

Materialiensammlung



Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung
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*European
Observatory on
Family Matters*



*Observatoire
européen pour les
Affaires familiales*



Low Fertility in Europe Family, Gender and Public Policies

Synthesis Report

Annual Seminar
Seville, Spain, 15–16 September 2000

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Heft 10

Wien 2001, ISBN 3-901668-23-3

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1 Introduction

The hackneyed perceptions of fertility levels in Europe are no longer true. Forget about the stereotype of large Mediterranean families: the picture of the Italian 'mamma' surrounded by numerous offspring is a thing of the past. Italy's women now have fewer children than any of their European counterparts. Some Italian regions even show fertility rates of below 1, whereas the replacement level is around 2.1 children per woman. Such a revolution in fertility regimes worries all those who have long measured the economic, political and social soundness of nations against the yardstick of population figures. What will happen to a Europe that can no longer assure the renewal of generations? What will happen to an ageing Europe? The European Observatory on Family Matters addressed this issue at its annual seminar in Seville on 15 and 16 September 2000. Far from being alarmist, the papers presented at this meeting contributed to a better understanding of the ins and outs of the problem.

The above developments raise a number of questions within the public policy debate on how to engineer changes in demography and especially fertility. How can we explain the decline in fertility and the persistently low fertility rates? What do the fertility differentials between Member States actually mean? Is there a time lag between countries in socio-economic convergence, or are we faced with country-specific models?

How and under which circumstances can public policy impact on fertility when it is too low? What do we actually know about the repercussions of various social and, more specifically, family policies on fertility levels? Is there a need for social support and services, and how does this need relate to worryingly low fertility rates? How is public opinion formed on this issue? What is the role of the media in forming public opinion?

It is quite evident that any attempts at raising fertility levels require a proper understanding of the reasons for low fertility and a definition of the tools available to governments within their efforts to influence fertility patterns.

2 Policy concerns and low fertility

2.1 Policy implications of low fertility

The European Union has witnessed an unprecedented demographic evolution over the past 30 years. Fertility has dropped dramatically, reaching extremely low levels. Mortality has continued to decrease, and all EU Member States have become immigration countries. Similar fertility and mortality patterns have been observed in most developed countries. These developments raise three major concerns for the future: the acceleration of demographic ageing and its socio-economic implications, the possible decrease in the labour supply and its impact on future economic growth, and the prospect of total population decline.

In these three areas, fertility developments will exert a different impact with relation to time-horizon considerations. Because the labour market is the main focus of concern, fertility changes will only have a limited effect over the next 10–20 years. However, if low fertility levels persist, this will produce a continuously declining working-age population, despite a possible increase in participation rates and immigration flows.

In the next few decades, we shall also have to worry about structural imbalances in the age distribution. This broad demographic change will pose important challenges for institutions as well as for policies that were established in an era with a very different demographic perspective. Even if demographic ageing is an inevitable development, an increase in fertility could decelerate this ageing process, thus facilitating the necessary adjustments on the part of both policies and institutions.

In the long run, total population decline will be a major concern. To sustain a stationary population, there is no other meaningful alternative to an increase in fertility. As Peter McDonald argues,¹ “demographic sustainability will be achieved if fertility eventually rises again to replacement level and remains at that level. ... If fertility is to remain below replacement level, then demographic sustainability will only be achieved through a combination of below replacement fertility with some positive level of net migration. Of course, the lower is the fertility rate and the lower is the level of migration, the lower will be the size of the ultimate stationary population. ... The persistence of below replacement level fertility implies that countries need to be considering strategies for their population futures, strategies for demographic sustainability. This involves at least vague but broadly reasonable targets for future fertility and migration, as well as notions about desirable future population size. It is likely also to involve targets for labour force participation rates for both men and women. ... Optimal strategies are likely to vary substantially across the advanced countries. For most European countries, however, increases in fertility rates are certain to be part of the package.”

The regional diversity of demographic and economic characteristics suggests that more emphasis has to be placed on the regional dimension. In terms of labour supply, low fertility poses important challenges not only for those regions in which employment rates are already high, but also in terms of regional development in a context of demographic slowdown.

The time horizon of low fertility implications seems to be quite long. However, as policy measures need time to produce a significant effect—especially in the case of fertility—policy responses and choices have to be made at an early stage.

2.2 Governments and low fertility

At the international level, it seems that governments are more and more concerned with low fertility. Peter McDonald argues that, “In the 1999 round of the United Nation’s periodic survey of population policies, 28 countries with below replacement fertility considered that their fertility rate was ‘too low’. Since the previous survey in 1996, seven countries had shifted their view about fertility from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘too low’. The

¹ All papers presented at this Seminar are listed in the table at the end of this document.

seven additions to the list were Armenia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Spain. All the English-speaking countries and all the Nordic countries, along with Belgium and The Netherlands remain satisfied with their levels of fertility, as are three Eastern European nations, Slovenia, Yugoslavia and Moldova. With falling fertility in most of the countries now satisfied with their fertility rates, it may not be long before most of them, including the more liberal Western countries, begin to express concern about the level of their fertility. In Australia, where fertility has fallen from 1.9 births per woman to 1.7 in the past eight years, concern is now expressed in many quarters ranging from the Greens political party to the Business Council of Australia. Thus, does low fertility matter?, is now a question more and more answered in the affirmative. ... Greater certainty about the issue of low fertility, however, is not matched by certainty about the appropriate range of policies to address low fertility.”

