurrence of family change across socioeconomic groups. In particular, studies from several countries have found that family instability and single parenthood have increased the fastest among women with the lowest levels of education (for the United States: Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McLanahan 2004; Martin 2006; Europe: Härkönen and Dronkers 2006; Härkönen 2012). The reasons behind these developments are not fully understood. Regarding the shift in the educational gradient of divorce, Härkönen and Dronkers (2006) drew on the 'Goode hypothesis' which states that when divorce is difficult (due to social, legal, and economic barriers), divorcing requires resources that are more common among the highly educated. When divorcing becomes easier, those lower in the socioeconomic ladder (who are often also those with higher marital strain) find divorce more accessible and can end up with higher divorce rates due to higher stress in their partner-

ships. Their results were broadly in line with this hypothesis (see also Blossfeld et al. 1995; De Graaf and Kalmijn 2006; Bernardi and Martínez-Pastor 2011). Other explanations have drawn on the interaction between cultural, economic and social policy factors that may contribute to union dissolution and single parenthood being more common in some educational groups than in others (Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McLanahan 2004). In particular, several American studies have increasingly stressed the importance of stable economic prospects as a prerequisite for stable (married) family life in modern societies, and maintained that the lack of them partly explains the withdrawal of low educated women from stable families (Ellwood and Jencks 2004; McLanahan 2004; Edin and Kefauver 2005)

Rates of single parenthood are due to childbearing by single mothers, separation, and re-partnering. Overall, childbearing by single mothers has been more important in the United States than in most European countries (Heuveline, Timberlake and Furstenberg 2003), as discussed above. These are also differences between educational groups. Childbearing by single mothers has been more common among the least educated in all countries (Perelli-Harris et al. 2010). Furthermore, the educational differentials in fertility to single mothers have increased in some countries, although the trend is not uniform. In addition, the growing instability of families with the least socioeconomic resources adds to the occurrence of single parenthood among children with less educated parents.

Much interest in terms of socioeconomic differences in fertility behavior has been on the educational differences in the number of children women have (e.g. Skirbekk 2008). Generally, women with less socioeconomic resources have had more children. In some countries, however, there are no major educational differences in the number of children born, but rather in the timing of births (Andersson et al. 2008).

The postponement of births by the highly educated has been generally observed and has partly to do with the longer time these women spend in education, which is often seen as incompatible with family formation. Children born to highly educated women thus often have fewer siblings, and older parents. Regarding half-siblings, the negative gradient of divorce prevalent nowadays in many Western countries, together with no differences in step-family formation and fertility, lead to expect that children born to less educated mothers are more likely to have step-children as well.

#### **D. FAMILY STRUCTURES, FAMILY DYNAMICS AND CHILD WELL-BEING**

What effects do these family demographic changes have on children's well-being and life chances? Numerous studies have analyzed these questions and focused on different indicators of child well-being and life chances, such as economic well-being and poverty, educational achievement and attainment, psychological well-being, and family demographic behaviors in adulthood. As a summary, one could say that different family demo-

graphic changes have different effects on child outcomes. Furthermore, the estimation of each of these effects is plagued by serious methodological challenges due to the non-random assignment of families to these states. For example, parents can to a high extent choose to have more or less children, to have them earlier or later, and to separate or stay together, often due to reasons that cannot be observed and statistically controlled by the researcher. These same unobservable factors (such as personality traits and the quality of the parents' relationship) can additionally affect children's well-being. Therefore, causality is very difficult to claim.

Maybe the most research interest has been devoted to studying the effects on parental separation (for reviews, Amato 2000; James and Amato 2010; Garriga and Härkönen 2009). Overall, children of divorced or separated parents experience heightened economic strain and tend to perform worse in terms educational success and attainment and different aspects of well-being than those whose parents have remained together. Here again, causality is difficult to prove and it is not completely clear to what extent these effects are due to the divorce/separation as such, or due to some other factors that are correlated both with the parents' separation and children's outcomes. However, many indications do suggest that at least part of the difference between children with separated parents and those whose parents did not separate are due to the separation itself (Ibid; McLanahan and Percheski 2008). These effects tend to be stronger in the short run, even though they often do not completely disappear even in the longer run. One can also maintain that the effects are rather heterogeneous: for some children (especially for those from highly confliction or otherwise badly performing families), parental separation may have positive effects; other children do not experience any (at least long-term) negative outcomes; yet others may adapt very badly to their parents' divorce. Although much needs to be learned from which factors actually account for this heterogeneity in effects, socioeconomic safety and the behavior of parents and other significant adults during and after the divorce process does predict children's adjustment.

Other researchers have analyzed the effects of family size on children's living conditions and futures. Again, children from larger families tend to experience more economic strain and perform worse in school, among other outcomes (e.g., Steelman et al. 2002), which supports common beliefs of higher economic constraints in such families and more competition between siblings in them. However, many scholars maintain that growing up in a large family does not in itself lead to compromised life chances. Instead, some research suggests that the observed associations are partly due to birth order: first-born children generally perform better than their later-born siblings, and there are more later-born children in larger families (Black et al. 2005; Härkönen 2012b). Having more siblings thus would not affect the life chances of children with the same birth order (second children, for example).

Finally, parental age can have important effects on children's well-being (e.g. Martin 2004). A lot of research has focused on the effects of teenage parenthood on parents'

and children's outcomes alike. In general, the children of teenage parents tend to fare worse in terms of academic and various other outcomes, although, here again it has been difficult to determine how much of these differences are due to the parents' age as such or to other factors. Some studies have analyzed this question using a broader distribution of parents' ages and analyzed outcomes such as educational attainment and health (Mare and Tzeng 1991; Powell et al. 2003; Myrskylä and Fenelon 2012; Silventoinen et al. 2012; Härkönen and Buis 2012). Although fertility postponement may have negative health repercussions for mothers and children alike, the results generally show that either these do not materialize to affect the living conditions and life chances of children, or they are overrun by the positive effects of increasing age, such as maturity and economic stability. Overall, the effect of parental age on children's outcomes appears to be positive, calling into question concerns of postponed parenthood.

#### **E. CAN DEMOGRAPHY EXPLAIN CHANGES, CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN CHILD WELL-BEING?**

The last two sections showed how family behaviors and family change have not been evenly distributed across socioeconomic groups, and how family demographic behaviors can matter for children's well-being and life chances. Together, these two effects suggest that family demography may play –a potentially increasingly important– role in the intergenerational reproduction of socioeconomic inequality. Furthermore, due to the cross-national differences in family structures and behaviors, and the family change over time, family demography may potentially explain some of the differences in child well-being across countries and over time.

These possibilities have been considered in the family demographic and social stratification research. For example, a core question in Sara McLanahan's (McLanahan 2004; McLanahan and Percheski 2008) 'diverging destinies' thesis was that family demography may become an increasingly important pathway in socioeconomic reproduction across generations in the United States, but also elsewhere. In the same manner, some studies have asked whether family structures can explain differences in child poverty between countries and across time (Chen and Corak 2008; Iceland 2003). Both of these arguments are theoretically feasible; if some family demographic structures and dynamics have adverse effects on children's outcomes, and if parents with lower socioeconomic position are more likely to experience these potentially harmful conditions, family demography may be an important explanation to the correlation between the socioeconomic statuses of parents and children. A similar line of argument holds for cross-national or period differences in child well-being.

However, the relatively limited number of existing empirical studies that have directly assessed the extent to which family structures and family demography can explain exist-

ing child well-being differences between socioeconomic groups, countries, or periods have questioned whether it plays a strong role (Chen and Corak 2008; Heuveline and Weinshenker 2008; Härkönen 2012). Generally, income redistribution policies and labor market attachment appear more important. This does not mean that family structure cannot be important for child well-being. Quite the contrary, poverty rates, for example, in single parent households can be remarkably high, and even more so in single parent households headed by a mother with low education. What the above findings mean is that it is likely that the socioeconomic background differences in child well-being and life chances would not be much different without the uneven distribution of divorce, single parenthood, and other family demographic behaviors across socioeconomic groups. However, it is possible that the role of family structure on inequality in children's outcomes depends on the particular societies and time periods that are analyzed (cf. Iceland 2003), and more research is needed to draw stronger conclusions on this issue.

## F. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Family life courses have changed rather remarkably over the last decades and these have the potential to affect children's lives and inequalities between children, especially as these changes have been more rapid in some socioeconomic groups than in others. What we know from previous research is, firstly, that changes associated with the 'second demographic transition' –such as increases in family instability and single parenthood and postponement and reduction of fertility– begun earlier in some countries (notably, Northern Europe and the United States) than in others (Southern Europe especially). There are also increasing signs that at least some of these changes are experienced differently in different socioeconomic groups, with divorce, for example, increasing more rapidly among the less educated so that union instability is becoming strongly associated with low education in many countries. We also know that many family demographic behaviors (such as parental divorce and age at parenthood) are at least associated with –if not causally affected by– various child outcomes, such as educational attainment and physical and mental health. Together, these findings suggest that family change can have had an important effect on developments in child well-being and in reinforcing existing inequalities in children's living conditions and life chances. However, the existing evidence suggests that although possible, these effects might be weaker than anticipated.

What about policy? As usual, policy responses should focus on the issue of most concern to the public, researchers, and policy-makers. Policy interventions intended to lessen inequalities and effects caused by family change are likely to be most effective when they target economic outcomes, such as child poverty. A long line of research has shown that single parent household and large family poverty rates vary cross-nationally, and are strongly affected by income redistribution and policies that support mothers' employ-



ment (Vleminckx and Smeeding 2001; Brady and Burroway 2012). These policies can thus have a major role in leveling the playing field between children in different family types.

However, it may be more difficult to decrease potential effects of family demographic behaviors on longer-term effects (such as education) and non-economic aspects of well-being. The most studied family demographic patterns, such as single parenthood and parental divorce, are associated with poorer child outcomes practically in all (Western) countries where they have been studied (Garriga and Härkönen 2009; James and Amato 2010). Although some studies suggest that extensive and family-friendly policies may alleviate the impacts of single parenthood (e.g., Pong et al. 2003), it is more difficult to detect consistent patterns between parental divorce and many well-being indicators across countries, and even more so to establish what lies behind any cross-national patterns (Garriga and Härkönen 2009). It seems that although 'traditional' social policies that aim at equalizing economic inequalities may have long-term effects by reducing children's poverty risks, which then may have independent effects on child outcomes, policies that aim to decrease the gaps in well-being between children growing up in different family forms may need to "think outside the box" and additionally concentrate on non-economic forms of support.

Can policies address the socioeconomically uneven development in family dynamics and forms? Parental leave policies and educational policies are known to affect the timing of fertility (Andersson and Neyer 2008). However, if postponement of parenthood—which is associated with positive child outcomes—is the policy aim, this may conflict with other population policy goals which instead tend to stress the opposite. It is potentially possible to address the uneven trends in family dynamics, such as divorce and union formation, by labor market and social policies that improve the economic position and stability of those with the least resources. This is suggested by research stressing the negative effects of economic instability on family formation and stability, and some findings suggesting that the educational differences in divorce are less in countries with more encompassing social welfare systems (Härkönen and Dronkers 2006).

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#### **4. POVERTY ERADICATION: CONFRONTING FAMILY POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

### **FAMILIES AT RISK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

*Silvana Tiani Brunelli*

The condition of the modern family is characterized by two strong components: on one hand, major social and cultural achievements and on the other open and decisive challenges. The elements that have been historically acquired provide to the family values, strength and success. The missing elements cause difficulties, problems and threaten the efforts made.

Thinking about the family and its development implicates the recognition and the enhancement of the acquired components. However, it also requires identifying the exact current challenges in order to give them a competent and innovative response. This current phase of history needs a new logic to interpret reality and original tools to enable processes of growth and improvement. The process of social innovation for the family can be conceived on the basis of the knowledge and development of personal skills.

#### **A. TWO TYPES OF PROBLEMS**

Today's society encounters two types of problems. A historical and well-known problem is poverty, intended both as deficiency in economic terms and in the human dimension, as the inability to manage self-sufficiency and create wealth within the household.

Modern families are also disrupted by a second type of problem, a new type of difficulty for which society is unprepared and has not established effective responses yet. The set of problems can be grouped into the concept of: lack of relationship and personal skills. This deficiency manifests itself in a long list of specific problems: conflict, unfaithfulness, divorce, difficulties with children; which can then cause bullying, early school leaving and psychosomatic disorders.

In recent decades several personal and social indicators have shown a serious worsening: increase in divorces, increased depression and personality disorders, greater use of psychotropic drugs, even in early childhood, alcohol abuse and smoking among young people, prostitution and difficulties in finding a job. Be noted that these serious problems are not necessarily connected to economic poverty.

Underlying all these issues it is possible to identify the lack of personal skills necessary to sustain life experiences and direct them in a constructive way.

From a careful analysis of the present reality, research in the innovation in human skills offers guidelines and practical tools to address both types of problems jointly. It proposes to take action on the development of life skills to overcome the condition of poverty and to prevent and solve behavioral and interpersonal problems.

## **B. A NEW OPERATING LOGIC**

In the past, the difficulties in family and social context have been addressed with ways that have proven to be unsuccessful. One of today's main challenges is to design a new paradigm that can enable a real growth processes.

The classical approach suggests focusing the attention on the problem in order to solve it. This mode includes two poles: on one side the resource (wealth) and on the other the lack (poverty). The aid shall take place by pouring the resource in the shortage so that the wealth shall be consumed to overcome poverty. It is a single movement: a one way giving and receiving. This form of action alleviates the negative effect but does not eliminate the cause to the root.

We propose a new approach: to focus on life skills to prevent the onset of the problem and, also, to remove it where it is present. The development of life skills creates a form of relationship in which there is an exchange of mutual help: the movement is no longer one-way but two-way, each one can give and can receive help. In other words, instead of providing a passive support, enabling constructive interaction: two parties help each other.

Greater maturity in the human field, made of knowledge, skills, personal choices and a real commitment, is the force that removes the problems at source. Not only it deals with the final effects but it also transforms the starting point.

Thus, a good direction for innovation policies for the family is (thus) conceiving growth projects aimed at all citizens, not just at those who are in trouble but also at those projects that have the goal of increasing personal maturity, the ability to improve the relationship and lifestyle.

Within these projects, each family can grow. The family that lives in a state of well being may conceive more complex and sophisticated goals and may progress further and contribute to active citizenship. The family that is suffering poverty, hardship or exclusion may be involved in learning experiences without negative labeling.

In summary, the processes of social innovation for the family can be designed on a new basis:

- To focus attention and give priority to the development of relationship skills and personal skills;

- Human skills are the resource that prevents and solves problems at the root;
- Human skills are the driving force that promotes the progress on both individual and social level;
- Growth plans for all families, for those in need and for those who are stable;
- Support mutual help projects, where everyone can give and everyone can receive.

### **C. RELATIONSHIP SKILLS IN FAMILY**

Relationships have been so far left to spontaneity, without any special training: some do not encounter major difficulties but to a significant extent many appear dysfunctional and cause discomfort. The quality of relationships is a vital component that determines the stability of the couple's relationship and effectiveness in the education of children; therefore, it cannot be overlooked as a secondary element.

The nature of human relationships is a key factor that helps determining the quality of family life. It is therefore essential to address this area as a goal and a field in which it is possible to activate innovation and growth.

Relationship skills can be conceived as real functions to be studied understood and developed.

Family members can learn to communicate properly and increase mutual understanding, they can fully express themselves, help each other and collaborate more effectively.

Communication difficulties are the basis of family conflict that subsequently leads to separation and divorce. Even the failures in the education of children are mostly of behavioral nature, and therefore, due to an inability in transmission.

Increasing the relationship skills in the family means to contribute to the stability of the family, prevent conflict and divorce, raise the quality of education, and contribute to the personal well-being of each component, to make people collaborative within the family and in communities.

Good relationships within the family contribute to the success of the family and create the opportunity to interact with other families and therefore be supporters of active citizenship.

### **D. PERSONAL SKILLS IN FAMILY**

Today's society is characterized by increasing complexity. Family is at the center of several inquiries and a high number of tasks to be fulfilled. Complexity can be seen as a synonym of refinement, but at the same time implies more management skills.

Family is supported by personal skills: clarity of objectives, lifestyle choices, planning time, organization, daily habits, health care, supporting stress, fixing errors, professional skills that ensure survival, problem solving, facing incidents and injustices, running the house and goods.

Building a family has been so far a spontaneous experience.

Progress in the community can be brought in innovative ways: conceiving the skills to create and build a family.

Personal skills are crucial to create stable families, capable of being self sufficient and to participate in social development in an active way contributing to the resolution of present issues such as poverty, marginalization, prostitution, divorce and many more.

Skills can grow with the spread of knowledge, practical experiences and projects. The increase in skills leads to personal maturity that makes a person autonomous thus not at risk of poverty or marginalization.

#### **E. INNOVATION FOR FAMILY: PREVENTION, PROBLEM SOLVING AND GROWTH**

How can we regard the development of the family?

Actions in favor of the family have the task of responding to three major challenges:

- To solve the current problems
- To prevent the recurrence of problems in time
- To conquer new goals toward an unprecedented maturity.

Among present problems we can mention: poverty, divorce, difficulties in raising children, infidelity, prostitution, abuse of harmful substances from youngsters and adults that affect health (alcohol, smoking, drugs), the increase in psychological problems associated with the consumption of psychotropic drugs, unemployment and the inability to ensure the maintenance of the family.

One of the greatest gifts that Family Policies should make to European families is a real commitment to reduce and solve these issues.

An innovative form of prevention can be found in the development of relationship skills and personal skills. The maturity on the human level allows each individual to act correctly and therefore avoid falling victim of the weaknesses and problems above mentioned. Personal skills are (a) means to transform problems into projects, thus the negative aspects can be managed with a positive logic. The personal achievements are a source of comfort, give stability to the family and can offer the best contributions to society.



Families can proceed toward new goals such as stability, relationships based on respect and understanding, excellent collaboration that allows to satisfy the needs and to achieve important goals, better health, a high level of personal well-being, greater ability to ensure economic self-reliance, values and commitment to the community, take action in volunteer work in ones own territory, create a network of relationships between families and local institutions to achieve common purposes.

There are several actions that can be taken to implement the above objectives, but one undoubtedly new and effective way of facing them, is through the innovation in human skills.

Acting for the maturity in human terms. Maturity that allows each individual and each family to grow up become independent, progress, achieve goals and contribute to the community.

The mere presence of personal and relationships skills, which acts as a form of prevention to discomfort, has within itself the potential for the resolution of problems as well as the push for progress.

## **F. THE PRIORITY OF TODAY'S FAMILY**

### **THE STABILITY OF THE HOUSEHOLD**

A priority for the families of today and tomorrow is stability.

The free choice of the partner and divorce are achievements of civilization that allow people to lead their lives according to their qualities and requirements, as well as the changes that occur with time.

However, after the conquest of these stages, it is essential to consider the next step: the personal maturity to form a stable family over time. Being able to share their lives with a spouse and children thanks to their ability to love, to communicate, collaborate and solve problems together, without breaking the relationship.

Stability ensures the wellbeing of the family by reinforcing it; it also offers the ideal environment for raising children and gives a deeper meaning to the couple's relationship. It is also the base of the family's state of wealth.

### **MATURITY IN SEXUALITY**

Another priority of the family is a healthy sex life within the couple relationship. In our society we have known sexual repression as well as the lack of restraint. The fluctuations

between these two extreme points have caused the issue of infidelity and prostitution. Dissatisfaction in the intimate sphere is also one of the causes of separations.

When sexuality is experienced in a complete and balanced way within the couple, maintaining fidelity to one partner becomes an element of real personal maturity that provides value and vitality to the couple. It also helps making the relationship stable and as well as dynamic.

### **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

In the education of children it is a priority to improve relations and learning processes: to reduce misunderstandings, tensions, wounds and increase understanding, support and collaboration. The development of life skills can make childhood an happier time and increase the maturity of the youngsters. It represents the best action to prevent the discomfort as well as to center goals.

The quality of education can evolve by teaching adults to teach with love and firmness, without the use of painful stimuli. Kids can learn and be more respected.

Another option of intervention is the study of relationship skills that can be learned simultaneously by all generations.

### **ECONOMIC AUTONOMY**

In a historical period marked by economic crisis, self-sufficiency assumes a central role. Managing the family's material needs must be understood as a responsibility of the family that is supported by talent and skills.

It is also necessary to combine vocational training to individual talents, clarity and determination: choosing a job, producing results, collaborating with others. Nowadays, it is not enough to know how to perform a job. It is fundamental to also develop elements of human nature such as loyalty, fairness, honesty, commitment to ecological sustainability, sensitivity to social problems and ethics.

### **PROJECTS FOR THE FAMILY**

Families can implement projects of development in which it is possible to keep the valuable elements acquired, reduce or eliminate disorders and achieve higher standards. Projects involving the care of health of each component, improving relations, maintenance of the house where you live, realization of goals and personal growth of each member.

Historically, the act of planning has been a feature of companies that set themselves goals and appropriate procedures to achieve them. Planning can also enter the family universe and become a reference point, an element of cohesion and stimulus to cooperation.

#### **ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

Each family is called to participate to their community and to contribute to the common goals that lead to a common good. There are numerous ways in which a family can interact with its community: volunteering, fostering, social promotion, cultural events, networks of mutual aid, cooperation between families, and participation in local politics.

Active citizenship is understood as an expression of personal maturity of each citizen. It represents the most widespread and powerful source of prevention of social problems and the ideal path to progress.

Each family can be in relation with other families with the awareness of building together the Community in which they live and in which the new generations grow.

#### **G. PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICIES FOR THE FAMILY**

1. Promoting innovation in human skills in the family as the direction for emancipation and for personal and social progress.
2. Promoting the study and development personal skills and relationship skills in families, school and in society as an engine of growth and problems resolution.
3. Design projects for the family designed for all the citizens in which it is possible to pursue new goals, to address problems and to originate a joint action for their prevention.
4. Reinforce the value of a married life and family stability, to be conquered and maintained thanks to the personal skills: understanding, collaboration, planning and a healthy sexual life.
5. Innovating the quality of education from a human perspective: reduce the use of painful stimuli, increase personal skills, increase learning through understanding and firmness and improve relations.



## 5. FULL EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK: ENSURING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

### MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

*Fred Deven*

This briefing paper substantially draws on the work provided by scholars in the context of the International Network on Leave Policies and Research ([www.leavenetwork.org](http://www.leavenetwork.org)). More especially, on the annual International Reviews of Country Notes, edited by Peter Moss (TCRU, University of London). It also is indebted to the work of Margaret O'Brien (University of East Anglia) on father-inclusive family policies delivered at a recent UN Expert Group meeting (O'Brien, 2011).

#### A. INTRODUCTION

The briefing paper focuses on major characteristics, trends and developments. It draws substantially on the annual reviews referred to above. The 2011 review includes detailed country notes for 26 European countries (Moss, 2011). As the 2012 edition became available in June (Moss, 2012), not all changes and developments are yet included here. Another Network member (Karin Wall) made a comparative analysis of leave arrangements on the basis of a Council of Europe family policy questionnaire (Wall et al., 2009) ([www.coe.int/familypolicy](http://www.coe.int/familypolicy)). This analysis provides more limited information for another thirteen European countries.

This briefing paper does not include detailed information via comparative tables or figures, partly because such information for all European countries is unavailable or greatly differs in detail and accuracy and partly because such work is like targeting a moving mark. See for example, Wall et al. (2009: Figures 11 to 16) or Moss (2012: various tables) providing comparisons and more detailed information for a majority of European countries.

The OECD Family Database ([www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database)) as well includes such information for a large number of European countries (cf. PF2.1 to PF2.4, sub Child-related leave) and is updated occasionally. Thevenon & Solaz (2012) draw on this for their analysis of labour market consequences of parental leave policies in OECD countries. MISSOC is another source operating on behalf of the European Commission who provides broad comparative data, especially on maternity leave ([www.europa.eu/social](http://www.europa.eu/social)). Finally, large research projects such as the EC funded 'Family Platform' also provide relevant comparative analysis, for example on state family policies ([www.familyplatform.eu](http://www.familyplatform.eu))

Mothers' labor force participation was widely considered to be one of the most significant social developments of the 20th century. But social research also highlights the continuing difficulties faced by employed mothers in combining work and family life and caring for dependent persons, unequal division of domestic work, as well as a motherhood wage penalty.

Fathers' active participation in family life will likely be one of the most important social developments of the 21st century. In most European countries, governments and public authorities at various levels, as well as other actors such as the employers and trade unions are developing support for working fathers' caring responsibilities. From the late 1990s, in particular, there has been a rapid expansion of both parental leave and flexible working provision targeted at fathers, especially in the Nordic countries which have been global pioneers in work-family policy innovation (O'Brien, 2011).

## **B. DEFINITIONS**

This briefing paper is about leave entitlements, mainly for workers with dependent children. Working parents today, especially in the affluent European countries, are entitled to a range of different forms of leave. The most common being maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave.

Maternity leave is generally available to mothers only (except in a few cases where part of the leave can be transferred to other carers under certain circumstances). It is usually understood to be a health and welfare measure, intended to protect the health of the mother and new born child, to be taken just before, during and immediately after childbirth. Paternity leave is generally available to fathers only, usually to be taken soon after the birth of a child, and intended to enable the father to spend time with his partner, new child and older children. Parental leave is available equally to mothers and fathers, either as: (i) a non-transferable individual right (i.e. both parents have an entitlement to an equal amount of leave); or (ii) an individual right that can be transferred to the other parent; or (iii) a family right that parents can divide between themselves as they choose. In some countries it is generally understood to be a care measure, intended to give parents the opportunity to spend time caring for a young child; it usually can only be taken after the end of Maternity leave. In some cases, parents can choose to take all or part of their Parental leave on a part-time basis.

Parental leave is sometimes supplemented by a further period of leave intended also as a care measure, and given various names, such as 'childcare leave' or 'home care leave'. This leave is for parents following the end of Parental leave, and may not in practice be very different to Parental leave (although the conditions attached to the two types of leave may vary, see for example Finland or Norway).

Leave to care for children who are ill as an entitlement varies considerably between countries in terms of length, age of children included and payment. In some cases it may be extended to include certain adult relatives.

Although we will continue to differentiate between these forms of leave, it is to be noted that the distinction between these types of leave is beginning to blur. In some European countries (ex. Norway, Sweden), we notice the emergence of a single, generic Parental leave entitlement that no longer make specific distinctions. However, some part of this generic post-natal leave can only be taken by mothers and another part only by fathers. In a country such as Portugal, all leave comes under a common umbrella term of 'Parental leave'. A further variant that is blurring distinctions is the possibility that part of Maternity leave can be transferred to the father, making it, in effect, a variant of Parental leave (for example, in Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal Spain, UK).

### **C. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARENTS**

#### **MATERNITY LEAVE**

There is not much flexibility in Maternity leave, and taking leave is obligatory in numerous countries. Flexibility in use mainly takes the form of some choice about when women can start to take leave and how much of the leave period they can take before and after birth. Belgian mothers, for example, may take two weeks of Maternity leave as 'free days', spread over a period of time.

Two approaches to maternity leave policy are emerging. The most widespread approach is the traditional concept of a 'Maternity leave' intended only for women, linked to pregnancy, childbirth and the first months of motherhood and treated as a health and welfare measure. Other leave available to women is additional and available equally to women and men. Women are thus entitled to more leave overall than men. The more recently emerging approach is to move towards a generic 'parental leave', usually with periods designated for 'mothers only' and 'fathers only'. Thus Iceland offers nine months Parental leave, three months each for the mother and father and a further three months for the parents to divide as they choose; the only recognition of childbirth is the obligation for women to take two weeks leave after birth, with the possibility of an extended leave if a woman has suffered complications at or after giving birth.

#### **PATERNITY LEAVE**

The usual definition of Paternity leave, being an entitlement for fathers only that enables them to take a short period of leave immediately following the birth of a child, often as-

sociated with providing help and support to the mother. However, as Parental leave in a number of countries includes a period of time that only fathers can take (sometimes referred to as a 'father's quota'), here again the distinction between Paternity leave and father-only Parental leave can be unclear and confusing.

Comparing Iceland, Norway and Sweden provides an example of this complexity. Iceland offers nine months of 'birth leave', 3 months for mothers, 3 months for fathers and 3 months as a family entitlement to be divided between parents as they choose. There is, therefore, no paternity leave *per se*, but three months of leave are available for the use of fathers only, to take as and when they choose. Norway, by contrast, has two weeks paternity leave (i.e. to be used at the time of birth) plus a further twelve weeks father's quota, a part of the parental leave that only the father can use; most of the Parental leave is a family entitlement. Sweden also has paternity leave (ten days) and a fathers' quota (60 days) as part of Parental leave (Moss, 2011).

If we define paternity leave narrowly as a short period immediately after the birth that is only available to fathers, about fifteen European countries have paternity leave, varying from two to ten days and is usually paid (on the same basis as maternity leave). There are some exceptions such as Finland (cf. 18 days with a further 12 'bonus' days for fathers who take the last two weeks of parental leave), Slovenia, (cf. 90 days), or Spain (15 days).

Italy allows fathers 12 weeks post-natal 'optional leave', mainly in circumstances where the father is the sole or main carer (e.g. if the mother is dead or severely incapacitated). It is unclear whether this should be considered Paternity leave or a variant of schemes where Maternity leave can be transferred to fathers in certain conditions.

## **PARENTAL LEAVE**

In Europe, a specific situation exists for EU member states. From March 2012 on, all must provide at least four months per parent ("an individual right and in principle non-transferable") under the terms of Directive 2010/18/EU (adding to the Directive 96/34/EC). The directive defines this leave as enabling men and women "to take care of (a) child until a given age", so distinguishing this leave from Maternity leave, where the directive setting minimum standards was adopted as a health and welfare measure. But no payment or flexibility requirements are specified.

Parental leave varies on four main dimensions: entitlement, length, flexibility, and payment:

Entitlement: Parental leave is a family entitlement in a number of countries, to be divided between parents as they choose (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovenia); an individual entitlement in other European countries (e.g. Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain and the UK); and mixed (part family, part individual entitle-



ment) in four countries (Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden). It should be noted, however, that countries where leave is an individual entitlements vary in whether unused entitlements can be transferred to a partner (e.g. Croatia, Slovenia) or whether entitlements, if not used, are forgone.

Length of leave: Broadly, countries divide into those where the total length of post-natal leave available –including maternity, parental and childcare– comes to around nine to 15 months; and those where continuous leave can run for up to three years or more.

The former includes Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia and the UK; the latter includes the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia and Spain. Sweden falls in between: paid leave is expressed in days (to emphasize that it can be taken very flexibly), roughly equivalent to 18 months if taken continuously, while each parent is also entitled to take unpaid leave until a child is 18 months. So, too, does Austria and Australia, with leave lasting until a child's second birthday, though in the latter case the second year requires an employer's agreement (Moss, 2011).

Flexibility: Being able to choose when to take leave until a child reaches a certain age is the most common option, followed by being able to take leave in one block of time or several shorter blocks. Other forms of flexibility include: the possibility to take leave on a full-time or part-time basis, to take a longer period of leave with lower benefits or a shorter period with higher benefits, additional leave (e.g. multiple births), the transfer of leave entitlements to carers who are not parents.

Slovenia is the European country with the greatest flexibility, with six options.

Payment: A majority of countries provide some element of payment. Some European countries make no payment (cf. Greece, Ireland, Spain, UK). Payment policy varies considerably. In 12 cases (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland and Russia) payment is either: flat-rate or set at a low earnings-related rate; not universal (e.g. means-tested); or paid at a high earnings-related rate but for less than 6 months. Twelve countries pay an earnings-related benefit of more than two-thirds of normal earnings for 6 months or more. However, all impose a ceiling on benefit payments. But in a number of countries such as Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France and Germany parents on leave receive a general 'childrearing' benefit that is paid to all parents with young children.

#### **D. OTHER MEASURES**

*Childcare leave* can usually be taken immediately after parental leave, creating a continuous period of leave, even if the conditions (such as benefit paid) may not be the same. It is, however, much less common than parental leave.

Finland is exceptional in that its 'home care' leave is both available to all parents and paid, albeit with a relatively low flat-rate allowance (so blurring the distinction with parental leave, cf. Moss, 2011).

In addition to parental and childcare leave, another type of leave is an entitlement to a break from employment for any reason, including (but not confined to) childcare: a 'career break / time credit'. A statutory entitlement of this kind is found only in Belgium, with one year's leave that can be extended up to five years by collective agreement negotiated at sectorial or company level; this is in addition to Parental leave. For further information on this innovative and unique entitlement, see briefing paper for this Expert group meeting (Deven, 2012).

With one exception, countries include some provision to take leave in case of the illness of a child. The EU Parental leave directive gives all workers an entitlement to "time off from work on grounds of force majeure for urgent family reasons in cases of sickness or accident, making their immediate presence indispensable", without specifying minimum requirements for length of time or payment. Among EU member states almost half (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden) specify an entitlement to leave of ten days or more per year to care for sick children, though the age range of children covered varies; for all of these countries, except Belgium and Italy, leave is paid and usually at a high level of income replacement.

In some cases, the length of leave decreases as children get older: for example, from being unlimited for a child under 12 months to 14 days a year for children from six to 12 years old in Hungary; or being without limit for a child under three years in Italy but five days a year per parent for a child aged three to eight years. Leave is shorter or unspecified and unpaid in the other member states.

Of the non-EU countries, Croatia, Norway and the Russian Federation have an entitlement to paid leave of ten days or more per year specifically to care for a sick child. In the seven other countries, there is either no leave available (Iceland) or leave is confined to seriously ill children and employees in smaller organizations are excluded (United States) or leave is for less than 10 days and/or unpaid (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Switzerland). For example, South African workers are entitled to three days 'family responsibility leave' per year, but this covers a range of circumstances, not only caring for a sick child; while in Australia, all employees have an industrial right to use up to five days of personal or sick leave per year to care for a sick family member.

About twenty countries offer additional leave entitlements, covering a wider range of family members than children. Conditions for taking leave vary between countries from ordinary illness through to serious or terminal illness or care of a very dependent relative. Length, payment and other dimensions of leave also vary considerably. In Luxembourg, for example, fathers may take a few days leave at the time of childbirth using a general

entitlement to take 'leave due to extraordinary circumstances' or 'family responsibility' leave.

In most countries, adoptive parents have similar leave entitlements to other parents.

Various European countries (e.g. Croatia, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland) permit women to reduce working hours to enable breastfeeding. Women reducing their hours for this reason are usually entitled to earnings compensation.

### **E. SUMMING UP**

It should be noted that total leave is not always the period of time after the birth of a child that parents in a family can take leave. In a few cases, both parents may take leave until their child reaches a certain age (e.g. Czech Republic). Total leave ranges from none to 72 months, with a median length of 24 months, while total paid leave ranges from none to 38 months, with a median length of 12 months (Moss, 2011)

On the basis of all information above, European countries can be divided into the following three clusters related to the provision of earnings-related post-natal leave:

- a. Nine months or more, at two-thirds or more replacement rate: the five Nordic countries, countries from Central and Eastern Europe (Croatia, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia), Germany plus Greece (private sector) Here, a period of Parental leave is always included.
- b. Four to six months, but confined to maternity leave: includes various Continental Western European countries. Ireland comes here, although the effect of a ceiling on the earnings-related benefit is that the maximum payment is only €270 a week, showing the need to take account of levels of ceilings in assessing the generosity of national schemes.
- c. Four months at most of earnings-related post-natal leave: includes countries United Kingdom (and other English-speaking countries abroad), Austria, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Switzerland.

The European Commission uses the number of months of well paid leave, i.e. paid at two-thirds or more of earnings as an indicator in monitoring member states' progress in meeting Employment Guidelines (EC, 2010)<sup>11</sup>.

By way of comparison, the United States of America is the only country to provide at federal level no period of paid statutory leave of any kind.

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<sup>11</sup> Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis, 2010 compendium, Table 18.M3 - <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=4093&langId=en>.