Scientists are equally concerned. In his paper, Wolfgang Lutz cites a highly distinguished panel of the US National Academy of Sciences that comments on likely fertility trends in today's low-fertility countries: “Further steep falls in fertility to very low levels are possible but unlikely to be sustained. Homeostatic mechanisms may begin to operate, although possibly with considerable lags. Societies have the capability to encourage and reward childbearing, by providing incentives or by removing disincentives for behaviour that has social benefits. ... In various ways, industrial societies already provide various rewards, but using them to deliberately manipulate fertility is a sensitive issue, potentially involving substantial economic transfers, and likely to be contested. Whether such policies will be adopted in specific countries depends on the indeterminate outcome of political struggles that are difficult even to visualise at this time.”²

Wolfgang Lutz points out that, “this distinguished panel of international experts says that fertility is unlikely to stay at very low levels for long because governments will be forced to do something about it due to the problems associated with massive ageing. They foresee political struggles that actually are already starting in Europe (e.g., see the German *Kinder statt Inder* [children instead of Indian immigrants] or the fierce struggle around vested interests and so-called ‘acquired rights’ in the context of pension reforms). One purpose of this seminar is to prepare for this likely struggle, to help move it away from a destructive emotional and ideological battle (war of the generations, war of the childless against those with children), and guide it into a more rational, science-based channel.”

2.3 Immigration as an alternative

Wolfgang Lutz argues as follows: “What may look like an obvious alternative at first sight turns out to be a very complex question and, unfortunately, a highly ideological one. There have been and will be many other seminars on migration, and migration is not the topic of this one. At this point it suffices to state that migration can only temporarily and under certain conditions ameliorate some of the feared negative consequences of ageing. Migration is a highly emotional and controversial issue that should be approached in a more rational manner. From a demographic perspective, it is fair to say that migration alone cannot offer a sustainable solution to population ageing under continued very low fertility conditions. The level of fertility remains key to the process of population ageing, and the topic of this seminar is whether and by what means governments could influence the level of fertility, should they wish to do so.”

² Panel on Population Projections

Bongaarts, John & Bulatao, Rodolfo A. (eds.) (2000): *Beyond six billion. Forecasting the world's population.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. p. 107.

3 Diagnosing the social situation in Europe

The European Commission's first report on the social situation in the European Union shows that in the years to come, the rising demand for social services will be one of the major challenges to Europe's societies and policy-makers, while low fertility and thus demographic ageing raise questions as to Europe's future population development. What is the link between social situation and low fertility? Does very low fertility really point to a poor social situation in any given country (e.g. high unemployment rate, wide pay gaps, inadequate housing, difficulties in reconciling work and family life)?

In fact, the realisation of an individual's life plans—such as having children—requires government support. Where the demand for social support remains unsatisfied, fertility may have a lower level than the one actually desired by individuals and couples. On the other hand, where the social situation is better and both government support and social services meet people's needs, it will become more likely that life plans are implemented and fertility rates reach the levels desired by couples. Hence, low fertility must be interpreted as a sign of difficulties encountered by individuals in the implementation of plans at different levels: family, employment, improvement of the quality of life. A fertility level that is definitely below the one desired implies shortcomings in the supply of social services and social support arrangements. The resultant policy perspective—namely, to invest in services rather than in cash benefits—is new for Europe.

In a more general way, as was said by Constantinos Fotakis, “today, in the beginning of the new century, there is a growing awareness that we are entering a new era. The European population is ageing. Changes in lifestyle have also been very significant. Across Europe, women have a new role to play in the economic and social life. At the European level, this increased participation of females is likely to continue. However, women still have particular problems not only in gaining equal access to the labour market, but also in reconciling professional and family life. People are marrying less and at a later stage in their lives. Divorces are more frequent than in the past. Combined with the low fertility levels, these changes mark a departure from the family model of the married couple with children. The number of smaller-sized and more frequently changing households is growing.

However, it would be a big mistake to think that the role of the family is declining in importance. Social trends prove quite the opposite. With increased life expectancy, it is not unusual today to find three or four generations living at the same time, and increased demographic ageing is set to make this even more common. Moreover, recent family statistics show that nowadays young people are staying at home with their parents much longer. Last but not least, a recent study on several EU Member States has shown that the increasing pressure on families with children, and particularly on working mothers, may be one of the causes, together with youth unemployment, explaining the increase in delinquency and higher crime rates observed among youngsters.

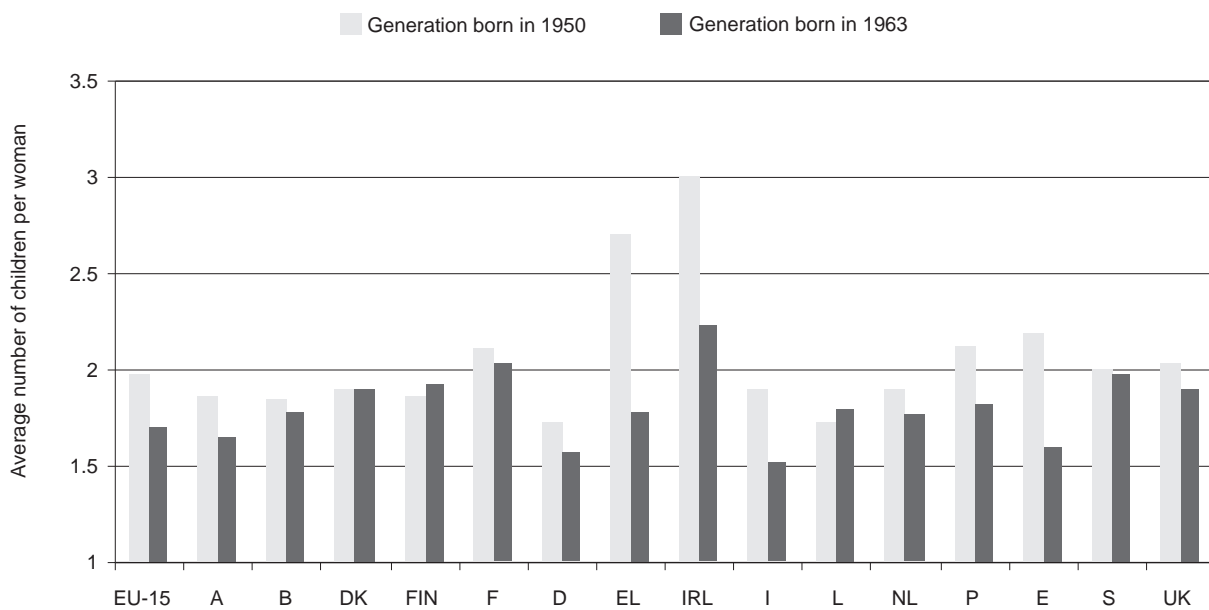
These are some aspects showing that the role of the family remains particularly important for the future of our society. As the future unfolds, we need to ensure that such positive developments as those provided by the technological revolution and globalisation are exploited to the full, and not allowed to create tensions in our societies.”

4 Low fertility affects all developed countries

4.1 Facts on low fertility

Declining birth rates and their sustained slippage below replacement fertility is one of the characteristic developments not only in Europe, but also in all other developed countries. This evolution is not new: for example, in most Member States, the descendants of the post-war generation remained below replacement level (Fig. 1) (for the different methods of measuring fertility see *Family Observer*, No. 1, 1999). But what is new, according to David Coleman, is the speed of the decline and the persistence of low fertility levels. This implies that we are currently witnessing an unprecedented evolution within demographic history, both in Europe and in all other developed countries.

Figure 1: EU: Completed fertility by generations born in 1950 and 1963



Source: Eurostat, Demographic Statistics

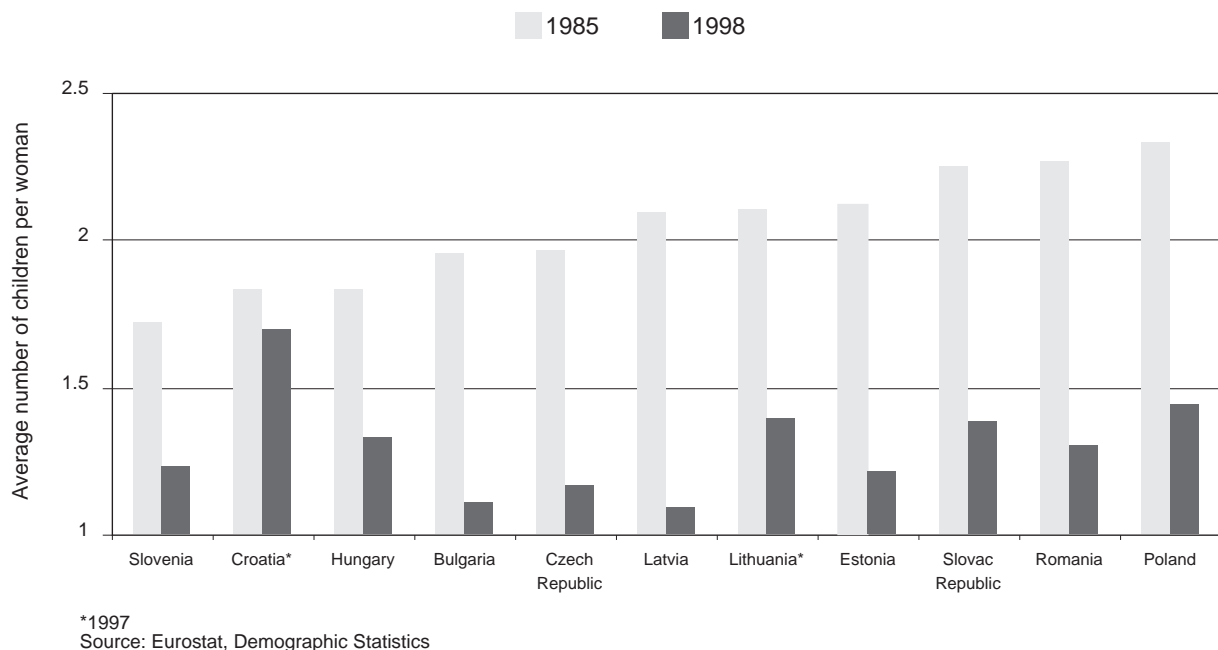
Despite the convergence towards low fertility levels, EU Member States differ in terms of timing and intensity of developments. In the Mediterranean countries (Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal), fertility dropped much later—but then, much faster. The levels attained by Spain, Italy and Greece are extremely low.

The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) enjoyed a slight increase in fertility rates at the end of the 1980s. Despite a renewed decline in recent years, their current fertility levels are among the highest in the European Union. Fluctuating fertility rates that are always below—but sometimes very close to—replacement level characterise the developments in Belgium, France, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom; whereas Germany, Austria and—to a certain extent also Luxembourg—have seen their birth rates stagnate at low levels for almost 20 years. Boasting the highest fertility within the EU for a long time, Ireland is now rapidly approaching a level that is definitely below 2.1 children per woman.

The pace of these developments has been extremely fast in all industrial nations. A particularly dramatic decline in fertility can be observed in the former Communist countries (Fig. 2). Whereas in the mid-1980s

the average number of children per woman tended to hover around replacement level in most of these countries, the current rates are very low. Some Eastern European countries have the lowest fertility levels ever recorded world-wide. The United States and New Zealand are the only developed countries to show replacement fertility. According to Peter McDonald, this evolution is in part due to the higher fertility of Hispanic women and young US-Americans and to the significantly higher fertility of the Maori population in New Zealand.

Figure 1: Total fertility rates in a selection of European non-EU countries



4.2 The paradoxes of low fertility

Juan Antonio Fernández Cordón and Giovanni Sgritta argue that people are often surprised at the demographic situation in Southern European countries, and especially that of Spain and Italy, considering it to be a paradox. Why a paradox? The idea of the paradox first comes up when comparing *what now is*, with *what it used to be*. In 1975, after ten years of declining fertility in the Central and Northern Member States of the EU, the highest fertility rates in the EU were found in Spain (2.79) and in Greece, Italy and Portugal (around 2.20). 15 years later, at the beginning of the 1990s, the situation was the opposite: the Southern countries had the lowest fertility rates. As the decline has continued during the last decade, they now have reached levels unprecedented in any other Member State. Such a dramatic change in such a short period of time took analysts aback who had previously attributed the higher rates in Southern countries to their economic and social characteristics: the South was different, and so was its fertility level.