## **F. SOME POLICY ISSUES**

### **ELIGIBILITY**

At present, the overall picture for European countries is that all workers have the right to one or more types of leave arrangements (for parents), especially maternity and parental leave. But realities are (far) different from that belief. Although it remains unclear for most countries what proportion of parents are eligible for leave, as comparable and consistent information often is lacking, it remains safe to hypothesize that there remain significant excluded groups, also in countries with a generous leave policies. We refer to the self-employed, to workers with insecure or unstable labour market histories prior to a child's birth. They may be over-represented by low income and immigrant families. Country level eligibility criteria (e.g. length of continuous service) restrict access to parental leave for many fathers and mothers. Public legislation at national or regional level may not be applicable to private employers with less than 50 employees.

This should get more attention of public authorities and other actors, among others from a perspective of equal opportunities and social justice.

### **FUNDING AND BUDGETS**

How are these payments funded? Generally statutory leave payments come from some form of contributory insurance fund, financed by contributions from employers and employees, and sometimes with contributions from general taxation. The costs are pooled or collectivized, rather than individual employers paying their own workers.

In some cases employers may make 'top up' payments, adding to the statutory benefits received by their employees, as a result either of collective agreements or individual company policies.

The main exception to this picture is when parents on leave receive a general 'childrearing' benefit that is paid to all parents with young children, usually come from general taxation (but not in France).

### **TAKE UP RATES**

A complex mix of informal unpaid and formal paid entitlements across and within nations makes assessment of the magnitude of paternal leave taking difficult to assess. Most sources providing information on take-up of various types of leave have many gaps, making systematic cross-national comparisons almost impossible.

Public authorities usually rely on registrar data in order that their supervising administration can execute the correct payment. An increasing complexity of the regulations (e.g. types of flexibility) further hampers the comparability of data on take up rates. But such data are hardly useful for research purposes, especially on the basis of a longitudinal research design.

In general, maternity leave appears to be extensively and fully used by mothers who are eligible. Where parental leave is unpaid, and regular statistics are lacking, take-up is thought to be low, irrespective of gender. It may be used where entitlements to other forms of leave have been exhausted. Fathers' use of parental leave is low where it is a family entitlement. Fathers' use is higher when it is an individual entitlement and is relatively well paid. Leave is used differentially according to gender but as well according to education, income and employment both individually and in relation to the partner (Moss, 2011). Generally speaking, mothers continue to take more leave than fathers, including the Nordic countries. Care and the use of leave arrangements continue to be quite strongly gendered. In this respect, the question remains for numerous European countries whether parental leave is a progress or a pitfall from the perspective of equal opportunities, e.g. employment, career development, and the sharing of caring (Moss & Deven, 1999).

## **INCENTIVES**

Various measures have been introduced to encourage fathers to use parental leave. Mostly these are wholly or partly individualized entitlements, so that fathers not using their 'quota' lose it, as unused leave cannot be transferred to a partner.

Fathers' use of leave is heightened when high income replacement is combined with designated father targeted or reserved schemes. Blocks of time which are labeled 'daddy days' or 'father's quota' are attractive to men and their partners. 'Gender- neutral' parental leave schemes which implicitly include fathers do not appear to promote greater father involvement. Numerous policy experiments with the timing of father's leave are occurring (O'Brien, 2011).

Another approach is to offer some form of bonus (e.g. additional leave) if fathers take some parental leave. For example, fathers in Finland can take 24 'bonus' days, in addition to their 18 days of paternity leave, if they take the last two weeks of parental leave (all together called 'father's month'). Sweden introduced a 'gender equality bonus' that provides an economic incentive for families to divide parental leave more equally.

While as part of a radical overhaul of German policy, if the father takes at least two months of leave the overall length of benefit payment is extended to 14 months. Portugal offers a bonus to families where the father shares part of the maternity leave; it is also

unique in making it obligatory for fathers to take two weeks of leave. Other countries with incentives for fathers to take leave are Austria, Croatia and Italy.

A socio-economic profiling of fathers' utilization of leave indicates: higher rates are generally associated with high income occupations (self and partner), high levels of education (self and partner), and public sector occupations (self and partner). In countries where there is no statutory father-care sensitive parental leave taking time away from employment is more difficult for low-income fathers.

Lower take-up rates by fathers in less secure and poorly regulated occupations indicate the significance of financial loss as a disincentive.

#### **LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS IN RELATION TO OTHER POLICY INSTRUMENTS**

Two key policies need to be included in discussing policy frameworks to support employed parents with young children: parental leave and early childhood education and care (ECEC), in particular at whether they are coordinated in the sense that an entitlement to leave leads immediately into, or coincides with, an entitlement to ECEC. Great variations exist between European countries in both leave policies and ECEC. They relate especially to attendance rates at formal services and entitlement to ECEC. Attendance rates vary from less than 10% for children under 3 years to over 50%, with a median rate of just under a third. Attendance rates for children over 3 years are uniformly higher, but varying from under 60% to over 90% (Moss, 2011).

What these figures do not reveal is the opening hours of services and how far they are suited to the needs of working parents. In at least some cases they will not be. Many countries have an entitlement to an ECEC service, but in most cases this is only from 3 years of age or later. A more limited number of countries have entitlement at 1 year or younger (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden). It is only in these countries that policies are designed to ensure no gap between the end of well-paid leave and the start of an ECEC entitlement. Elsewhere, the gap is from 18 to 67 months, which if combined with countries that have no ECEC entitlement emphasises the extensive lack of coordination between these two policy areas.

**Flexible working hours/options:** A number of European countries (Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden) give parents the right to work part-time hours either because of their child's age or disability. In the Netherlands, all Dutch employees have the right to work part time, though employers may turn down an employee's request under specified conditions.

Greece provides an example of a country that provides both payment and a substantial degree of flexibility in how reduced hours may be taken. Parents are entitled to work fewer hours per day, with full earnings replacement. But these reduced hours may also be

taken as a period of full-time leave, up to three and three-quarter months in the private sector and nine months in the public sector. Finally, in a few countries (e.g. Italy, UK), parents have a legal right to request flexible working hours from their employers, who must consider their request and may only refuse them if there is a clear business case for doing so.

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## 6. FULL EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK: ENSURING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

### **WORK, FERTILITY AND THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD: TRENDS AND THEIR IMPACT ON WORK AND FAMILY AGENDA**

*Dimiter Philipov*

Major societal trends related to the family continued their general course during the first decade of this Century: fertility remained low; new family forms are on the rise; the work and family dilemma continues as a riddle with many solutions apparently not effective; young adults' life course is condensed with crucial life events. This development however holds its specific aspects for different time periods that imply specific policy-related implications. This paper presents a brief description of trends and issues related to the work-life dilemma of contemporary families. A specific feature of contemporary life is the economic recession in the European countries which are in the focus of the present analysis.

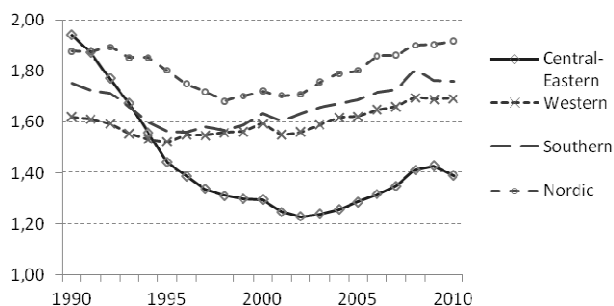
#### **A. FERTILITY**

Recent and current fertility change in the European countries is characteristic with two major trends: the rebound of fertility and the effect of the recession on fertility.

##### **REBOUND OF FERTILITY**

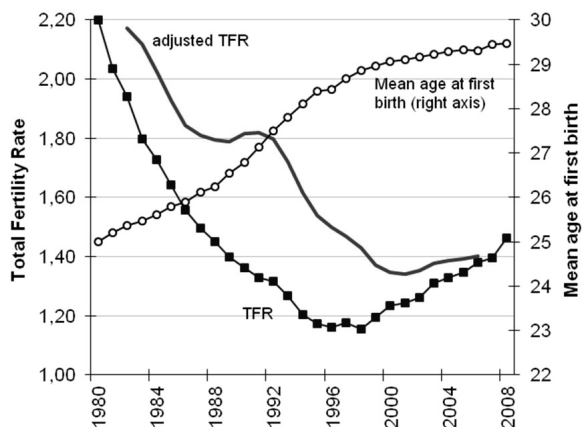
Figure 1 describes the fertility trends observed as of 1990 in several sub-regions in Europe. While fertility (measured with the total fertility rate) declined all throughout Europe during the 1990-s and lowest points were observed around the turn of the Century, during the recent decade it increased in all countries with few exceptions such as Portugal.

How can this rebound be explained? During the recent 3-4 decades and as of the start of the transition in Central and Eastern Europe, births have been postponed to later ages in life. During the run of postponement, period measures of fertility such as the TFR are depressed downwards. The fertility level at the end of the reproductive life however is not affected by postponement. Hence changes in fertility measures such as the TFR can be due partially to this postponement effect along with actual decline in the level of fertility.

**FIGURE 1: TOTAL FERTILITY RATE IN REGIONS OF EUROPE; EU MEMBER COUNTRIES ONLY**

Source: Eurostat and Human Fertility Database.

Postponement of births to later ages of life cannot last for ever. When its effect will be exhausted it will not further depress the values of the TFR and the TFR will rise. Analytical work shows that (Goldstein et al. 2009, Bongaarts and Sobotka 2011) a major reason for the rebound is namely the decline of the fertility postponement effect. To this end use is made of an adjustment of the TFR that accounts for the postponement effect. Figure 2 illustrates these changes in the case of Spain.

**FIGURE 2: TFR, ADJUSTED TFR, AND MEAN AGE AT FIRST BIRTH: SPAIN 1980-2008**

Source: VID-IIASA European Datasheet 2010.

The figure shows that the TFR declined significantly till the second half of the 1990s and thereafter started to increase. The mean age at first birth illustrates postponement (similar curves for mean ages at higher births are not included in the graph): it increased considerably during the time of decline of the TFR but this increase turned moderate later. As a consequence the adjusted TFR is considerably higher than the actual TFR all throughout the period, but the difference declined during the last decade and is about to disappear towards the decade's end. I.e. postponement extinguishes and the observed TFR resumes higher values. Fertility level in Spain as indicated by the adjusted TFR has never been below 1.3 and was only for a couple of years below 1.4.

The rise in the mean age at first birth is indicative also about a postponement of the entry into parenthood: a crucial topic in contemporary social research and policies.

#### **EFFECT OF THE RECESSION: REBOUND OF POSTPONEMENT?**

Figure 1 shows that during the last couple of years before 2010 the rise in fertility in some regions declined and even a fall in fertility has been observed – particularly in the countries situated in Central-Eastern Europe (countries in transition). This change comes during the rebound. The effect of the recession is known to influence mainly timing of births, i.e. it has a postponement effect (Sobotka et al. 2011). Thus the effect of the recession on fertility is to renew postponement of births.

#### **DO POLICIES HAVE AN EFFECT?**

The decline in fertility till the turn of the Century was considered as negative by many European governments. According to a UN enquiry carried out in 2009 (United Nations 2011), 27 governments in Europe evaluated the fertility trends in their country as “too low”, and only 13 assessed them as “satisfactory”. 30 governments stated they perform policy related to fertility: 25 with the purpose to “raise” it, and 5 to “maintain” its level. Only 9 governments preferred “no intervention”. Many governments followed with practical action: family policy instruments were being changed with the purpose to alleviate barriers to childbearing.

Frequently the rise in fertility observed during the second half of the decade is explained with these policies. Academic research indicates however that the fertility rebound is explained with the decline in postponement. Hence policies have a minor effect on the level of fertility. It can only be argued that policies might have encouraged young families to have their children earlier in life; therefore their effect is on timing of births and hardly on their quantity. This effect seems also to have been lost during the years of the reces-

sion, moreover because under the economic pressure some governments (eg. in Spain) decreased funding support to families.

## **B. POSTPONEMENT: AN OUTCOME OF THE WORK-FAMILY DILEMMA**

The work-family dilemma is by and large a problem of time-use. Young adults must take decisions about a sequence of crucial life events such as completion of education, starting work, leaving the parental home, starting an own family, having children. These events are condensed within a short time interval (frequently referred to as “the rush hours of life”) and they compete for the time of the individual. One solution to this ‘competition’ is to postpone some of the events to later age: particularly those which are strongly bounding or irreversible, such as entry into a marriage or becoming a parent. This rational decision-taking under existing constraints defines the run of contemporary changes around the family. For example, cohabitation is not as bounding as marriage and hence it can be preferred as a temporary family form that precedes the more bounding marriage. As a consequence, a successful cohabitation may remain as a long-standing family form of the couple.

A diversity of social policies instruments aim to alleviate the work-family conflict along these events. A significant aspect of these policies has only rarely been discussed: helping individuals not to postpone important decisions to later age. This aspect of policies is known as ‘tempo’ policies (Lutz and Skirrbekk 2005). Tempo policies aim to achieve compatibility among events in terms of time use, so that individuals can have increased choices to parallel courses in life. An example of such a policy instrument is the encouragement of kindergartens and crèches in universities and in large-scale working enterprises which is a parallel between education or work on one side and childrearing on the other. Tempo policies have a considerable potential and their enhancement can have a marked contribution to the alleviation of the work-family dilemma.

Time use is not the only reason for postponement. There exist at least two other reasons: poverty and uncertainty in life.

Poor people feel they do not dispose with the resources necessary to achieve certain aims in their life, such as own dwelling, higher education, or having children. Under the pressure exercised by financial and material constraints individuals are forced to postpone some of their preferred life events until later in life and focus on those means that will help them achieve these aims. Primary means are working for pay and therefore individuals prefer work to family-related events. Apparently conditions of employability can change similar arrangements. Alleviating problems related to the family in similar cases needs other than tempo policies and they related to issues such as employment, training, financial support.

Uncertainty is another reason for postponement of crucial life events. Uncertainty has been recently on the increase for a diversity of reasons. Specifically in the ex-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe it was due to the difficulties that young adults experienced during the transition period. At present this aspect of increase in uncertainty is not as significant as it has been until only a couple of years ago. Another aspect of uncertainty in these countries was due to the large increase in the set of alternatives for arranging one's life that increased enormously with the transition to a democratic regime. Making proper choices in a large set of alternatives requires a detailed knowledge of the consequences of this decision-taking; however in times of dynamic societal change these consequences are not easy to assess and hence dynamics of change causes rise in uncertainty.

All over Europe similar development of uncertainty is discussed as being caused by rising globalization (Blossfeld and Mills 2010). Globalizations opens new markets, opportunities for travel, enhances communications, etc., which brings new opportunities for choices to young adults. Facing these opportunities they might decide to postpone bounding events such as marriage or having a child.

A proper way to view the effect of policies where uncertainty is considered is providing means that lead to a decline in uncertainty. One powerful way is increase in information through mass media, specialized bureaus and other ways for transfer of information to the population.

### **C. THE WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE**

Young adults react to competing life paths with postponement of crucial and irreversible life events. This section provides a brief review of the environment in which the work-family dilemma is observed. One component of this environment is globalization of contemporary societies which was discussed above. Other components refer to women's preferences and the dominant gender model in society.

The 'theory of preferences' as it is known (Hakim 2001) posits that according to their preferences to choose between a working career and family care women can be categorized in three groups. The first group includes women who definitely prefer family care to a working career; the second group includes women who definitely prefer career to family work and the third group refers to undecided women whose preferences are not clearly demonstrated. The three groups are approximately equal in magnitude, i.e. one third of all women in each group. The main policy implication from the theory of preferences is that policies that refer to the work-family dilemma should target women from the third group as these policies will be ineffective where women from the other two groups are considered. Hakim's results have been debated but the general inferences mentioned here have gained support.

Gender issues are a significant background of the prevalent work-family relations. The traditional breadwinner model where the man works and the woman cares for the family is not dominating anymore and continues giving ground to a contemporary model where both partners work and both care for the family. Yet participation in family care is strongly biased towards women who do the bulk of the household labour. Thus women feel the burden of work for pay and work at home at a greater extent than men do.

Governments have done a great deal towards supporting a division of labour at work and in the household. The legal system in most of the countries is not a significant obstacle through the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming. However, problems of gender equity remain particularly where women take the bulk of the household work: there exists a conflict between a contemporary legal system on one side and traditional social norms to family care, on the other. This conflict is observed mainly in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe (McDonalds 2000). This conflict is stated as an important explanation of low fertility in these countries.

#### **D. WORK AND THE FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL LIFE**

This section focuses on education and employment as well as on new family forms.

##### **EDUCATION**

It is a primary reason for the postponement of entry into parenthood. In most of the European countries the proportion of women that attain university education is higher than that for men. Women prefer more humanitarian and social disciplines, i.e. there exist some gender-specific preferences to higher education. While being in education women prefer to postpone having babies to the times when education will be completed. This relation is however quite loose in the Nordic countries where policies support students in childrearing. These policies refer to the tempo-policies mentioned above. It is likely to expect that they can be effective in other countries as well. A specific feature of education in the Nordic countries is that higher education is completed at a relatively higher age at life.

During the period 2001-2009 the number of students in tertiary education in the EU-27 has increased by three million: from 16.1 to 19 million. A further steep increase is expected in the future. The 2020 Strategy of the European Union sets a specific target with respect to education: "at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education". A proportion of 40% is high for countries like Italy and Austria as well as for a range of other countries so increase in these countries is expected to be faster. Higher education will continue to increase and therefore this incentive for postponement of entry into par-

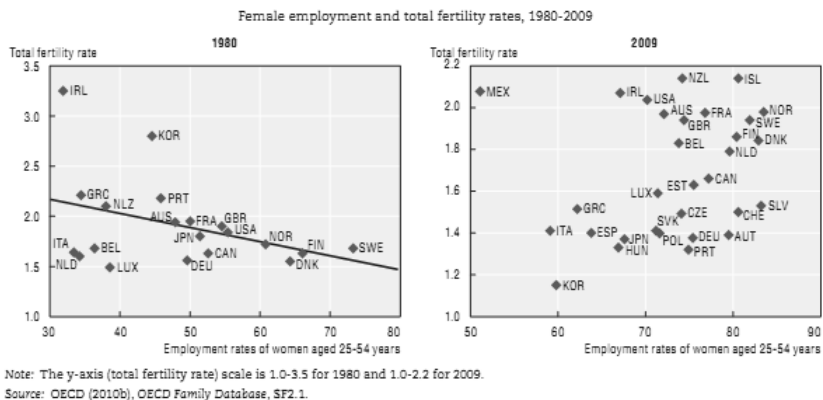
enthood will be here to stay. Adequate tempo-related policies need further enhancement.