The above is related to the second reason why the situation may seem like a paradox, namely its relation to *what it should be*. In fact, the existing low fertility level seems to contradict the apparent reality of an economically less developed and more traditional South. On the economic side, this region has a more archaic productive structure, and income levels lower than other EU Member States, along with more inequalities. Its society is more traditional than that of the rest of the EU; it is characterised by a religious background, a strong family orientation and few women in the labour force. In short, the South is different; but the expected relationship between fertility and income (inverse), the proportion of working women (also inverse) and tradition (positive) does not seem to work: hence, the paradox.

Besides being an initial step in a broader analysis, discovering a paradox is no great help when it comes to understanding, let alone correcting, a situation. On the contrary: it calls for a reappraisal of the basis for such a diagnosis, which may be summarised in two statements implicitly or explicitly underlying this view. The first one is that there is only a quantitative difference regarding the fertility decline in the Southern countries, as compared to earlier developments in other EU Member States. The second one is that Southern countries are not yet engaged or are only minimally engaged in the most recent, general modernisation process. In fact, the main question is not only related to the general determinants of low fertility all over Europe, but also to the factors that account for the particularly low levels found in the Southern countries.

But is the South as different as it seems? Juan Antonio Fernández Córdón and Giovanni Sgritta argue that Southern countries undoubtedly differ from other EU Member States in crucial aspects of economic life. There are also very obvious differences in some key indicators that make it seem apt to categorise Southern European countries as 'traditional societies'. Examples include the low incidence of cohabitation, low proportion of births outside wedlock, low divorce rate, certain structural household and family indicators (more extended families, less single-parent families, etc.) and a low rate of women active in the labour force. These indicators are at the core of what some researchers have labelled 'the second demographic transition'. But before concluding that this transition has not yet occurred in these countries, we must take a closer look at some of the indicators. For instance, the household size has diminished in all EU Member States, yet important differences remain. In Denmark or Sweden, an average household comprises two persons, in Spain or Ireland, around three persons. This is partly due to the higher proportion of older adults who live with their families in the Southern countries, although this is not the case in Italy. It is not so much a structural feature, but rather a cross-sectional view of an evolutionary process. We must recall that social changes took longer to catch on in the South, and that rapid changes lead to the coexistence of generations that do not differ greatly in age but have experienced very different histories. This is especially true for the very old, for whom changes in mentality and improvement of the pension system have come too late. These people live with their sons and daughters who were already adults when the changes set in at the end of the 1970s. The other explanation for more extended households is that young people are delaying their residential autonomy. In Spain, only 1% of young people below 30 live alone (as opposed to around 20% in Sweden and 15% in France). This explains the high proportion of couples with children in Spain or Italy. If we compare the share of couples with children below 16, the percentage is the same in Spain (10%) as in France or Denmark (9%).

Statistical facts cannot be considered without referring to dynamics, because the simple comparison between countries at a given point in time is misleading. All changes characterising the second demographic transition can be found in the Southern Member States, though with a much lower incidence and with great differences between co-existing cohorts. The family structure is also dependent on the fact that families and other relationships of primary solidarity have served as 'social shock absorbers' in the Southern Member States, substituting for assistance to the poor and state-supplied services elsewhere.

In fact, there are two important factors that have a bearing on the fertility level: (1) nuptiality and union formation, and (2) women's participation in the labour force. Concerning nuptiality, its decline does not have the same meaning in the Central and Northern Member States as it does in Spain or Italy. In the former, there has been an important change in the meaning of cohabitation. Initially, it was considered as a sort of 'provisional or trial marriage' that was formalised when a child was born or expected. Now it tends to be considered an alternative to marriage, allowing the coming of children (according to the Family Fertility Survey (FFS), 58% of the young women in Sweden were cohabiting at the birth of their first child). Such a process has not even started in the Southern Member States, where the incidence of cohabitation is still very low.

On the other hand, the small incidence of cohabitation found in the four Southern Member States of the European Union does not cover the same social reality. In Greece and Portugal, cohabitation is low because marriage is high; whereas in Italy and Spain, cohabitation is low because there are fewer unions (the proportions of women marrying being similar to those observed in Central and Northern countries). In Italy and Spain, young people are not forming any unions at all, while this is the population group that enters into cohabitation in the rest of the EU.

All this leads to the conclusion that the decisive fact is the low level of unions in Italy and Spain. Because this may be considered as the major factor explaining the low level of fertility in these countries, it is important to stress that young people's material well-being may be preventing them from getting into a partnership, be it marriage or cohabitation.

In Spain, and in Italy as well, concern about the situation of young people has focused on reducing their high unemployment rates. Their situation has been improving and will most probably continue to do so in the future, due to increasing job opportunities associated with a reduction of new cohorts entering the active population. What could be the consequence of these changes for fertility?

When analysing the situation of the young, the debate invoking 'material' causes (scarce and precarious jobs, housing beyond reach) and psychological or even 'societal' causes (different 'preferences' of the young, a different conception of the family) is not central. Both causes are valid but not at the same level. The kind of family that exists in Southern countries is able to absorb the difficulties young people face in finding a suitable job and suitable housing. It may even be correct that the cosiness of the 'family nest' prevents young people from better adapting to the changing conditions on the labour market and from changing their preferences in relation to housing. In that way, the role of the family may be part of the problem, but it does not create the problem. The Southern EU Member States face a special situation, because the parents of their young people belong to generations with possibly stronger family values. Once more, the meaningful question must be addressed to the future. As things are changing for the better on the labour market (as they already are and hopefully will continue to do), young people will get jobs more easily and their views on stability may also change (even if this no longer means keeping the same job forever). Will they continue to stay with their parents as long as they do now? Or is it more likely that they will behave in the same way as their peers in the rest of Europe? It seems difficult to believe that the important differences now existing between Southern countries and the rest of Europe will remain. The attitudes and opinions of young people are very similar in all EU Member States, including some seemingly traditional attitudes such as the importance given to the family or the persistent desire to have children. There are no easy answers to these questions; but if one listens to what young Italians or Spaniards say in interviews, it does not seem that they have adopted the present situation as a 'new normality'.

What about women's participation in the labour force? It is well known that fewer women work in the Southern Member States (but not in Portugal), as compared to other EU Member States. But do these persistent differences suffice to establish the existence of a Southern model of women active in the labour force? Juan Antonio Fernández Cordón and Giovanni Sgritta think they do not, because they cannot be interpreted as structural. To show this, we have to enter into a more detailed analysis, placing more emphasis on the dynamics of ongoing changes than on existing differences at a specific moment in time. For one, the differences between individual countries do not reflect the diversity of women's situations. Secondly, average indicators are less meaningful than a detailed age analysis. A cohort approach is essential and differences are related to women's family status.

In an analysis based on dynamics, we measure the biographical diversity of the generations of women involved, basically determined by the socio-economic history of the country they live in. The influence of cultural specificities cannot be discarded, but they seem to be less important than expected regarding the simple average participation rate. In the Southern countries, labour-market participation is not affected by any strictly gender-related fact that could be due to a specific cultural behaviour assigning a differentiated social role to women. Even if this might have happened in the past, it is now slowly disappearing in the process of cultural convergence among EU countries. Especially in Spain, women's cultural inclination to stay at home to take care of their children does not seem to be stronger than elsewhere. However, Spanish women find it more difficult to reconcile their domestic tasks with an outside job.

In Spanish society, the perception of 'women's work' has changed dramatically in the last two decades. Up to the early 1980s, the majority of Spaniards felt that mothers with small children should not work, and the majority of married women agreed with the statement that "women can work only if it does not affect taking care of the family". In a representative national survey carried out ten years later, the majority approved of working women whose children were grown up, and only 52% of respondents agreed with the state-

ment that “it would be a drawback for a pre-school age child if his/her mother worked,” while young people and educated persons clearly opposed it.

With rapidly rising proportions of women in the labour force, the fertility behaviour of active women has changed considerably. The partial incompatibility between childbearing and paid work throughout two decades of major social changes indicates that reconciling women’s wish to work and to take care of their children—that ought to be shared by men—cannot be accomplished without supportive measures.

Difficulties encountered in reconciling work and family have an impact on the level of fertility. This indirect consequence of the increasing participation of women in the labour force makes fertility one of the main objectives of public policies. Enabling women and men to reconcile their paid work with a normal family life without great personal sacrifice appears to be an important prerequisite for raising fertility levels.

5 Explaining low fertility: policy lessons

5.1 The decision to have children

Making a rational decision to have a child means that “people make the considered calculation that the benefits of an additional child outweigh the costs. While much of the cost may be figured in monetary terms, there are no monetary benefits. Instead, the benefits consist of dimensions of a psychological nature that are not readily quantifiable. ... One way to think about the benefits of a child in this circumstance is in terms of net benefit thresholds (the psychological benefits less the psychological costs). That is, people have some calculus of the psychological gain to them of having the next child. This will be highly variable across individuals. If the economic costs of children rise, some individual psychological thresholds will be crossed and decisions will be made not to have the next child. The dimensions of the psychological benefits of having a child will vary according to the birth order of the child. Having the first child provides benefits including the status of being a parent, ‘being a family’, having offspring who will carry on the family, meeting the expectations of others, having a baby who will be fun and will grow up and love you, fulfilling childhood dreams, or providing vicarious pleasure from the child’s success. The decision to have a second child may be more related to the strength of the notion that each child should have at least one sibling, or to having a child of the other sex. Those who have a third child may value at least three children as a ‘real’ family, or they may be still trying for a child of the sex that they don’t have. Those who have a fourth child may simply love children. It is likely that the level of the net psychological benefits threshold falls as birth order rises. That is, the highest psychological threshold relates to the first child. Also, it is very likely that the level of the threshold falls as people get older. That is, all other things being equal, a woman at age 29 may feel more inclined to have a second child than a woman at age 39. Psychological costs probably rise with age or, perhaps, increased age leads to downward rationalisation of the perceived benefits. Accordingly, as the age at childbearing increases, people will be less likely to have additional children.” (Peter McDonald)

In terms of policy, the rational decision to have a child “implies that, if we wish to have a positive impact on fertility decision-making, we should try to raise the psychological benefits thresholds or to reduce the economic costs of children. The first is not readily amenable to policy, although a general sense that a society is child-oriented or child-friendly probably has some effect in raising thresholds. If children are always portrayed as a negative (a threat to a good relationship, an obstacle to having a good time, as potential drug addicts or delinquents) or if social institutions do not make allowances for the possibility that a person has children (no dogs or children allowed), then thresholds will tend to be lower. Encouragement of earlier childbearing could also be a way in which psychological thresholds might be raised. There is no question that the remarkably different history of fertility in the United States in the 1990s and its maintenance at a higher level than in any other industrialised country is related to the much earlier onset of childbearing in the USA. Recently, Singapore considered the introduction of a large tax rebate that would be paid to women if they had their first child before the age of 28 years.” (Peter McDonald)

5.2 The costs of children

Costs of children can be divided into two categories, direct and indirect costs. The direct cost of a child is the actual monetary expenditure on the child less any financial benefits that are received through the tax-transfer system because of the presence of the child. Free or subsidised services reduce the expenditure that parents would otherwise have incurred. Peter McDonald argues, “that parents and potential parents are well attuned to changes in the direct costs of children within their own society. If they perceive that children have become more expensive then psychological benefit thresholds will be put to the test. The indirect cost of a child is the earnings lost because of the need to spend time bearing and caring for the child. Research in several countries has shown that the indirect cost of the first child is considerably greater than the indirect cost of later

children. Direct costs are also higher for the first child but direct costs are flatter than indirect costs as the number of children rises. Indirect costs fall as society is organised in such a way that parents can combine work and family. This may partly explain the fact that countries with high labour force participation rates for mothers have relatively high fertility and countries with low participation of mothers have very low fertility. There is a strong argument that indirect costs are more significant in determining whether a woman has a first child than direct costs, while direct costs are more significant in decision-making about later children. ... Indirect costs have fallen in Australia from the 1980s to the 1990s as more mothers have been able to participate in the labour force and, hence, to lower the earnings forgone through having a child. This trend has probably kept first birth rates at a higher level than would otherwise have been the case."