## WOMEN IN LABOUR

According to Eurostat data (based on the labour force surveys) employment in the active population aged 15 and higher has increased significantly till 2008 when it reached a quota of 58.9% for females and 72.7 for males. During the years after 2007 the recession caused a decline in employment for both sexes. The decline was steeper for men than for the women because men are dominant in the sectors most strongly affected by the recession: construction and industries. Yet the data for 2011 mark a slight increase.

Increase in labour force participation rates among women has been observed during the last couple of decades in many countries in Europe. Academic research points out that this increase has been negatively correlated with fertility until 0-15 years ago but recently it has turned non-negative if not positive. The figure below describes these changes for the OECD countries.

FIGURE 3: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND TOTAL FERTILITY RATES, 1980 AND 2009



Source: Figure 3.8 in OECD, 2011.

A regression line across countries and the level of total fertility rates has had a negative slope in 1980. In 2009 no line is given as the data are not accordingly distributed: If Mex-

ico were removed from the figure a line with a positive slope could have been received with a lineal regression.

Hence there is a reversal in the correlation between fertility and employment: they have become less incompatible towards 2009 as compared with past years. Researchers explain this change with the rise in services and support provided by family and other social policies which have alleviated the conflict in the time use for the family and for work. OECD (2011) provides a detailed analysis of these policies.

One trend that led to the decline in this incompatibility is the high level of part-time employment of women. In 2007 nearly every third woman (31.2%) in the EU 27 was working part-time while for the men this percent is 7.8 points. Apparently part-time labour-force occupation gives increased possibilities for childcare. Part-time is a convenient alternative to full-time employment for women who can be classified as “undecided” in the preferences classification discussed above. Notably part-time participation of women has increased by 1 point during the last couple of years, apparently under the impact of the recession.

## **FAMILIES IN TRANSITION**

A traditional family includes two married parents and at least one child. Although the term ‘family’ has its legal definition, in practice it is used for a variety of forms that derive from the classical one:

- *A couple without children.* Childless families are on the rise particularly in countries situated in Central Europe (Germany and Austria), where social norms are tolerant towards not being a parent. There is evidence that some Eastern European countries may soon be included in this group. In other countries such as in Southern Europe and some countries on the Balkans and Eastern Europe the social expectation that everyone should be a parent is strong and hence childlessness is rare. An important policy implication is that where childlessness is a concern, policy-makers should be aware of the role that social norms might play.
- *Single parent with at least one child.* The single parent is usually a mother. The proportion of these families has been increasing. These families are vulnerable from economic point of view because the mother’s income can be insufficient for the maintenance of a reasonable well-being of the family.
- *Cohabiting couple with or without children.* This type of family has become common in most of the European countries, with some exception in countries where religiosity is relatively strong (Poland, Ireland, Italy). Cohabitation is frequently a prelude to a marriage and it serves as a way to enjoy the common life with a close person without taking risks in an uncertain world. Cohabitation has become common under the pressure



of recent ideational changes that push towards a higher female autonomy. Contemporary legal systems in Europe have reflected this family type.

- *Single-sex families.* Still statistically rare, these families are on the increase as tolerance to uncommon behaviour has increased across European populations.
- *Families of foreigners.* These families refer to a couple that is of a foreign origin in the country of residence. Statistics shows that these families are unaccepted and socially excluded by the local population – a clear field for policy action.

## **E. WORK AND FAMILY: A BROADER VIEW WITH RESPECT TO POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This section outlines additional considerations that are important in shaping policies relevant to the work-family conflict.

### **ARE MORE CHILDREN DESIRED?**

The work-family dilemma steps on the assumption that couples want to have children but involvement in labour is an obstacle to meeting their desires.

The assumption has been recently analysed in detail for example under the framework of the FP7 project 'REPRO' ([www.repro-project.org](http://www.repro-project.org)).

The ideal number of children for Europeans is about 2.1 while fertility is considerably higher. The difference is known as the 'fertility gap' and it is assumed to indicate the need of policy action. Recent debates showed that this measurement is crude (Philipov and Bernardi 2012), yet the idea is useful and needs elaboration.

The idea developed in REPRO is the following. First, information should be gathered about fertility intentions to have a child within a short period of time such as 2-3 years. Second, information about the fulfilment or frustration of these intentions should also be gathered with panel surveys several years later. Third, the reasons for frustration or fulfilment of intentions should be analysed for drawing policy implications. With the application of rigorous scientific theories this framework yields valuable and reliable policy-relevant information.

An important constituent of this approach is that intentions are analysed in their integrity. I.e., intentions not to have a child are also considered. Indeed, having children is a fundamental reproductive right: "Couples are free to decide the number and spacing of their children" as is stated in the Human Rights Declaration. Governments act to fulfil needs of families that want as well as needs of families that do not want to have children.

## **A SYNDROME OF POSTPONEMENT?**

The discussion in the preceding sections frequently described postponement of family formation as a dominating trend in contemporary young adults' life course. Postponement of the birth of the first child has risen with several ears during the last two decades. As a result the majority of young couples have their children considerably later than their parents. Entry into parenthood has become a dominating pattern of behaviour that has spread through contemporary societies as a social norm. This pattern is named by some scientists as 'syndrome' because it originated under the pressure of external obstacles rather than as a free choice.

## **VALUE OF CHILDREN?**

Individuals usually solve their work-family dilemma with the postponement of childbearing and specifically with a later entry into parenthood. As discussed this is a rational choice as having children is an irreversible and crucial event as compared to other events such as work and education. Yet, why couples do not decide to give up these other events and enjoy a happy life with children? Apparently the joy and satisfaction that children bring is not dominating over the achievements reached with higher education and well paid job. This comparison confronts values: the values of children with the values related to work and career. Studies on this topic are not frequent and need reinforcement. Some researchers find that policies and the media can turn towards explaining the high value of children for a family and thus help couples decide that having children brings not less joy than a working career (Esping-Adersen 2010).

## **F. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Policies that aim to increase fertility are frequently termed as pronatalistic. I exclude this policy approach from my recommendations. Instead, the following simple scheme can be followed.

- First, analytical research should examine people's intentions to have a/another child and follow whether this intention has been fulfilled or remained frustrated.
- Second, delineate those obstacles that prevented people from fulfilling their intention. Identify obstacles that can be subject to policy action.
- Identify appropriate policy tools that will alleviate the effect of these obstacles.
- It is important to note that the same scheme applies also in the case when intentions not to have a/another child are frustrated, i.e. when people have unplanned pregnan-

cies. This case is however under detailed monitoring by family planning policies so I do not consider it here.

- This approach directs policies towards alleviation of obstacles that people meet. It does not directly incur pronatalism.
- A major group of obstacles that prevent people from fulfilling their family size desires refers to the work-family dilemma. As discussed above this dilemma is by and large a product of competing time paths. Therefore a promising way to policy-making is to help people run parallel life courses, i.e. the recommendation is to organize and proceed with 'tempo' policies which were mentioned above. Examples:
- Reconcile being in education with care for the family. Policies may encourage the spread of kindergartens in universities and higher schools.
- Reconcile being at work and with care for the family. A diversity of policies are practiced here and their expansion is recommended: part-time work, kindergartens in large companies, supporting a nanny who cares about children while parents work, promoting a decline of the gendered division of labour in the family. Note should be taken that these policies will be less effective among women who are firmly destined to a working career, and redundant to women who are firmly destined to care about their families.

Last but not least, more attention should be turned towards the spread of new family forms. Some of them include families that need support, such as single-parent families and single (usually widowed) old persons.

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## **7. FULL EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK: ENSURING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE**

### **INTEGRATION OF FAMILY POLICIES RESPONSES AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES**

*Lorenza Rebuzzini*

Over the past several decades, the structure of families has changed rapidly in most of the world's industrialized countries, and Europe is facing nowadays declining birth rates, with fertility rates falling below the crucial two-child replacement level in many countries, declining marriage rates and union commitments, rising divorce rates, growth of non-marital parenthood, and women and couples waiting longer to have children. At the same time, the population is ageing and life expectancy has been growing: less children, less people in active work, and more ageing people.

#### **A. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND FAMILY POLICY**

Family policy has therefore entered the public debate as a set of policies aimed to cope with the demographic change and to achieve a sustainable growth, pursuing two main goals: (a) to help people have the number of children they want (according to research, European women have on average one children less than they desire); (b) to face the decreasing number of active people and the ageing of population.

The demographic challenges affecting Europe have been addressed in the light of "sustainable growth, a competitive social market economy aiming at full employment and social progress, a high level of social protection of citizens and intergenerational solidarity". It is a widespread opinion that sustainable growth cannot be achieved without demographic growth.

The European Union has consequently approached family policy in two specific ways:

- the Demographic Challenge;
- the Respect for National Policies.

#### **THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE: WORK-LIFE BALANCE POLICIES**

According to the aims specified above, the action of the European Union has focused on work-life balance, also indicated as work and family-life balance, and on gender equality, as well as active ageing. This choice is due to the goal to pursue at the same time higher levels of female employment, in order to 'fill the gap' of retired people, and higher birth rates. The Lisbon Strategy in 2000 set the goal of 60% of women employed in the labour

market, and in those years countries have experienced growing number of women participating in the labour market. According to statistics, moreover, women with a stable job are the ones who decide to give birth to children.

The European Union has shaped policies of work-life balance and active ageing in the light of the equal opportunities for all, developing its function of:

- coordination in employment policies and relevant areas of social policy, in particular by defining employment guidelines;
- coordination and exchange of best practices in relevant areas of social policy, especially those linked to care services for children and dependent people.

Several initiatives have been launched, especially promoting the best practice method (on which is based the action of the European Alliance for Families), and the OMC, Open Method Coordination, aiming to develop soft laws mechanisms.

## **THE RESPECT OF THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

The European Union has no specific competence on State family policy, according to Art. 4 of the Treaty of European Union: "competences not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States". It is therefore "the responsibility of the Member States to formulate policies in support of families."

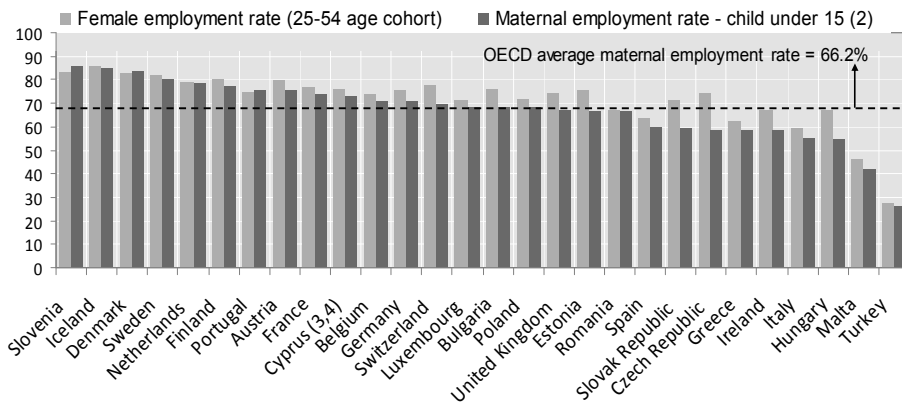
Taking into consideration these two characteristics that have shaped the approach of the European Union towards family and family policy, we need to note that:

(a) Reconciliation of work and family life is not seen as a policy to improve the well-being of families, but it is explicitly convened as "a means of achieving equality between women and men".

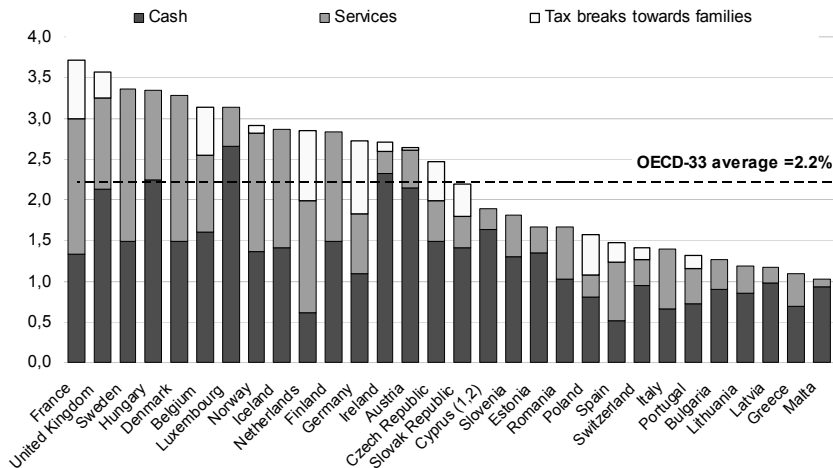
In this way, nonetheless, it seems that the demographic challenge cannot be assumed in its complexity, leading to poor results. If we consider the statistics, we can find that the positive correlation between female employment and birth rates is not univocal.

The number of children a woman decide to have seems rather to depend on a more complex set of conditions: work-family balance support, tax breaks towards families, cash transfers for families with children, childcare services.

For example, as the following charts show, Portugal and Slovenia have high female employment rates, but low investments on family policies and, definitely, low birth rates. France, with a female employment rate similar to Portugal, but with strong family policies, has higher birth rates.

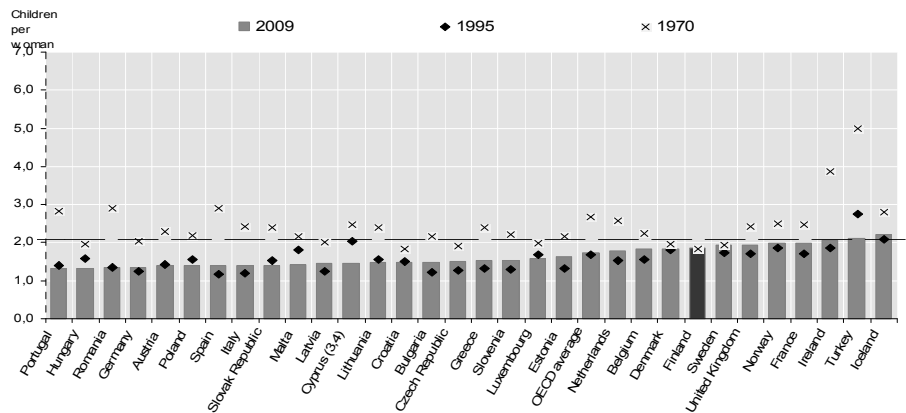
**FIGURE 1: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT RATE/MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT RATE**

Source: OECD Family Database, 2012.

**FIGURE 2: PUBLIC SPENDING IN FAMILY POLICIES**

Source: OECD Family Database.

FIGURE 3: BIRTH RATES



Source: OECD Family Database.

FIGURE 4: EUROPEAN FAMILY POLICY SYSTEMS ABOUT 1990

Policy regime	Overall Characteristics	Cash support	Support for working parents	Countries
Social-Democratic	Universal state support, high commitment to gender equality	Medium-level cash benefits, high-level other benefits	High-level support to both parents, long leave and extensive childcare facilities	Denmark Finland Norway Sweden
Conservative	Employment-related state supports, driven by more traditional gender view	Medium- to high-level cash support	Medium-level support, long leave and limited childcare facilities	Austria Belgium France Germany Ireland Luxembourg Netherlands
Southern European	High occupational fragmentation, mix of universal and private benefits	Low-level cash support	Low-level support	Greece Italy Portugal Spain
Liberal	Low-level, need-oriented support and market forces	Low-level, need-oriented support	Low-level support with strong private sector	UK Switzerland

Source: FamilyPlatform Project (adapted slightly modified from Gauthier 2002)..

(b) Being competence of the different European countries, family policy has been strictly linked to the different welfare regimes characterizing single Member States. Categori-



tion of welfare regimes have been tried, but all of them have raised criticism and have led to some revisions. In the present paper we do not face the debate, but we bear it in mind, especially in its most common declination, summed up in the following table. Moreover, as seen in Chart 2, States differ greatly according to public spending on family policies, and this seem to be a determinant factor for families wellbeing and reproductive choices.

## **B. SOME DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY POLICY**

Building a framework of reference for family policies is therefore quite hard, as there is no univocal definition of family policy or family programmes. We can start from comparing different definitions, trying to underline the common aspects and the cross-cutting elements. Here are some definitions of family policy, taken from research documents or searching in the Web.

1. "Family policies are defined as those policies that increase resources of households with dependent children; foster child development; reduce barriers to having children and combining work and family commitments; and, promote gender equity in employment opportunities."
2. "Family policy, a subfield of social policy, encompasses one of four family functions: (a) family creation (e.g., to marry or divorce, to bear or adopt children, to provide foster care), (b) economic support (e.g., to provide for members' basic needs, (c) childrearing (e.g., to socialize the next generation), and (d) family caregiving (e.g., to provide assistance for the disabled, ill, frail, and elderly). Family policies address issues such as child care, child support, divorce, family violence, juvenile crime, long-term care, and teenage pregnancy. Tax provisions that create a child care tax credit would be considered family policy. However, a tax reform law that lowers taxes for individuals, many of whom happen to live in families, would not be considered family policy. The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) would be considered family policy. However, a universal health care program would not be considered family policy, because it targets individuals, irrespective of whether or not they live in a family setting."
3. "'Family policy' is not a single concept but rather a range of concepts. These entail a perspective for thinking about policy in relation to families. Also, while family policy is defined in various ways, its components entail laws, regulations, benefits and programmes that are designed to achieve specific objectives for the family as a whole, or for its individual members. (...) As a field of activity, 'Family policy' finds expression in a multiplicity of family-related programmes and services. These include childcare, counseling, social services, income maintenance, etc. Action takes place through policies as well as through appropriate institutional mechanisms. Moreover, reaching policy objectives also involves the cooperation of various social actors. (...) While the eight country studies agree upon the necessity to improve the well being of the family, not all advocate direct

intervention. (...) They (Family Policies, ndr) aim at strengthening families as well as at enhancing the overall socio-economic progress of society by using the family as a framework for action. Some of these services are direct and specific, such as day care, public housing, child allowance or financial support to poor families, whereas others have an indirect impact on families, i.e. through counselling and guidance as well as through providing decision makers with useful information. In addition, while some services and programmes (e.g. education, health) are encompassing all social strata, others are tailored as social welfare programmes to address the needs of poor families”.