For Finland, Sirpa Taskinen reports that social benefits are less important in this context. "Surveys imply that the benefits hardly affect the decision of families to have their first child, and are also rather insignificant in the decision to have a second child. At least this is what people report as their conscious behaviour. Day-care facilities do have an impact on the decision to have more than one child."

5.3 Post-materialist values and low fertility

This approach stipulates that "changes in social and demographic behaviour have been driven by the growth of the values of individual self-realisation, satisfaction of personal preferences, liberalism and freedom from traditional forces of authority, particularly religion. ... These values have been shown to have been associated with increases in divorce rates, cohabitation and ex-nuptial births. There is little doubt that these forms of behaviour are much more prominent in the more liberal societies of Nordic countries and English-speaking countries than in the more traditional family cultures of countries of Southern Europe, Germanic countries and Asian developed countries. ... It is evident that, among the advanced countries, fertility is higher in the liberal societies than in the traditional societies. Thus, societies that maintain traditional behaviour seem to be considerably less well able to reproduce themselves than the more liberal societies." (Peter McDonald)

The idea that "post-materialist values encourage low fertility is a classic example of the 'ecological fallacy'. Within any one society, on average, individual women who are more highly educated, less religious, more urban or more liberal in their attitudes and values have lower fertility than the less educated, the more religious, the more rural and the more conservative. This finding is then used to draw the fallacious conclusion across societies that more liberal societies will have lower fertility than more conservative societies. The lesson from this ecological fallacy is that a country's low fertility should not be addressed by laying the blame selectively upon a sub-group of women within a given society, those with low fertility. Rather low fertility is a societal phenomenon related to the structure of social institutions." (Peter McDonald)

How do these post-materialist values develop and spread among Europe's young generations? Based on several European surveys, Walter Bien highlights the striking conformity of opinions among European youth, in particular with regard to such issues as sexuality, family and fertility. One of the most significant findings obtained from an analysis of the *Youth and History* study is the surprising level of homogeneity among young Europeans in their opinions on contemporary issues. Also relevant is the low variance between rural and urban areas. Whereas cultural identities vary very slightly from country to country, the differences are virtually non-existent on the regional level. There is no decline in relevant ('good') attitudes and values when explaining the decline in birth rates, and there is no specific value pattern of parents-to-be as compared with other age groups, that need to be changed to make a better future.

Although there are major behavioural differences between EU countries and even a marked degree of variation within countries, Walter Bien thinks that there is a latent European identity in terms of the values shared by the new generations. Values prevail whose formation has certainly been influenced by the mass media, the dissemination of homogeneous information, as well as views within our societies. "There are huge differences in the situation of young people living in Europe, both between countries and between the different regions in one and the same country. One can also find major differences in the behaviour of young people within Europe. There are also some differences in attitudes of young people living in different countries of the EU, but there are no consistent patterns of such differences. On the other hand, there seems to be

a common pattern in the responses to each of the different topics. Perhaps it is useful and possible to talk about a latent common European attitude, and in particular about the value of children and family as a European cultural identity that does not differ significantly between countries and rural and urban areas. Maybe this common identity is triggered by the power of TV and mass media (music, movies and books) providing almost identical information all across Europe. The young people must find their specific way (behaviour) between a (European) media-based value system and a very (region-)specific context (situation)."

Maura Misiti provides a differentiated in-depth analysis of this hypothesis and of the role played by the media in the dissemination of a number of views and opinions on demographic issues. It seems that opinions still depend largely on the national demographic history but also on the manner in which every Member State has or has not turned demographic questions into major policy issues. This explains why demographic changes in Europe neither generate a homogeneous response nor a homogeneous public opinion. For this reason, it is absolutely impossible to foresee the development of a hypothetical European public opinion.

To explain the role played by the different media (television, radio and the written press), Maura Misiti refers to a survey on the information campaigns about the world population exceeding the six-billion mark. It appears that the mechanisms of information reception and public opinion production are far from being uniform, and that reception strongly depends on the recipient's initial information level. The willingness to store new information presupposes that a minimum level of interest already exists in the media consumer. Unless such an interest was mobilised beforehand, there will be no reception—which may explain, at least in part, the reception gaps associated with the level of educational and professional attainment. "People who are interested in a particular piece of information will tend to turn to various sources and in the end will be able to form quite an accurate opinion. On the other hand, people who do not delve more deeply into a particular piece of information will continue to harbour ideas similar to the general average opinion. The group of people most interested is largely made up of rather well-educated men, while the group of people who got their information exclusively from television has more women than men. Among those people who had no information at all about the question there is a particularly large group of elderly women, especially from South Italy, which indicates the low level of education and the general backwardness so prevalent among that social group." In the light of such findings, it appears rash to maintain that there are uniform opinions and values on demographic issues and the question of fertility levels.

5.4 Gender division of paid and unpaid labour and the decision to have children

When analysing this issue, we may, as proposed by Hans-Joachim Schulze, juxtapose two configurations:

- ▶ In the first case, there is a clear distinction between the responsibilities of men, which relate to their jobs, and the responsibilities of women, which relate to care and domestic work—a scenario we may term 'complementary division of labour' (job versus family).
- ▶ In the second case, there is no differentiation between men and women concerning the distribution of paid and unpaid work. This is a 'symmetric division of responsibilities'.

At first sight, we cannot say whether the one or the other scenario is more favourable to fertility. In fact, the answer to this question will largely depend on the economic and socio-cultural context. It is also linked to the policies applied in the family and labour-market domain.

If we take a closer look at the EU Member States, we see that, although there is no predominant form of how work is shared between women and men, the complementary division of labour is losing in importance. The majority of women want to participate in the labour force and share care and domestic work with their partners; they are increasingly aspiring towards an equal gender division in family and household tasks. In countries where women want to participate in employment, but where neither public policies nor men's contribution to family duties change considerably, fertility levels are likely to be low. If, however, policy-makers enable women to better reconcile work and family life and men take on a greater share of the household tasks, couples wanting to have children will realise their plans more readily.

In other words, the process of modernisation does not necessarily engender low fertility figures. Beginning at a certain level, which prevails throughout the EU, modernisation may—under certain conditions—be favourable to fertility. The example of the Scandinavian countries illustrates that people will choose to become parents if the efforts undertaken to raise employment go hand in hand with policies incorporating some sort of gender-equality perspective. It also shows that the exercise of a pro-natalist choice and the creation of a better environment for children will only be possible through modernised family policies and alternative child-care policies, as pointed out by Sirpa Taskinen. Moreover, there is a need for appropriate labour-market policies and an across-the-board re-design of gender relations.

More precisely, and quoting Künzler,³ Hans-Joachim Schulze argues as follows: “Fertility and gender differences in employment have a strong negative correlation. ... A comparison between OECD countries shows that the smaller the differences in employment rates, the higher the fertility rate. More effectively than other policies, the promotion of gender-role modernisation through an equality-oriented family policy creates the conditions that make work and family life compatible. A decisive contribution is made by the supply of day-care for children aged one to three years. The better the degree of provision for this age group, the smaller the difference in employment rates between women and men. The difference between the rate of employment and the degree of child-care provision is negatively correlated. Comparative research on families’ division of labour in the household shows that the societal modernisation of the role of women may also have a modernising impact on the participation of men in families. The Scandinavian countries (and The Netherlands) consistently hold high rankings with regard to the participation of men in family work. Germany and late female mobilisation countries consistently hold rankings at the other, traditional, end of the scale. France, Belgium and Great Britain hold middle positions. ... The social-democratic welfare states of Scandinavia appear to have created conditions that allow a co-existence and co-evolution of family with modernised gender relationships. Likewise, the consequences of deficits in modernisation are clearly visible in the late female mobilisation countries (including Germany). These findings refute the scenario of family’s decline and doom as a result of modernisation, and especially of modernising gender relationships—a scenario that has accompanied family sociology and family research from its very beginnings up to the present day.” In other words, modernisation of family policy and fertility go together well on the macro level.

The father’s family orientation is of special interest with regard to its possible impact on the quality of the father’s parenting. In this connection, Hans-Joachim Schulze refers to Herlth,⁴ arguing that the modernisation of the father’s role as indicated by *family orientation* and *participation in household activities* can be regarded as an important factor of the quality of the father-child relationship. It is striking not only that the two indicators of modernisation have independent effects on parenting, but also that the degree of household participation does not influence maternal marital satisfaction. “Family-oriented fathers are most probably also child-oriented fathers. They also participate to a greater extent in housework. However, household participation as such is not a valid predictor for the mother-child relationship or for the development of children’s competence. What is crucial is the father’s role orientation, i.e. the concept of male involvement in everyday family life that he accepts as a norm. The consequences of a father’s modernised gender-role orientation for the mother’s marital satisfaction and supportive behaviour are not the result of the father’s greater participation in the household.” (Hans-Joachim Schulze)

These considerations lead to some political questions. From a policy point of view, it would be necessary to analyse which factors in family life encourage or discourage such an orientation. First, we should note the fact that the child as an expressive resource for his/her father easily explains variations in family orientation. The more a father is engaged in strong, emotionally satisfying relationships with his child, the stronger his

³ Künzler, J. (2000): Compatibility between modernisation and the family. In: Schulze, H.-J. (ed.): *Stability and complexity: perspectives for a child-oriented family policy*. Amsterdam et al.: VU University Press. pp. 119–142.

⁴ Herlth, A. (2000). The modernisation of the father’s role and its consequences for family functioning. Schulze, H.-J. (ed.): *Stability and complexity: perspectives for a child-oriented family policy*. Amsterdam et al.: VU University Press. pp. 165–182.

family-orientation will be, and the higher the likelihood that he will participate in household activities. Therefore, emotional ties to one's children can be considered the key for a 'successful' modernisation of the father role. Secondly, we must also consider that practising family orientation—e.g. being present in the world of one's children and their mother—requires a lot of additional time, which fathers must be willing and able to provide. Increasing occupational stress on fathers will lower their family orientation and their participation in household activities. Occupational stress is often connected with work on weekends and overtime and tends to put a strain on the family. This mainly hits mothers, and especially working mothers. Therefore family policy could do a bit more to give fathers a real chance to be present in their family.

Summarising his findings, Hans-Joachim Schulze concludes: "Where public policy succeeds in shaping the conditions for family life more according to the requests of normative orientations of women and men, a higher degree of fertility can be observed."

5.5 Market-based economy and its impact on fertility

Analysing the relation between a market-based economy and fertility levels, Peter McDonald states that, "since the 1980s, the industrialised countries of the world have restructured their economies in line with a philosophy that the free operation of the market is the most efficient and effective form of economic organisation. Regulations and restrictions have been reduced so that capital can flow easily in the direction that maximises business efficiency and profit. ... The characteristics of this new economic regime are small government and low taxation, free flow of capital across international boundaries, free trade, freedom for employers and workers to determine wages and working conditions, and curtailment of government-funded social welfare. In distributional terms, the system rewards innovation and hard work and, hence, provides incentives for both. Government, both national and international, takes on a new role as facilitator and regulator of this system.