4. Family policies are an “amalgam of policies directed at families with children and aimed at increasing their level of wellbeing”.

Synonyms and repeated concepts can be found, in this short list of family policies’ definitions:

(a) “set of policies, amalgam of policies, range of concepts”: family policies seem to be characterized by a certain complexity;

(b) “increase, support, strengthen”: family policies promote the choice to have a family;

(c) “children care”: the presence of children in the family is of importance;

(d) “direct/indirect”: family policies are polarized on two different approaches, between considering families as an explicit object/subject of policies, and considering individuals as object of sectorial policies that help families, but only indirectly;

(e) “wellbeing”: another complex concept relating to quality of life, happiness, personal fulfillment, freedom

### **C. KEY CONCEPTS: FAMILY MAINSTREAMING AND FAMILY EMPOWERMENT**

In order to gather some more indication about the integration of family policies and shared responsibilities, we need to further analyze two key approaches/principles that can help in the definition, as well as in the practical implementation of family policies: Family Mainstreaming and Family Empowerment, both promoted by UN in different documents and fields, starting from the experience and the reflections on gender mainstreaming and gender empowerment. While Family Mainstreaming is intersecting family policies in their designing and implementation, Family Empowerment is intersecting the practice of social services.

#### **FAMILY MAINSTREAMING**

Family Mainstreaming (or mainstreaming the family issue) was first proposed by UN - DESA, starting from the Gender Mainstreaming approach and applying it to family poli-

cies and programmes. According to the document approved in the Consultative Meeting on Mainstreaming the Family Issue, family must be helped in "its supporting, educating and nurturing roles in contributing to social integration. This involved: (a) encouraging social and economic policies that are designed to meet the needs of families and their individual members; (b) ensuring opportunities for family members to understand and meet their social responsibilities; (c) promoting mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation within the family and within society; and (d) promoting equal partnership between women and men in the family."

Family Mainstreaming is at the same time, "a process, a strategy and a tool. As a process it concerns identifying the implications for families of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes. It is also a strategy for making family concerns an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. Moreover, it can be a tool for strengthening family-centered policies and programmes as part of an integrated and comprehensive approach to development planning." Family Mainstreaming can become useful in evaluating the impact of all the policies on families: therefore, it can become a tool not only for policy-makers, but also for NGOs and family associations.

The European Parliament has borrowed the definition of Family Mainstreaming, according to Resolution 2129 (Resolution on reconciling Professional, Family and Private Lives, 2003/2129(INI)), in which the Parliament "encourages the Member States and accession states to analyze the impact of their policies on families (family mainstreaming), while at the same time calling on them to separate gender mainstreaming and family mainstreaming; also calls on the Commission, in the context of its communication of 2002 on impact assessment (COM(2002) 276), to take account of the various dimensions and definitions of the family in order to identify the social impact of the measures proposed".

## **FAMILY EMPOWERMENT**

Family Empowerment is a criterion and a method for social practice: it is based on the activation of the inner-potentialities of family relations, by recognizing and promoting the symbolic, emotional, cognitive capabilities belonging not only to individuals, but also to the specific relation that individuals have, and trying to build positive synergies among all the individuals involved in the process (e.g. partners between them, parents and their children...)

This approach considers the family as a whole, as a complex and vital system, able to regenerate. Family Empowerment is a way of working with families, activating the single persons, developing their consciousness about their skills and sustaining their possibility to gain control over their choices.

The interventions based on Family Empowerment hold some characteristics:

- are directed to all the families at a local level;
- involve the family considered as a whole, as a subject;
- are focused on promoting the resources of the family (either inner resources or external resources, driven from the context in which the family lives, being those external resources both formal or informal);
- are aimed at enhancing the family as an active subject, main actor on the process, and not only an object and an addressee of intervention.

Family empowerment wants not only to support the relationships in the family, but aims to enhance the family as an active subject in building the community. Therefore, it has consequences not only on the families, but on the society as a whole.

#### **D. FAMILY POLICY: TOWARD INTEGRATION OF RESPONSES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

After having approached family policy in its complex and heterogeneous development in EU Countries, and after having considered Family Mainstreaming and Family Empowerment as key approaches, we now consider how to build family policies that (a) consider the family as a subject, capable of assuming responsibility and (b) share responsibilities with families. In this last paragraph some indications about the integration of family policy will be outlined:

#### **FAMILY POLICY IS CROSS-CUTTING**

Part of the difficulty in defining family policies is due to their extreme heterogeneity. Family policies cross many other policies such as gender equality, childcare policies, youth policies, policies for older people... For this reason, they often suffer from a lack of clarity and direction. OECD evaluates the commitment of Governments in family policies using the criterion of the public spending on family benefits, in percentage of GDP. This public spending is obtained by summing the child-related cash transfers to families with children, the public spending on services for families with children and the financial support provided through the tax system (see Chart 2).

It's interesting to note is that the three Countries with the highest amount of public spending are also characterized by different welfare regimes, and also very different labour markets: once again, we cannot define a 'better' model of family policy. Its cross-cutting character leads to a multiplicity of solutions that gather their specificity to the promotion of the family.

Family policy is therefore a set of policies, different and interrelated. As emerges also from OECD method of evaluation, family policy should not be considered residual poli-

cies, but 'core policies'. Better said, governments should promote family policy and should adopt the Family Mainstreaming approach in proposing, developing and implementing all the policies.

#### **FAMILY POLICY IS EXPLICIT, COHERENT AND LEGITIMATE**

In particular, also according to researches, family policy should be explicit, coherent and legitimate. Family policy should address to family explicitly: it means that the actions planned and implemented are directed to families, and not to individuals. For example, work-family balance policies can be directed to improve female employment rates (that is a policy directed to individuals, e.g. women) or can be policies directed to enhance the wellbeing of families (that is a policy explicitly for families). Family policy should also promote a set of coherent policies, e.g. a set of coordinated policies that are able to cover different areas of the needs of families. Family policy, moreover, needs to be promoted and implemented by an Agency or a Ministry with a specific appointment and a dedicated budget, at national and local level.

#### **FAMILY POLICY PROMOTES THE WELLBEING OF FAMILIES**

Family policies aim at promoting the wellbeing of families: they are therefore characterized by a distinctive promotional approach. This means that they are focused on promoting the wellbeing of the family considered as a whole, and specifically the relations among the individuals composing the family: the relation among father and children, mother and children, spouses or partners, grandparents and nephews, and so on. In this sense, family policy does not entangle the area of explicit needs, e.g. poverty reduction, unemployment, children poverty, and so on. Family policies should be considered as preventive policies as well: promoting and supporting the wellbeing of families and their responsible participation should help families in avoiding from falling under the poverty line.

#### **FAMILY POLICY PROMOTES THE EMPOWERMENT OF FAMILIES**

Family policy promotes the empowerment of family relations. In this sense,

(a) family policy does not expropriate families from their specific responsibilities in raising, nurturing, educating, and caring for their relatives; family policy helps families in accomplishing their tasks;

(b) family policy recognizes and awards the wellbeing created by the family

(c) family policy promotes the recognition of family as a social subject in society and trigger processes of democratic participation of families in the community.

Family policies are therefore policies targeted not on individuals, but on the family considered as a network of relationships. Family policies are consequently policies aiming at strengthening and improving the relationships among individuals, to preserve and promote the well-being of both the family and the individuals. It is often just an issue of putting the focus on different things –individuals or they relationships– but it changes approach, method and goals. Some ideas for changing the perspective on family policies are listed below:

**POLICIES PURSUED AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL - GUIDELINES FOR THE CHANGEMENT**

1. Implicit	Based on the consideration of individuals (gender, age, ethnicity...)	1. Explicit	Based ion the intergenerational relationships as an issue of solidarity among generations
2. Indirect	Focused on social problems and on poverty eradication; family is considered functional to achieve those goals	2. Direct	Focused on the enhancement of the family relationships
3. On the individual	Focused on motherhood	3. On the family	Focused on the family as a whole, and on parenthood and intergenerational relationships
4. Expropriating	Focused on giving services that can replace the family care	4. Promotional	Focused on helping families to accomplish their tasks

These last guidelines drive us to a further consideration: how to build effective family policies without listening to, and collaborating with, families themselves? In the light of the subsidiarity, and considering their cross-cutting character and the method of family empowerment, family policies should be projected and implemented involving families, and families' representatives. The 'old' slogan of people with disabilities, nothing about us without us, can be used for family policies as well.

## **E. FOR AN INTEGRATION OF FAMILY POLICIES: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **CONSIDER FAMILY POLICIES AS AN INVESTMENT, AND NOT AS A COST**

Many researches show the inter-connection between economic crisis and declining birth rates, especially in those countries that have been characterized by long trends of low-fertility rates (Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal). In Europe the debate is, in those days, how to promote a sustainable growth: a policy for growth cannot be set aside from investing in families. In times of crisis, the welfare systems of many countries are undergoing different forms of restructuring; the recommendation is therefore that the family policy is not considered as a cost to cut, but as an investment in growth.

### **CONSIDER WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AS POLICIES FOR THE WELLBEING OF FAMILIES**

Work and family life are two fundamental spheres of self-fulfillment and personal well-being. As seen, pursuing female employment does not lead to better birth rates, if female employment is not supported by family policies. We furthermore argue that it is the responsibility of childbearing that enterprises and institutions should recognize and support, considering and supporting parenthood. Work-life balance should become an issue of family policies, helping families to find the right balance in their professional and private life.

### **STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY MAINSTREAMING APPROACH**

At national and international level, family policy is still approached as a policy targeted on individuals in the light of equal opportunities. We advocate for a strengthening of the Family Mainstreaming at international, national and local level, not only in Institution but also in the labour market and in work-family life balance policies, as well as in policies for reducing poverty and in policies for migrant families.

## **STRAIGHTENING PARTICIPATION OF FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS**

Building family policy as a network in which institution, families and representatives of the economic sector can confront, listen to each other and collaborate; in this direction goes the best practice of the European Alliance for Families, at European and at local level, and also some social platforms promoted by the European Commission, as well as the consultative status of many associations at the United Nations. The European Alliance for Families promotes and enhances family policies through the best practice method; the alliances at local level (especially widespread in Germany) are networks based on the principles of responsibility (of all the actors involved in policy-building), participation and subsidiarity.

## **RECOGNIZE FAMILY CARE AND FAMILY CARE WORK**

The wellbeing of families, as well as individuals, is strictly linked to time and care. Care is a fundamental dimension of family life, and we believe that it is not only about care for small children or ancient people, but also care of the family relations in the whole life-course of families. Therefore, we advocate for the recognition of family care work. According to a recent research, the family care work is about 30% of the European GDP: an economic and social richness which is never counted in the economic balance of countries. Families do not want to be expropriated of their care work: they want to be supported.

## **ENSURE FREEDOM OF CHOICE**

In a recent survey at European level, many mothers asked for freedom of choice: freedom to decide about their working paths, about how long the maternity leave should be, about the real possibility to be stay-at-home parents. Family policy should build a set of policies and opportunities which enable families to make different choices, according to their attitudes and values. This freedom of choice should of course be balanced with equal opportunities policies for women's participation in the labour market, especially for those women with low-levels of education, more exposed to job loss after becoming mothers.



## 8. SOCIAL INTEGRATION: ADVANCING SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

### PARENTING COURSES

*Alonso Gil-Casares*

Parenting is a recognized cornerstone of children education worldwide. Parenting encourages a shared vision in couples that can lead to reduction in divorce rates. Parenting provides savings to governments in terms of eliminating social spending incurred in conflict derived from broken families.

This paper discusses the suitability for Case Method methodology as an appropriate tool to aid in Parenting.

#### A. THE CASE METHOD

Teaching through cases was first implemented at Harvard Law School by Christopher Columbus Langdell,<sup>12</sup> Dean of the Law School in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was an appropriate teaching system considering the specific legal and judiciary system applied in the Anglo Saxon environment. Anglo Saxon legal and judiciary system enforces jurisprudence and case law over legal coded articles which are mostly applied in continental judiciary systems.

This new system differed from traditional Socratic lecturing in the sense that students needed to analyze beforehand situations provided in real environments. They should henceforth specifically “put themselves in the shoes of the actor”, play the role and make decisions and recommendations.

Success and relevance of discussions and assurance of learning rates drove Harvard to adopt it in the new Business School (HBS 1908). Today, this kind of methodology has been adopted in prestigious universities all over the world. Just to name a few in addition to HBS, we have IESE, the Darden School at the University of Virginia, University of Michigan, Stanford, Ross School of Business, INSEAD, and Richard Ivey School of Business. In addition, case discussion methodology has also extended beyond Western culture and prestigious universities in the far East such as the Asian Institute of Management, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and Asian Case Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong have fully adopted this method of teaching. Using the words of HBS Professor Christensen, “a case is a narrative account of a situation, problem, or

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<sup>12</sup>Christensen, C. R. and Hansen, A.J. (1987). Teaching and the Case Method Harvard Business School: Boston

decision usually derived from actual experience.”<sup>13</sup>. Universities such as Harvard, INSEAD, IESE, Stanford have available data on ‘assurance of learning’ validated by AACSB and have been accredited by this internationally recognized accrediting institution.

## **B. CASE METHOD USAGE BEYOND BUSINESS AND LAW**

Usage of Case Method has spread beyond the basic ‘Business / Law & Teacher / Student’ environment. Observations on student behavior changes in the fields of communication, team building, commitment and implementation of decisions adopted, have driven several institutions in different disciplines to experiment with this system either in new fields or with new and different types of students such as:

### **ENGINEERING**

At the 2004 American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference & Exposition, professors Larry G. Richards and Michael E. Gorman of the University of Virginia presented their conclusions on their experience with this system in the paper ‘Using Case Studies to Teach Engineering Design and Ethics’.<sup>14</sup> After developing a set of case studies for teaching engineering ethics, engineering design and environmental issues, all cases have been used in a course on Invention and Design and in other courses offered by our Division of Technology, Culture, and Communications (TCC).

Developing their own conclusions while quoting well known scholars they confirmed that “Cases promote active learning,<sup>15</sup> team-based activities, and the ability to deal with open-ended problems. With cases, students can be exposed to realistic situations such as those involving open ended problems, multiple possible answers, key decision points, and tradeoffs. Thus, cases are a natural way to introduce engineering design and decision-making.”

The case method also fosters the development of higher-level cognitive skills<sup>16</sup> and<sup>17</sup> it forces students to go beyond rote learning. Cases address problems that require analysis,

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<sup>13</sup> Langdell wrote *Selection of Cases on the Law of Contracts* (1870, the first book used in the “case” system; enlarged, 1877); *Cases on Sales* (1872); *Summary of Equity Pleading* (1877, 2nd ed., 1883); *Cases in Equity Pleading* (1883); and *Brief Survey of Equity Jurisdiction* (1905)

<sup>14</sup> Proceedings of the 2004 American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference & Exposition Copyright © 2004, American Society for Engineering Education.

<sup>15</sup> In principle, they are usually critical of learning what clashes with their habitual behavior.

<sup>16</sup> Kolodner, J. (1993) *Case-Based Reasoning* Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, Inc. San Mateo, CA

<sup>17</sup> Leake, David B. (1996) *Case-Based Reasoning: Experiences, Lessons, and Future Directions* AAAI Press/MIT Press, Cambridge. MA

judgment, decisions, perspective taking, role-playing, independent thought, and critical thinking.

Shapiro reviews several approaches to developing knowledge and skills: lectures and readings facilitate “acquiring knowledge and becoming informed about techniques”; exercises and problem sets provide “the initial tools for exploring the applications and limitations of techniques”, while the case method promotes the “development of philosophies, approaches and skills.”<sup>18</sup>

Study key conclusions were that:

- Cases work best when they are used extensively during a semester. There is a learning curve for both students and teachers.
- Students must be prepared for the case experience. Is the case to be analyzed by individuals, or by a team? Do the students know in advance what role or perspective they are to assume?
- When using cases in a class, it is important to select or write cases to address the goals of the course.
- As a course progresses, the cases should become more complex. As students and teachers become more comfortable working with cases, greater sophistication and better analyses will result.

## **WITH BOARD MEMBERS**

Ken White, Vice President of Communication and Marketing at the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business in Charlottesville describes how Board Executives of a firm interact with each other and get themselves to work on a business issue treated differently from a pure MBA perspective:

“While MBA cases are designed to teach students on a particular business skill or principle, cases written for trustees are designed to draw out the board’s best ideas.”

“One of the reasons cases work is because our trustees fall right back into the pedagogical process they experienced while learning with cases,” says Ted Forbes, CEO of the Darden School Foundation.

“Utilizing cases makes for a more open and frank discussion,” he says. “It can be an excellent team-building exercise that leads to understanding, cooperation, and a unified agenda”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Shapiro, B.P. (1984) *An Introduction to Cases*, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA. 9-584-097

<sup>19</sup> White, Ken, *Cases Aren’t Just for Students* (BizED January February 2010)

### **C. PARENTING AS THE BEST AND MOST COMMON METHOD FOR RAISING CHILDREN?**

Parenting, the most traditional way that families have used over the years to bring up their children, is still today regarded across all societies as the best method on top of any government supported program, of doing so.

As stated by the World Values Survey, 1998-2008, "the vast majority of adults around the world believe a child needs to be raised in a home with both a mother and a father in order to grow up happily. This sentiment is strong in South America; more than 75 percent of adults in Argentina (88 percent), Chile (76 percent), Colombia (86 percent), and Peru (93 percent) believe a two-parent home is necessary for a happy childhood. North Americans are less likely to agree to this idea, but still 63 percent of U.S. adults and 65 percent of Canadians affirm the mother-father household as optimal for raising happy children.

(i) Agreement with the mother-father family ideal is even stronger in Europe than in the Americas, with the sole exception of Sweden. There, only 47 percent of adults agree that a child needs to be raised by a mother and father to be happy. Notably, Sweden is the only country in the world where a minority agrees with this sentiment. Agreement with a mother-father ideal exceeds 90 percent in Italy (93 percent), in Poland (95 percent), 80 percent in France (86 percent) and Germany (88 percent). More than three-quarters (78 percent) of Spaniards view this family arrangement as best for children, as do two-thirds (67 percent) of British adults.

(ii) Support for the mother-father family type is nearly unanimous in the Middle Eastern and African countries: Egypt (99 percent), Saudi Arabia (95 percent), Nigeria (97 percent), and South Africa (91 percent). Asian support for children being raised by a mother and father is also strong. Most of the Asian countries profiled exceed 90 percent agreement: China (97 percent), India (90 percent), Malaysia (92 percent), Philippines (97 percent), and South Korea (92 percent); and the remainder exceed 80 percent: Indonesia (81 percent), Japan (89 percent), and Taiwan (87 percent). Australians (70 percent) and New Zealanders (68 percent) express less agreement, resembling Americans, Canadians, and British attitudes on this issue."<sup>20</sup>

### **D. PARENTING AS A SIMPLE AND COST EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF CHILDREN EDUCATION**

After the 2011 UK riots in nearly 100 different spots of England and Scotland, an in depth study on why this phenomena had happened was undertaken. Objectives were to analyze the different reasons and take the necessary steps to avoid recurrence in the future.

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<sup>20</sup> World Values Survey, 1998-2008.

Steps will mean high expenditures from the tax payer over the years to provide individuals promoting these riots with job training and personal education and opportunities to be capable of re-joining the work force in current society.

Astonishingly enough, contrary to widely extended opinions that reasons were economic and crisis driven, the report identified absence of parenting to be the key reason behind it: "We heard from many communities where people felt that rioter behavior could ultimately be ascribed to poor parenting. In a wide survey of over 900 young people, 58 per cent supported this view. We also heard from some communities about a sense of entitlement among young people. The Panel's view is that where problems exist, the priority should be to focus on how we can best provide support to these families and young people to re-build their lives. There is strong evidence that good parenting has a positive impact on outcomes in a child's life. Through an analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study, Demos found that, while background factors such as income, parents' educational qualifications and family structure were also associated with positive early outcomes, it was the parenting approach that ultimately carried the most weight." <sup>21</sup>

#### **E. COMMUNICATION AS AN ISSUE IN PARENTING**

Diversity is a discovery of our times and much research is being undertaken in analyzing the differences in communication between males and females. Classical essays such as 14 million copies sold of John Gray's 'Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus' are generating a new set of disciplines based on analyzing and improving communication tools between men and women.

This is of key importance as current historical period is, unfortunately, eliminating opportunities for men and women to find the time to calmly sit and talk.

In addition, the competitiveness of the environment is impacting the very way people place their daily priorities. "Being 'us' frequently becomes a second priority vs. 'me' and 'my career'."

Couples need to have under control all these three elements to be able to overcome all the problems they face.

#### **F. DIVORCING COUPLES NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM NON-DIVORCING COUPLES**

A study undertaken by William J. Doherty, Professor of Family Social Science, University

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<sup>21</sup> After the riots. The final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel. Simon Marcus, Heather Rabbatts CBE, Darra Singh OBE (Panel Chair), Baroness Maeve Sherlock OBE.

of Minnesota and Leah Ward Sears Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice (retired) presented to the U.S. State Legislatures, states the following:

"There is a popular assumption among professionals and the public that divorce happens only after a long process of misery and conflict finally drives the spouses to end the marriage. This scenario turns out to be inaccurate for many couples confronting divorce. Sociologist Paul Amato of Pennsylvania State University and his colleagues found that most couples who divorce actually look quite similar to most couples who do not divorce. Most divorced couples report average happiness and low levels of conflict in their marriages in the years prior to the divorce. It is the minority of divorcing couples who, during their marriages, experienced high conflict, alienation, and sometimes abuse."

"Our results suggest that divorces with the greatest potential to harm children occur in marriages that have the greatest potential for reconciliation." We now know that divorce on average has dramatic effects on children's lives, across the life course. Research shows that divorced fathers and mothers are less likely to have high-quality relationships with their children. Children with divorced or unmarried parents are more likely to be poor, while married couples on average build more wealth than those who are not married, even accounting for the observation that well-off people are more likely to get married. Parental divorce or failure to marry appears to increase children's risk of failure in school."

"Such children are less likely to finish high school, complete college, or attain high-status jobs. Infant mortality is higher among children whose parents do not get or stay married, and such children on average have poorer physical health compared to their peers with married parents. Teens from divorced families are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, get in trouble with the law, and experience a teen pregnancy. Numerous studies also document that children living in homes with unrelated men are at much higher risk of childhood physical or sexual abuse. These studies generally adjust for parental education and income, which means that the negative effects cannot be explained by these demographic factors."<sup>22</sup>

All this evidence suggest that good communication between couples, a key objective of parenting, would result in a lower divorce rate leading to lower harm in children education. This in turn would lead to lower government spending in treating conflict and re-installing in society individuals with mental diseases derived from a broken home. Government support for parenting programs would mean "paying now and paying less" than having to solve issues generated by individuals transgressing society rules.

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<sup>22</sup>Second Chances. A proposal to reduce unnecessary divorce. William J. Doherty, Professor of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota and Leah Ward Sears Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice (retired)

## **G. CASE METHOD USAGE AS A TOOL FOR PARENTING**

Business students and managers graduating from IESE Business School in Barcelona (a partnering institution coming from Harvard Business School and the Spanish Universidad de Navarra) spotted in the late 60's the possibility of extending methodology to family issues and parenting. A group of family parents founded a Non Profit institution called FERT with the aim of making parents discuss family issues between themselves and aid in helping communication between couples.

Reasoning behind it was that:

- Parenting can be taught and learned.
- Case Method is a non imposed system but a tool to help in family education including parental communication.
- Parenting preempts children conflict.

FERT program which has subsequently spread to several countries addresses several fields of human and family education. Objective is to anticipate problems early on in marriage and deal with hot issues such as family communication, sexual relations, work life balance, adult routine/boredom, authority, ethics, parents and grandparent role in education, school aid, etc. Cases are not designed to deal with extreme situations that are no longer manageable but to anticipate conflict in the early stages of family development. By doing so, FERT aims at pre-empting family viruses that are the major causes of divorce and family break up.

Case method in parenting is currently being delivered to more than 100,000 couples worldwide every year. Results are being very positive and demand for new courses is continuously increasing as well as geographies where courses are being delivered

## **H. SUCCESS FACTORS**

Reasons for success are that methodology takes into consideration that 'family issues' are adult issues and therefore being delivered to adults. Although this may seem obvious, there are certain elements based on experience that are proving of key importance in choosing methodology:

1. Adults have fixed habits and resist change if they have no clear reasons to accept it.
2. Self-learning is crucial at this stage. So participation fosters the learning process.
3. Adults want to use everything they've learnt immediately, so they look for the most practical aspects of what they've been taught.

4. In principle, they are usually critical of learning what clashes with their habitual behavior.
5. A person probably learns more when the session focuses on a problem (which is always subjective), instead of a subject (more objective).
6. An environment of physical comfort, trust, friendliness and freedom of expression in the training session facilitates the learning process.
7. In order to learn, adults must recognize their own shortcomings in what they are taught. If not, they learn nothing.
8. When they are interested or have a reason to learn, they are very demanding with whoever is teaching them.<sup>23</sup>

## **I. CONCLUSIONS**

1. Parenting, a recognized cornerstone of children education worldwide, promotes children welfare, anticipates conflict and helps in couples' communication and family stability.
2. Parenting can further be learnt and is a field that encourages a shared vision in couples that can lead to reduction in divorce rates.
3. Parenting provides savings to governments in terms of eliminating social spending incurred in conflict derived from broken families.
4. Case Method is a proven academic system in various fields that promotes communication in solving issues generating commitment from students and couples to resolve and anticipate conflict.

## **J. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Government should analyze costs incurred in reducing and / or controlling conflict derived from broken families as opposed to investment in helping build stronger families.
2. Governments should promote Parenting and parental responsibility through appropriate tools to anticipate and reduce conflict derived from unstable families and children coming from divorced families.
3. Governments should encourage public and private initiatives that use the Case Method in Family Orientation Programs to help in:

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<sup>23</sup>Principles of Adult Learning. (IFFD)



(i) Promoting higher and better communication skills between couples that will result in a reduction in conflict and divorce in families.

(ii) 'Professionalization' of Parenting through supporting programs that make parents aware of their weaknesses and provide tools for improvement.

4. 'Pay now pay less' could become a guiding principle for Governments to build a better more human society with happier well educated individuals.

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## 9. SOCIAL INTEGRATION: ADVANCING SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

### SOCIAL INCLUSION AND INTEGRATION OF OLDER PERSONS: ACTIVE AGEING

*Anna Garriga*

In order to improve intergenerational relations and children's well-being is necessary to focus on the quality of parents' relationship.

- Parental divorce is negatively associated to children's well-being.
- Parental divorce reduces the quality and the quantity of contacts between the child and the non-resident parent. Parental divorce is associated with weak parent-child ties in adulthood.
- More research is needed in order to determine if parental divorce is harmful for children from low-conflict families and is beneficial for children from high-conflict families.
- Research also shows that parental conflict is linked with a poor parent-child relationship and parental conflict is negatively associated to children's well-being.
- Some evidence suggests that the quality of the parent-child relationship and the quality of the parents' relationship are protective factors for disadvantaged children. Nowadays, poor children have not only more chances to experience parental divorce but also to lose the positive influence of protective factors such as parent-child relations and parent's relationship quality.
- Traditional family policies, which are based on economic transfers and measures of balancing work and family life, do not eliminate the negative effects of parental conflict and parental divorce on children's well-being and intergenerational relations. Therefore, new family policies should be developed.
- In order to ameliorate European family policies, first of all we should improve our knowledge about European families. For this reason, a longitudinal and cross-national survey that specifically studies parental divorce, parents' relationship quality, children's well-being and intergenerational relations should be created.
- Policies promoting parents' relationship quality might improve children's well-being and intergenerational relationship. For this reason, Centres for Family Well-being that provide parenting and parents' relationship quality programs, high-quality childcare and other services for families should be established.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, children are living in a world that is changing far more dramatically than it was a century or even several decades ago. As Pryor and Rodgers (2001) note, far more significant than Internet-driven changes, or the possibilities of genetic engineering are transformations in the most fundamental of structures: the family. Family change is not new, since some children in the past also did not live their entire childhood with their two biological parents, because of parental death, one parent leaving home or being imprisoned, etc.

What is different today? The main reason for family change is not anymore death, but parental separation or divorce. The percentage of children experiencing parental separation is higher today than in the past since while parental separation or divorce was rare in most western countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, today it is a life experience for an increasing proportion of western children. In the European Union of 27, divorce rates rose by 250 per cent in forty years, since the number of divorces per 1,000 people increased from 0.8 in 1968 to 2.0 in 2008 (Eurostat).

Furthermore, since the new millennium, around one million Europeans have divorced each year, and many of them have children. The number of cohabitating couples with children is also increasing in all OECD countries, and these couples appear to be less stable than married couples (Kiernan, 2004).

These changes have led to various concerns, some of which focus on their economic implications, others on the effects on children's development, and still others that see them as moral problems linked to the breakdown of the family as an institution (Ellwood & Jencks 2004). In this paper, we focus on the second concern, i.e. the effects of parental divorce on children's development, taking into account various dimensions of children's well-being, and especially intergenerational relations. On the other hand, in spite of changes on family structure, children's well-being and parent-child relations are not only affected by the disruption of their parents' relationship but also by the quality of their relationship, especially in intact families.

This paper is organized as follows. First, we discuss the evolution of the literature on divorce.

We then review the empirical literature on the intergenerational effects of divorce and parents' relationship quality. Finally, taking empirical research findings into account, we provide several policy recommendations in order to improve children's well-being and intergenerational relations.

### **A. WHAT DO WE KNOW AFTER THREE DECADES OF RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE<sup>24</sup> ON CHILDREN?**

The academic and political discussion about the effects of divorce has often been highly controversial. According to Simons et al., (1996), "researchers during the 1970s and early 1980s viewed high divorce rates and a rapid rise in the number of single-parent families as an indicator of society's movement toward a more equitable, open atmosphere (...). Such normative changes were seen as healthy for both adults and children. Divorce allowed adults to terminate hopelessly troubled marriages, and children avoided the burden of being raised in an atmosphere of parental conflict (p.5)". In their famous book on single motherhood published in the 1990s,

McLanahan & Sandefur (1994) note that some people argue that single motherhood does not have long term consequences for children and others claim that is the major cause of children's problems; still others consider that even if single motherhood may be harmful, this topic should not be studied because it could stigmatize single mothers and their children. Since the early 1980s, research on the effects of parental divorce on children's well-being has experienced a great development, which has nuanced previous common wisdom. As Garriga & Härkönen (2009) note, in the early 1980s the common wisdom and the research hypothesis about that topic were as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* In terms of children's well-being, there are no differences between those who live in an intact family and those who live in a divorced family. Even if these differences exist: 1- they are short-term rather than long-term since children only experience the negative effects of parental divorce during the first two years after divorce (Simons, et al. 1996), and/or ; 2-parental divorce only has an impact on children's emotional stress since this event does not affect other domains of children well-being (Simons, et al.1996).

*Hypothesis 2:* Even if research demonstrates that there are differences between children from intact families and children from divorced families in several long term dimensions of well-being, the negative association between parental divorce and children's outcomes is not causal.

There are also no differences between children from conflict-free intact families and children from divorced families that do not experience parental conflict. This means that if the effect of parental divorce is not causal, we should not worry about its increase, since this growth increases the visibility of other social problems such as family conflict, which existed even before the rise in divorce rates.

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<sup>24</sup> From this section onwards, the phrase 'parental divorce' to cover both parental divorce and separation is used throughout this paper.

*Hypothesis 3:* The impact of parental divorce on children decreases over time, as this new phenomenon becomes more common and society increasingly adapts to it. If the effects of parental divorce are causal, but society can adapt to this social change, then the increase in parental divorce is not a social change that should worry us, since a new social change is less important if we can find the ways to eliminate or substantially reduce its possible negative effects.

*Evidence for hypothesis 1: Long term versus short-term effects and intergenerational relations.* Over the last three decades, several studies and literature reviews have shown that children from divorced families have less well-being compared to children from intact families (Amato & Keith 1991a, b; Amato 2001; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). It is important to note that these differences are not only found in the level of stress after divorce but also in other dimensions of children's well-being such as psychological well-being, behavioural problems, cognitive development, and parent-child relations...

Nevertheless, from a policy point of view if these differences are only short-term rather than long-term, the increase of parental divorce should not be seen as a problem, because its negative effects would disappear over time (Garriga & Härkönen, 2009). However, in recent decades, the literature has thoroughly demonstrated that there are long-term differences since the negative effect of parental divorce is shown on several adult outcomes such as educational attainment (Sigle-Rushton, Hobcraft & Kiernan, 2005; Jonsson & Gähler, 1997), adult psychological well-being (Cherlin, Chase-Lanslade & McRae, 1998; Gähler & Garriga, 2012), the frequency and quality of parent adult-child relations (Albertini & Garriga, 2011; Sobolewski & Amato, 2007) and divorce or marital satisfaction (Amato et al., 2007; Wolfinger, 1999). For example, Gähler & Garriga (2012) find that in a sample of Swedish young adult children (18 to 30 years old) there are important differences (around 10 %) in terms of psychological problems between those that experienced parental divorce before age 16 (52.3 %) and those that remained in intact families (43.2 %).

In addition, the effect of parental divorce on intergenerational relations might not be limited to one generation since one of the most robust findings from the literature concerns the intergenerational transmission of divorce, i.e. the higher-than average likelihood of those with divorced parents to divorce themselves (Wolfinger, 2005; Wagner & Weiß, 2006; Dronkers & Härkönen, 2008). The potential effects of parental divorce on intergenerational relations and children's well-being might therefore have an impact across several generations of a family, i.e.: the grandparents' divorce (generation 1) increases the probability of the parent's divorce (generation 2) and this affects the quantity and the quality of the relationship between the parents and children in the third generation.

*Evidence for hypothesis 2: Causality.* One of the most important topics in the literature on divorce has been whether the effects of divorce on children's well-being and intergenerational relations are due to this event, *per se*, or to some other family/parents characteris-

tics which are closely associated both with the risk of divorce and children's well-being such as parental conflict (Painter & Levine, 2000; Ní Bhrolcháin, 2001; Ginther & Pollack, 2004). Several studies show that parental conflict is partly but by no means completely responsible for the association between divorce and children's well-being since there is evidence that indicates that both relationship problems have independent effects on children (Jekielek, 1998; Hanson, 1999).

Nevertheless, the causality of the divorce effect is methodologically difficult or even impossible to establish, since experimental research in this area is not feasible (Amato, 2010; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). For this reason, second best solutions have been developed in the literature such as (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004): controlling for several characteristics before dissolution, fixed-effects models, and models that include measures of children's well-being before and after parental separation.... However, as Amato (2010) suggests, the findings of these studies that focus on average effects of parental divorce are contradictory and open to multiple interpretations, since researchers can view marital discord either as a cause of divorce or as part of the divorce processes.

Over the last two decades, several American or Canadian studies have documented a more nuanced explanation of the causality of divorce that focuses on the interaction effects between parental divorce and parents' relationship quality (Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995; Hanson, 1999; Jekielek, 1998; Strohschein, 2005). This research shows that divorce may be beneficial for children that live in high-conflict marriages, and that the dissolution of low-conflict marriages may have harmful effects on children's well-being (Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1995; Hanson, 1999; Jekielek, 1998; Booth & Amato, 2001; Strohschein, 2005). However, few studies have analysed this issue and these ones also have several limitations such as: to our knowledge, only one study (Fomby & Osborne 2010) has focused on very young children; most research has only analysed children's psychological well-being and rarely considered other dimensions such as parent-child relations; and all studies to date have used US or Canadian data, and no European study has addressed the matter. Therefore, more research on the interaction effects between parental divorce and parents' relationship quality is needed.

*Evidence for hypothesis 3:* Several studies have analysed whether the impact of parental divorce on children decreases when this new phenomenon becomes more common and society increasingly adapts to it-. They have used different strategies to test this hypothesis. One strategy is to compare the effect of parental divorce across generations, using identical measures over time (e.g. Gähler & Garriga, 2012; Sigle-Rushton, Hobcraft & Kiernan, 2005; Ely et al., 1999; Biblarz & Raftery 1999). The aim of this strategy is to test whether the effect of parental divorce is less marked in younger generations than in older generations.

The percentage of children experiencing parental divorce has increased substantially in most western societies. In spite of this common trend, western countries differ substan-

tially as regards: a) the percentage of children living in disrupted families; b) the social stigma associated to them; c) the development of family policies and d) the degree of the liberalization of their divorce laws. A second strategy is therefore to compare countries with different divorce rates, divorce laws, family policies, and social attitudes towards divorce (e.g. Garriga, 2010; Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Engelhardt, Trappe & Dronkers, 2002; Ely et al., 2000). In addition, this strategy specially focuses on examining if the impact of parental divorce is weaker in Scandinavian countries than in other western countries. Since according to Breivik & Olweus (2006), a fairly common view holds that the risk of negative outcomes for children associated with family dissolution is generally small or even non-existent in Scandinavia, since the number of divorces and separations are relatively high in these countries and they have adopted some of the world's most liberal divorce laws and implemented some of the most generous welfare states.

A third strategy is to compare results from studies conducted in different decades (e.g. Amato & Keith, 1991a; Amato, 2001) and in different countries (Chapple & Richardson, 2009). Although more research is needed, most studies show that there is no evidence for the decreasing effect of parental divorce since it seems that the effect of parental divorce is not less in younger generations<sup>25</sup> than in older generations and this effect is not lower in Scandinavian countries than in other western countries.

Why does the effect of parental divorce not decrease? Gähler & Garriga (2012) note two possible mechanisms. Amato (2001) formulates an argument against the decreasing hypothesis that is linked to family conflict prior to divorce. As mentioned above, divorce is more harmful for children coming from families with a low level of conflict than those coming from families with a high level of conflict, and some evidence suggests that this type of divorce has become more common (Gähler & Garriga, 2012). Thus, if the most harmful divorce has become more common we would not expect the negative effect of parental divorce to have decreased across generations (Gähler & Garriga, 2012).

Another argument points to the evolution of the social composition of divorce (Gähler & Garriga, 2012). Goode's (1962, 1970, 1993) theory, and some empirical studies (Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006; Chan & Halpin, 2009) suggest that when divorce is rare, it is more common among the upper class, and when it is widespread it is more common among the lower class. Nowadays, in some western countries parental divorce is more common among lower (Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006; Chan & Halpin, 2009) class. Garriga (2010) finds support for the hypothesis derived from Goode's theory according to which in countries where mothers from disrupted families are better educated than mothers of two-parent families, the risk of children growing up in a single-mother family arriving late for school is less than in countries where single mothers are less educated than mothers in

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<sup>25</sup> Wolfinger (1999, 2011) shows that the positive relationship between parental divorce and own divorce has attenuated over time.



two-parent families. However, more research is needed on how the change in the educational gradient of divorce affects children's well-being.

## **B. INTACT FAMILIES: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP QUALITY**

Research has shown a clear association between parents' relationship quality and children's well-being (e.g. Buehler et al., 1997; Kouros, Cummings & Davies, 2010) and the quality of parent-child relations and parenting (see Erel & Burman, 1995; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Several studies show that parents' relationship quality can influence children's well-being both directly and indirectly through parent-child interactions (e.g. Buehler & Gerard 2002; Gerard et al., 2006).

Is the effect of family relations stronger on children from disadvantaged backgrounds? There is some evidence that shows that quality of parenting and quality of parent-child relationship are more important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Kim, 2002; Mari-Klose et al., 2008). Furthermore, Garriga & Kiernan (forthcoming) find that the effect of parent's relationship quality on externalizing problems is stronger among poor children than among rich children. Parent-child relations and parents' relationship quality seems to be therefore protective factors for disadvantaged children.

These findings are particularly important if we take into account that today, unlike previous decades, in most western countries disadvantaged children are more likely to experience parental divorce than advantaged children. As a consequence, poor children nowadays are not only more likely to experience their parents' divorce but also to lose the positive influence of protective factors such as the quality of parent-child relations and the quality of parent's relationship. These family changes may increase inequalities between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. However, more research on the interrelationship between parental divorce, family relationship factors and socio-economic characteristics of the family is needed.

## **C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A CROSS-NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

In order to develop effective family policies aimed at promoting children's well-being and intergenerational relations, it is necessary to have a clear diagnosis of the state of the family and children in Europe. In fact, a careful diagnosis is the first step in a successful public policy. However, in my opinion we still do not have a clear analysis of the family factors that have a harmful or protective influence on children's well-being and intergenerational relations. For example, on the one hand, there are far fewer studies on the ef-

fects of parental divorce on children in Europe than in the United States. Furthermore, we have little information about the factors that promote co-parenting and parent-child relations in divorced families. In addition, compared with the American literature, there are few studies that analyse the link between parents' relationship quality and children's well-being and intergenerational relations using samples from European countries. The same is true for research examining the factors that promote parents' relationship quality. We have little information on the relationships between the change of the educational gradient of divorce, parental divorce, parents' relationship quality and children's well-being. But why is there this lack of European research on parents' relationship quality and divorce?

The most reasonable explanation is that in Europe, few countries carry out longitudinal surveys, and in those that do, the most important aim of these surveys is not to study divorce or relationship quality and children's well-being, but instead the family's living conditions and economic characteristics. Important information that is necessary to study these topics is therefore missing.

Moreover, all European countries share common characteristics but diverge in terms of their levels of welfare generosity and cultural values. For this reason, cross-national analyses comparing several European countries are very important in order to identify the macro-level factors influencing parental divorce, parents' relationship, children's well-being and intergenerational relations. However, the few cross-national longitudinal surveys that do exist were not created specifically to study these issues. For example, the goal of the survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) is to study the ageing process, and it contains little information about children and divorce. The Generations and Gender Survey, coordinated by the Population Activities Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, cover topics such as fertility, partnership, transition to adulthood, economic activity as well as intergenerational and gender relations. Nevertheless, this survey only contains retrospective information on parental divorce and adult outcomes since it is based on a sample of the 18-79 year-old resident population in each participating country.

In my opinion, the best surveys for studying children's well-being are the longitudinal cohort surveys such as the Millennium Cohort Study 2000. This survey follows a generation of British children born in 2000 and includes a great deal of information about their development and family life. However, some important variables are missing. For example, there is some information on parents' relationship quality such as parents' relationship satisfaction, but other dimensions of relationship quality such as conflict, compromise, and forgiveness are not measured. There is also some information about the frequency of contacts between the child and the non-resident parent after divorce, but other important factors that are necessary to understand the divorce process, such as co-parenting or the quality of relationship between the child and the non-resident parent, are not taken into account.

My first policy recommendation is therefore to undertake a longitudinal cohort survey of families and children in all the European countries, following the example of Millennium Cohort Study and adding the missing information. I am fully aware that this is a difficult goal taking the European economic situation into account. However, as mentioned above, if policymakers do not have a complete analysis of the factors that influence children's well-being and intergenerational relations in European countries, it is very difficult to develop effective family policies. A second-best solution is to improve the quality of the existing surveys by adding some questions that are necessary to study these issues. For instance, Generations and Gender Survey may be useful in order to analyse the factors that predict relationship quality, but this survey takes into account few dimensions of relationship quality and new questions about satisfaction, compromise and forgiveness should therefore be added. Another example is the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) database, which is organized and conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and aims to provide internationally comparable measurement on the performance of 15 year-old students. A limitation of PISA is that it contains information about family structure, but no information on the causes of the current family types. Single-mother families or mother and stepfather families may be due to divorce or separation, to the death of a parent or to the parents never having lived together. Adding only a question to clarify this issue would improve the quality of the survey. It could be also possible to include some questions about the quality of the parent-child relationship and the frequency of contact with the non-resident father.

#### **FROM TRADITIONAL FAMILY POLICIES TO POLICIES PROMOTING PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP QUALITY**

Traditional family policies are those that have been most extensively developed and implemented by governments in order to help families in general and single-parent families in particular. The aim of these policies is to create better conditions for families –by means of financial transfers, parental leave and childcare- in order to promote children's development. Traditional policies explicitly or implicitly assume that the causal or selection negative effects of parental divorce, such as parental conflict, can be solved after parental separation by improving financial resources in the family and childcare and parental leave policies. But are these policies efficient?

On the one hand, several studies show that in countries where these policies are most highly developed, such as in Scandinavia, few single mothers are poor (Vleminckx & Smeeding 2000; Heuveline & Weinshenker 2008). However, in spite of this, the negative effect of parental divorce on children's well-being and intergenerational relations is not less marked in Scandinavian countries than in other Western countries (Chapple & Richardson, 2009; Albertini & Garriga, 2011). It therefore seems that these policies are not enough to eliminate the selection (parental conflict) or causal effect of parental divorce and single motherhood. On the other hand, traditional family policies do not take

into consideration children experiencing family conflict whose parents do not divorce. In fact, there is some evidence that in Sweden a non-negligible percentage of children from intact families experienced parental conflict during childhood and this percentage has slightly increased in younger cohorts of intact families in spite of the generosity of the country's welfare state (Bernhardt, Gähler & Goldscheider, 2005; Gähler & Garriga, 2012).

In order to address these issues, over the last fifteen years, governments in various countries with different welfare state regimes and cultural values - such as the United States and Norway - have adopted policies aimed at fostering relationship quality in partnerships. In all western countries, marriage counselling or education services provided by private psychologists or social organizations have existed for some time. What is different today is that some governments have started to fund these services. This is a new international trend that has not been systematically studied, and which represents a substantial transformation of family policies. The basic idea behind these new policies is that improving the quality of partnership relationships makes it possible to avoid both family conflict and divorce, and to foster children's well-being and intergenerational relations.

In fact, there is some evidence related to this issue: researchers and practitioners argue that marital therapy is likely to be only modestly successful, given that couples are often seriously distressed by the time they seek help (Christesen & Heavey, 1999). In contrast, a number of reviews suggest that relationship education is effective (e.g., Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2008; Hawkins & Ooms, 2010). Furthermore, Stanley et al., (2006) using a large random survey of 4 middle American states, find that participation in premarital education is associated with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment in marriage and lower levels of conflict — and also a reduced likelihood of divorce. Because these estimated effects are robust across race, income (including among the poor), and education levels, the authors consider that participation in premarital education is generally beneficial for a wide range of couples.

Another important characteristic of these policies is the causal model that is assumed. In several countries, parenting programmes have been developed to improve children's well-being (Sanders & Murphy-Brennan, 2010). However, although programs on relationship quality have the same goal as parenting programmes which is improving children's well-being, they adopt another causal model and intervention strategy. They focus on parents' relationship quality to improve both the quality of parenting and the quality of parent-child relationship and children's well-being. In fact, some research suggests that using this strategy may be more useful for increasing children's well-being since as mentioned parents' relationship quality has both a direct effect on children's well-being and indirect effect through parent-child interactions (e.g. Buehler & Gerard, 2002).

The American policies are analysed in more depth in this paper, since that is where they have been implemented most extensively. In 2002, the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services launched a Healthy Marriage Initiative. Around 200 programmes were financed by the Healthy Marriage Initiative,

without taking into account programmes funded by the States (Hawkins et al., 2009). The Administration for Children and Families has also invested in three large-scale, multisite, long-term evaluation projects: the Supporting Healthy Marriages Project, focusing on low-income married couples with children; the Building Strong Families Project, focusing on low-income unmarried parents recruited around the time of the birth of their first child and Community Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Evaluation (CHRMEE). These programmes are designed for low-income couples, because in the United States (and in most other western countries) these couples are most likely to experience the breakdown of their relationship (Härkönen & Dronkers, 2006; Cherlin, 2010). There is strong evidence that marriage education can generally be effective in improving relationship satisfaction and communication among white and highly educated couples, but less is known about whether these programmes, including those that have been carefully adapted, will work with more diverse and less advantaged individuals (Dion, 2005). There is also no empirical evidence that marriage education programmes can increase the well-being of children (Dion, 2005). For these reasons, the aim of these evaluations is to test whether these programmes are effective for low-income couples and their children.

As Hawkins & Ooms (2010) suggest, “the results of the large-scale impact evaluation studies (BSF, SHM and CHRMEE) in the coming years will provide more complete and rigorous evidence of the longer-term efficacy and viability of MRE programs and their potential benefits for couples, their children, and the communities in which they reside (p.3)”. My second policy recommendation is therefore that policymakers from European countries should follow the evaluations of these projects. For this reason, I summarize the main characteristics of one of these programmes.

The Supporting Healthy Marriages Project, launched in 2003, focuses on low-income married couples with children, who were enrolled in eight programmes across the United States (Hawkins & Ooms, 2010). Most marriage education programmes only focus on the couple relationship process (Knox & Fein, 2009). However, several personal, family, and community demographic factors are associated with relationship quality and divorce (Amato, Johnson, Booth & Rogers, 2003). These factors are especially important for low-income couples (Knox & Fein, 2009). For this reason, this programme focuses on three levels: the personal strengths and vulnerabilities of the partners such as mental health and substance abuse; relationships insights, values, expectations, and skills and external influences and the macro context (Knox & Fein, 2009).

The core of each programme is 24 to 30 hours of marriage education workshops provided in a group setting, over several (typically two to four) months. The first three areas of the curriculum cover traditional concerns of marriage education, such as understanding marriage, managing conflict and promoting positive connections between spouses (Knox & Fein, 2009). Other areas of the curriculum are designed to provide insights and skills pertinent to several broad external challenges. These areas include strengthening rela-

tionships beyond the couple; enhancing the couple's ability to manage challenging external circumstances such as mental health problems, financial stress and strengthening parenting. The second component of this programme is engaging participants in additional activities for a full year (about nine months beyond the core programme) (Knox & Fein, 2009). Examples of the activities are booster sessions, one-on-one coaching mentoring by programme staff or peers, and activities for the whole family. The third component is to help couples gain access to a wide range of services and supports, such as physical or mental health services, substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, employment and training services, and childcare (Knox & Fein, 2009).

Random assignment design, the most rigorous standard for policy evaluation, is used to evaluate this project. The evaluation takes place in several domains of family functioning: marital quality; marital duration and stability; the mental health and employment status of each individual spouse; family income; co-parenting and parenting behaviour; and the children's well-being, including direct assessments of children's cognitive and behavioural development (Knox & Fein, 2009). These potential programme impacts are measured at 12 and 36 months after random assignment —and possibly at 60 months if earlier findings reveal impacts (Knox and Fein, 2009). Hsueh et al., 2012 show that short term evaluations one year after couples enter the study- "provide some encouraging evidence that a couples-based, family-strengthening intervention can yield positive effects when delivered on a large scale to low- to modest-income couples with diverse backgrounds (p.5)". Nonetheless, as these authors point out, "the importance of the short-term impacts, however, will ultimately depend on whether the program yields positive long term impacts on marital stability and parents' and children's well-being over time (p.5)"

### **SURE START CENTRES: WHAT CAN WE DO AFTER DIVORCE?**

One policy that has obtained successful results in terms of improving the quality of parenting in single parent-families is the Sure Start Centres. These centres, which have been in place in the United Kingdom since the late 1990s, aim to overcome the segmentation of family policies, and to promote parenting and the family's emotional well-being at the same time. These centres originated from the Cross-Departmental Review of Services for Young Children. This Review concluded that: 1-disadvantage among young children was increasing and it was more likely that poor outcomes could be prevented when early intervention was undertaken, and; 2- that the services being provided were uncoordinated and patchy, and recommended a change in service design and delivery (Melhuish, Belsky & Barnes, 2010). It suggested that programmes should be jointly planned by all relevant bodies, and be area-based, with all children under four years old in an area and their families being clients. Some characteristics of this programme are:

1. This is based on the scientific evidence that the children's first years of life are crucial in fostering their future development. Several services related to this specific stage of the family development are therefore provided. For example, in order to promote children's development, some centres offer high quality childcare or give parents information on other good quality care providers.
2. Using an integrated approach, these centres provide various kinds of services, ranging from parenting to employment support and family health.
3. Most centres are in disadvantaged areas. The goal is to reach most families, and especially most disadvantaged families such as single parents, living or not in deprived areas. The latter have less contact with the mainstream services than other family types. Several methods are used in order to reach these families such as home visiting
4. These centres use a multi-agency approach, which means working in partnership with other public agencies and social organizations.

Several evaluations of Sure Start programmes were carried out. Previous evaluations of the efficacy of this programme were inconclusive, and several changes were introduced for this reason (Melhuish, Belsky & Barnes, 2010). Subsequent evaluations showed that this programme has positive effects on parents and children (Melhuish, Belsky & Barnes, 2010). Melhuish et al., (2008) in their longitudinal investigation of children and families seen at 9 months and 3 years of age, comparing children in Sure Start areas with those in similar non-Sure Start areas, reveal beneficial effects for children and families living in Sure Start areas, when the children were 3 years old. Children in Sure Start areas show better social development, exhibiting more positive social behaviour and greater independence/self-regulation than their counterparts in non-Sure Start areas. This result is partially a consequence of parents in Sure Start areas manifesting less negative parenting, as well as a better home learning environment. The effects of Sure Start programmes seem to apply to all subpopulations, including single parents. In addition, families in Sure Start areas use more services for supporting child and family development than those not living in these areas. For these reasons, policymakers should in my opinion take future evaluations of this programme into account, in order to determine whether these programmes could be suitable for implementation in other countries.

#### **A POLICY RECOMMENDATION: CENTRES FOR FAMILY WELL-BEING**

As mentioned above, traditional family policies based on family transfers and measures that help families to balance work and family life do not solve most of the problems related to children's and family well-being. In other words, it is not enough to offer good conditions for the families, but instead it is also necessary to improve what I call the emotional and relationship dimension of the family. For this reason, my final policy recommendation is the creation of centres for families following the philosophy of Sure Start

centres. However, they should put more emphasis on promoting parents' relationship quality before and after separation since as mentioned above: (1) before separation, parents' relationship quality is associated to children's well-being and family stability and (2), cooperative co-parenting predicts more frequent father-child contact, which in turn predicts a higher relationship quality and more responsive fathering, and these factors are associated to children's well-being after divorce (Sobolewski & King, 2005; King & Sobolewski, 2006). The main characteristics of these Centres for Family Well-being should be:

Centres should be area based and these should also offer high quality childcare for two main reasons. First, children's first years of life are crucial in fostering their future development.

Second, parents experience deterioration in the quality of their relationship after the birth of their first child (Doss et al., 2009). During the first years of the child's life, parents therefore need special support in their role of partners and parents. However, what can we do to make most families follow a parenting or parents' relationship quality programme? In contrast to American policies on parents' relationship quality, I believe that is really important to offer both services- childcare and parenting and parents' relationship quality programmes- in the same centre. In my opinion it is easier to reach parents if they receive support from a centre that they usually attend than if they have to go to a specific centre where they only go for a parents' relationship programme.

In fact, if these programmes are run in a centre without childcare, parents may think that they are only for those with 'problems'. Second, it is also reasonable to think that is easier to provide long term support for relationship quality and parenting in a centre with childcare than in a centre without this service, since parents continue to maintain their contact with the centre through their children.

*Integrated services.* Sure Start Centres does not only focus on parenting, but also provide other services such as employment support and family health. Different kinds of services are necessary to improve relationship quality and parenting. Since, for example, research shows that unemployment is negatively associated to relationship quality (Hansen, 2005). It is therefore not possible to enhance the relationship quality of a couple if one of the partners is unemployed by simply providing a marriage education workshop; we should also help this partner to find a job. Furthermore, professionals at the centres should help couples gain access to a wide range of services and supports that are not provided in the centres.

*Evaluation.* Centres for Family Well-being and all the programmes that they offer should be carefully evaluated. Indeed, as a first step governments should create few centres, and then they could build new ones if the evaluations are positive.

Finally, besides the creation of the Centres for Family Well-being, all public policies -such as health or education services- should take the perspective of relationship quality into account. For example, in the report "Marriage and Relationship Factors in Health: Impli-



cations for Improving Health Care Quality and Reducing Costs”, Staton & Ooms (2011) provide some tools and program models designed to strengthen couple relationships that could be adapted and integrated into the health care system.

#### D. CONCLUSIONS

Most studies show that parental divorce is negatively associated with children’s well-being and intergenerational relations. More research is needed in order to determine if parental divorce is harmful for children from low-conflict families and is beneficial for children from high-conflict families. Parents’ relationship quality has a positive effect on the well-being of children from intact families. Some studies suggest that among disadvantaged children, parent-child relations and parents’ relationship quality are protective factors. Today, poor children are not only more likely to experience parental divorce but also to lose the positive influence of protective factors such as the quality of parent-child relationship and parent’s relationship quality. These family changes may increase inequalities between children from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to ameliorate European family policies, first of all we should improve our knowledge about European families. For this reason, a longitudinal and cross-national survey that specifically studies parental divorce, parents’ relationship quality, children’s well-being and intergenerational relations should be created. Traditional family policies - which are based on economic transfers and measures to balance work and family life - do not seem to eliminate the negative effects of parental conflict and parental divorce on children’s well-being and intergenerational relations. Policies promoting parents’ relationship quality might improve children’s well-being and intergenerational relationships. For this reason, Centres for Family Well-being that provide parenting and parents’ relationship quality programmes, high-quality childcare and other services for families should be created.

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## **10. GOOD PRACTICES**

### **A. PROJECT BARNABLICK**

#### *Official name of the Organization*

Stockholm City Mission (Stockholm Stadsmissionen).

#### *Website of the Organization*

<http://www.stadsmissionen.se/UngaStation> (in Swedish).

#### *Name of the practice*

Project Barnablick (Barnablick is a Swedish word that means "through the eyes of the child").

#### *Aim of the practice*

The purpose of this project was to broaden the definition of child advocacy. To correctly carry a child's voice into an adult world, to demand change and act as an important complement to what the state is offering to vulnerable children, requires a trusted relationship between child and worker, a relationship built over time with mutual honesty and open communication about expectations.

#### *Target group of the practice*

Hard to reach children and families.

#### *Name of the person who made the presentation*

Martin Broby.

#### *Position in the Organization*

Project Manager/ Social Worker.

### **B. WELFARE TO WORK**

#### *Official name of the Organization*

Cherish Ltd t/a One Family.

#### *Website of the Organization*

<http://www.onefamily.ie>.

#### *Name of the practice*

Welfare to Work: New Futures.

*Aim of the practice*

Raising skills and aspirations by helping participants to overcome the barriers that prevent them from fully participating in work, education and/or skill development: focused on building confidence and is underpinned by mentoring and key-working support.

*Target group of the practice*

Welfare to Work: New Futures provides an integrated response to the aspirations of lone parents who want to take steps to ensure their economic independence. The programme offers an innovative motivational, interagency progression programme designed specifically for lone parents. The model is based on international best practice for supporting groups most displaced from the labour market and incorporates proactive community-based recruitment, thorough needs-assessment, key-working and mentoring. New Futures is underpinned by specialist parenting and family support services..

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Stuart Duffin.

*Position in the Organization*

Project Manager.

**C. VEILIG THUIS**

*Official name of the Organization*

Municipality of Rotterdam.

*Website of the Organization*

<http://www.rotterdam.nl>.

*Name of the practice*

Veilig Thuis (Safe Home) - The Rotterdam Approach to Family Violence.

*Aim of the practice*

One of the main problems during this economic crisis families are confronted with due to the increase of (psychological) stress, unemployment, poverty and drug addiction is family violence. Recent research in the Netherlands (University of Utrecht, 2010) showed that 9 procent of the Dutch household are confronted with severe violence within the family. Family violence is the physical, psychological abuse committed by a family member, a relative or a care taker in the household. There are many types of violence within families, also referred as domestic violence, like part-



ner, child and elder abuse, honour related violence, internal trafficking (lover boys), female mutilation and parent abuse. The main aim of the Rotterdam approach and its action programme 'Veilig Thuis' is to stop and prevent family violence by using a system approach. .

The Rotterdam approach contains a chain from prevention, reporting, analysis & diagnosis (file completion), risk taxation & qualification, casemanagement & care provision to the follow up. There is a front office, the Advice and Report Centre (ASHG) and 13 local domestic violence teams (back office).

In the local teams the police, the child advocacy centre, the social workers, the Centre for family and Youth and the probation service are working closely together in order to make 1 family plan for all the family members, including the perpetrators. Furthermore, Rotterdam has developed an early warning/detection tool: the Code of Conduct for Reporting family violence.

*Target group of the practice*

All family members, victims of family violence and (assistance to) abusers in order to make one integrated family plan.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Antonios Polychronakis.

*Position in the Organization*

European Programme Manager.

## **D. CASH TRANSFERS**

*Official name of the Organization*

Nagy csalások Országos Egyesülete (Hungarian Association of Large Families).

*Website of the Organization*

<http://www.no.e.hu>.

*Name of the practice*

Family support in taxation (and by financial contributions).

*Aim of the practice*

Combating poverty of large families.

*Target group of the practice*

Large families in Hungary.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Aniko Varga.

*Position in the Organization*

Expert and Member of the Board.

## **E. FAMILY FRIENDLY CERTIFICATE**

*Official name of the Organization*

Fundación Más Familia (Spain).

*Website of the Organization*

[http:// www.masfamilia.org](http://www.masfamilia.org).

*Name of the practice*

Family Responsible Certificate for Corporations or Municipalities.

*Aim of the practice*

The Fundación Masfamilia is a private, independent, nonprofit-making and charitable organization, created and directed to seek innovative and highly professional solutions for the protection and support of the Family, and especially those with dependent members (children, the elderly, the disabled, etc.).

*Target group of the practice*

Corporations and Municipalities.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Ignacio Socías.

*Position in the Organization*

Member of the Board of Trustees.

## **F. AUDIT**

*Official name of the Organization*

Osservatorio Regionale Politiche Sociali (Regional Observatory for Social Policies - Veneto Region, Italy).

*Website of the Organization*

<http://www.osservatoriopolitichesociali.veneto.it>.

*Name of the practice*

Audit - Work and Family.

*Aim of the practice*

Defining actions to improve the promotion of a family friendly working environment (conciliation), through a specific process implemented directly by the companies and firms and to be evaluated in 3 years time. After the state of the art analysis, the definition of the actions to be implemented and the signature of the agreement, the certificate 'Audit Family&Work' is awarded. After the 3 year time plan, the appropriate Committee 'Auditrat' (based on Veneto Region) evaluates its development and, if correctly completed, confirms the certificate.

Objectives:

- to foster the culture for a better work-life balance through concrete actions encouraging a new cultural model of enterprise.
- to start up a process for constant improvement: human resources more motivated, satisfied and reliable are a benefit for the enterprises / institution.
- to develop a good shared communication plan in order to consolidate team work and management of emergencies.

*Target group of the practice*

- a) Public Institution at National / Regional level (potential owner of the methodology).
- b) Private Companies and Firms (willing to test and follow the AUDIT label path).
- c) Training / Guidance centers (willing to train the auditors).
- d) Workers, both male and female (the final beneficiaries of the AUDIT process).

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Alberto Ferri.

*Position in the Organization*

Responsible for EU project planning and management.

**G. PARLER BAMBIN**

*Official name of the Organization*

Centre Communal d'Action Sociale (CCAS) de la ville de Grenoble (France).

*Website of the Organization*

<http://www.grenoble.fr/8-solidarites.htm>.

*Name of the practice*

Parler Bambin (speaking toddlers): enhance early conversation with toddlers to improve future learnings.

*Aim of the practice*

We know that there is a strong link between the family's low social background and the learning difficulties of children that don't have enough words and language skill, because of a lack of parent's stimulation. The program was developed with Dr Zorman, specialist in cognitive development and researcher in science of Education: it is an early prevention of that kind of deficiency that can lead to school failure. .

In the program, the early childhood educators are trained to develop the language skills for toddlers and use all means to incite all day long an interactive conversation with each child to stimulate them. When a child arrives in the day-care, the educators and the parents evaluate the level of his language development thanks to a questionnaire. If he is identified as a 'late talker', the educator invite him twice a week to small workshops with 2 other children.

*Target group of the practice*

All the children from 0 to 3 years-old welcomed in day-care facilities and especially the children identified as 'late talkers' (test based on a scientific scale of language development). Around 3,000 children from 0 to 3 welcomed by year in the 27 day-care facilities of the city of Grenoble.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Marie-Automne Thepot.

*Position in the Organization*

Deputy Director of the CCAS, in charge of social innovation.

## **H. BELGIAN TIME CREDIT SYSTEM**

*Official name of the Organization*

Knowledge Centre WVG (Department of Well-Being, Health and Family, Brussels, Belgium)

*Website of the Organization*

<http://www.kenniscentrumwvg.be/>.

*Name of the practice*

Time Credit System.

*Aim of the practice*

Although it was first labeled as 'career break system' and designed to tackle raising unemployment levels it rapidly developed over the years into a valuable tool for work-family balance. It got an increasing take up rate and was 'successful' among young mothers as it was far ahead the EU Directive on Parental Leave. It was also made more flexible and became more focused as a tool to better combine work and care responsibilities.

*Target group of the practice*

Several periods in the development of the career break system can be distinguished. First, various modifications were introduced which gradually improved the system from the perspective of the employees (1986-1991). Second, there was some re-trenchment followed by some progress as a collective agreement was negotiated between the employers and trade unions in the National Labor Council (1991-1999). Third, the career break system received a further impetus (2000-2011) as the basic entitlement was expanded, e.g. more flexible options, becoming a right for employees in the private sector.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Fred Deven.

*Position in the Organization*

Scientific Director.

## **I. FAMILY ENRICHMENT COURSES**

*Official name of the Organization*

Šeimų Universitetas (Families University).

*Website of the Organization*

<http://www.seimu.lt/>.

*Name of the practice*

IFFD Programmes.

*Aim of the practice*

IFFD courses for parents are designed to suit the different stages of child development. All courses are structured on the participant-based case study method and use cases involving real situations. Cases are first analyzed by small teams formed by

few couples, and then discussed in larger groups at general sessions moderated by experts in Family Development.

The current courses and relevant ages of children discussed therein are as follows:.

- First Steps: A program for parents with children from birth to 3 years old, or for young couples planning to become parents.
- First Letters: A program for parents with children from 4 to 8 years old.
- First Decisions: A program for parents with children from 8 to 10 years old.
- Pre-adolescents: A program for parents with children from 10 to 13 years old.
- Adolescents: A program for parents with children from 13 to 17 years old.

*Target group of the practice*

Our mission is to help families around the world to build stronger and happier relationships, through strengthening the role of fathers and mothers when they attend our courses.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Paulius Gebrauskas.

*Position in the Organization*

Director.

**J. EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR FAMILIES**

*Official name of the Organization*

European Union, European Alliance For Families.

*Website of the Organization*

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/families/index.cfm).

*Name of the practice*

European Alliance For Families.

*Aim of the practice*

The European Alliance for Families is a portal devoted to family policies in the European Union. It aims to create impulses for more family-friendly policies through exchanges of ideas and experience in the various Member States.

The European Alliance for Families was founded in 2007 by the Council of Europe with a view to improving the living conditions of Europeans who have children or would like to start a family. It also focuses in child poverty and on equal opportunities for women in the workplace.

The Alliance website serves as a medium for exchanging good practice, ideas and experience among the different Member States. It is available in English, French and German.

*Target group of the practice*

The Alliance website serves as a medium for exchanging good practice, ideas and experience among the different Member States. It is available in English, French and German.

*Name of the person who made the presentation*

Emanuela Tassa.

*Position in the Organization*

Socio-economic analyst at the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.





## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS**

### **A. FAMILY POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

1. Enhance and strengthen mainstreaming the family-friendly approach in policy making at all levels considering the impacts of socio-economic policies on families.
2. Develop, promote and implement family-friendly policies aimed at providing sustainable, affordable and quality living conditions for families.
3. Develop, promote and implement policies and practices that provide long-term economic and social security for parents and families.
4. Actively support family-oriented policies aiming at preventing negative family conditions, outcomes and impacts, such as family breakdown.
5. Invest in programmes that coach and support communication within the family and encourage healthy family relationships, in order to prevent violence and family conflicts between couples and parents.
6. Promote the use of a range of tools that improve individual and family capacities in parenting and communications programmes, such as the case-study method. Empower families and recognise their role in social cohesion and economic development, so that they can contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy, in areas such as employment creation and poverty reduction.
7. Invest in research, including enhanced cross national longitudinal data analysis of data sets to improve policy impacts.
8. Promote and fund research on families in transition, including their socio-economic conditions; the impact of divorce and domestic violence on children, relationship quality and quality of life.
9. Conduct evaluations of family policies and practices by all relevant stakeholders.
10. Encourage and promote good practice exchanges in Europe through the European Alliance for Families and other networks.

### **B. CONFRONTING FAMILY POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

11. Develop, promote and implement policies that recognise that ending child poverty is central to improving child and family well-being and encourage social, economic and educational policies to prevent intergenerational transmission of poverty.

12. Implement programmes to help parents, particularly lone parents, enter the labour market and develop their educational and personal development skills.
13. Promote family-friendly taxation policies and practices, including reduced taxes on goods and services for early childhood products and services.
14. Support specific assistance for families in transition, low income families, lone parent families, large families as well as families with older persons and persons with disabilities.
15. Call on States to address the structural debts, so as to avoid the transfer of structural poverty to future and younger generations.
16. Promote the provision of integrated services for families where a multi-disciplinary team of professionals can work together to offer coordinated services to victims of family violence. Enhance the provision of domestic violence preventative services through developing and promoting a universal code of conduct for reporting all forms of domestic violence, child and elder abuse.

### **C. ENSURING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE**

17. Recognise and communicate the value of work-family balance in the economy and in society.
18. Develop, provide and communicate comprehensive well-resourced and flexible parental leave entitlements throughout the life course of the family and in periods of transition.
19. Support, promote and communicate part-time working arrangements according to parental choice by ensuring non-discriminatory practices towards parents in the labour market. Promote skill development and learning systems throughout the life course of the family and in periods of transition to facilitate parents' re-entering the labour market.
20. Promote, develop and communicate key media messages focusing on the value of children, maternity, paternity and families in our communities and societies.
21. Develop, promote and communicate the economic and social value of family-friendly workplaces in accordance with comprehensive systems of accreditation.
22. Enhance dialogue and partnerships between social policy makers and relevant stakeholders, including families, family associations, business sector, trade unions and employers to develop and improve family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace.

23. Support and promote a stronger, integrated, accessible and supported framework to enhance lone parents' opportunities to balance work and family life and therefore fully engage in education, skill development and job advancement.
24. Recognise and communicate the social, economic and cultural value of family care work.
25. Offer and promote a variety of care practices and opportunities to enable families to make choices (e.g. regarding childcare arrangements), according to their parental responsibilities, needs and values.

#### **D. ADVANCING SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

26. Promote 'centres for family well-being' that facilitate quality couple and family relationships, parenting and co-parenting programmes, high-quality childcare and other ancillary services which support families.
27. Promote and develop active measures to support the psychological well-being of children and youth with sensitivity to family situations.
28. Promote school to work transitions and young adults' economic security to facilitate family formation and stability, particularly among those with insecure socio-economic resources.



## 12. PARTICIPANTS

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The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2014) offers an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development; take stock of recent trends in family policy development; share good practices in family policy making; review challenges faced by families worldwide and recommend solutions.

Owing to rapid socio-economic and demographic transformations, families find it more and more difficult to fulfil their numerous responsibilities. Many struggle to overcome poverty and adequately provide for the younger and older family members. It is also more and more difficult for them to reconcile work and family responsibilities and maintain the intergenerational bonds that sustained them in the past.

In response to these trends, the preparations for this anniversary focus on exploring family-oriented policies and strategies aiming mainly at confronting family poverty; ensuring work-family balance and advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity. The preparatory process is to accelerate progress in family policy development; demonstrate its relevance for overall development efforts and draw attention to the role of different stakeholders in achieving these goals.

As part of this process, the International Federation for Family Development and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, together with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, organized a European Expert Group Meeting in Brussels (6-8 June 2012) hosted by the European Union Committee of the Regions, in which 26 experts, practitioners and observers from 15 countries discussed about family-oriented policies and strategies aiming mainly at the topics suggested for this Anniversary and learned about different good different locations in Europe. The meeting was coordinated by the International Institute for Family Research - The Family Watch.



This publication contains the main outcomes of it. All the information is also available online at [www.family2014.org](http://www.family2014.org).