In the 1990s, this system has produced lower levels of unemployment in many industrialised countries and, on average, greater prosperity. However, there are questions about its distributional outcomes. The system is unforgiving of its casualties whether they be individuals, companies or nations. Companies and nations are penalised for failure through out-flow of capital at short notice. Individuals are penalised for failure by loss of their income source. The rewards may be greater under this system than under the former system of protection, but the risks are also greater. Most countries deal with the casualties of the market through their welfare systems, but these are increasingly seen as being under threat. In the prospect that the welfare safety net is not guaranteed, people adopt risk-averse behaviours.

In continental Europe, accommodation to the workings of the new market economy has been particularly problematic because of the prior existence of high fixed costs of labour and low labour force participation, both outcomes of the organisation of continental European welfare states. ... There is a very strong tendency among those in mainstream jobs to protect their rights in the welfare system. The result is an insider-outsider labour market in which the insiders tend to be middle-aged males and the outsiders are women and younger people. The safest strategy for women and young people is to become an 'insider' and to delay or eschew family formation. The system is one of a conservative, family-wage, welfare state still based on the presumption of the male breadwinner model of the family."

Peter McDonald is convinced that, "individuals need to focus upon the acquisition of saleable skills, work experience and a marketable reputation. At the same time, they need to accumulate savings or wealth as a personal safety net. They also need to maintain flexibility of time and place so that they can react to opportunities as they arise. The risk-averse individual in a world that rewards market production is unwise to devote time or money to social reproduction. Social reproduction involves altruism, that is, time and money devoted to others or to the society at large. For the risk-averse in a free market economy, altruism is equivalent to foolhardiness. Family is at the heart of social reproduction. It is the place where altruism abounds. There are people and politicians who believe that the public world of the market economy and the private world of the family can be separate worlds; that an individual can be highly competitive, individualistic and risk-averse in the market but then be self-sacrificing, altruistic and risk-accepting within the family. The only

explanation I can give for this logic is that these are people who still believe in the separation of the roles of men and women; that market production is a male responsibility and social reproduction is a female responsibility. A worker with a family can be flexible to the demands of market production if he has a wife at home taking care of social reproduction. Indeed, conservative reaction to low fertility sometimes takes this direction.”

“However, young women today are equipped for market production at a level at least equivalent to young men and employers are very happy to employ women in the market economy. Where human capital counts, the free market will employ a skilled woman before an unskilled man, even before a man slightly less skilled than the woman. The risk-averse woman of today will ensure that she is able to support herself and, given the chance of relationship breakdown, will be careful not to put herself in a position of dependency upon a man. Couples recognise that dual employment provides a hedge against job loss for either one and banks reinforce this by providing housing mortgages on the basis of two incomes. Parents and schools encourage young women to accumulate skills that will enable them to remain attached to the labour force. As a result, there are very few young women today who see their future lives in terms of finding a husband and never thereafter being engaged in market work. Reinforcement of the male breadwinner model of the family is not the solution to the dilemma that we now face in maintaining social reproduction in combination with a free market approach to economic production.

The foundation of social reproduction is the birth, nurture and socialisation of the next generation. The failure of the social and economic system that we have today is most evidenced by our failure to be able to establish this foundation. For the past 20 years, almost all industrialised countries have had rates of birth that are below the level that reproduces the population. What kind of society cannot even reproduce itself? The answer is the society based on the new market economy.

The market is not interested in this issue because the market is very short-term in its orientation. Firms and governments become caught up in this short-term vision and with good reason because they tend to be punished by the financial markets for any short-term lapse. ... With focus on the short term, long-term investment tends to fall off the agenda for both firms and governments ... but, if the market is reacting to a shortage of workers induced by previous low birth rates, an increase in births does not feed into the labour force for around 20–25 years. That is, the lag time to response can be very long indeed and major demographic problems can be created in the interim. Population policy is policy for the very long term. We can project ahead now and see that very low birth rates such as those that apply in Japan and most of Europe today will lead to age structures that are unsustainable. There is no sign at all that the market price mechanism is about to correct for this situation in Japan or Europe. Indeed, the opposite is true. The market continues to produce risk-averse workers for whom children are a considerable risk. Employment structure in many countries still remains wedded to the male breadwinner or family wage model.

Thus, even if the market were to have highly favourable outcomes such that unemployment fell to very low levels and real incomes rose, this would not necessarily stimulate an increase in fertility. The reason is that fertility decision-making in the market economy has much more to do with relative well-being than with absolute well-being. No matter how successful the market is, under present arrangements in most countries, it will always provide lower benefits to those with children than to those without children. Likewise the benefits of the market will fall as the number of children increases. The collapse of birth rates in most industrialised countries is telling evidence of the failure of the market approach to allow social reproduction to proceed. There is an argument that what is required is a new social contract that enables the market approach to proceed but which, at the same time, provides just rewards to social reproduction. ... Successful policy will almost certainly involve changes in social and economic organisation on a much wider scale. These changes must involve an invigoration of the concept of horizontal equity. That is, allowing for income-earning potential, society must attempt to equalise the economic outcomes for different family configurations. This is equivalent to a strong assertion that children are a social good and not merely a private, optional pleasure. The new social contract also must be one that is based in gender equity and not in the male breadwinner model of the family. Nevertheless, if the market is able to improve the economic well-being of women and young people, as it has done to a large extent in the United States, this is a highly desirable end.

In many European countries, particularly Eastern European countries, there is a strong argument that low fertility is related to poor economic conditions.” (Peter McDonald)

6 Which public policies have an impact on fertility?

6.1 Trends and limits of family policies in Europe

A closer look at traditional family policies (i.e. primarily cash benefits made available to couples at the national level, to help them cover the cost of raising children) reveals that their impact is not tangible. This induces John Ditch to postulate the following statement: “After careful examination of all available evidence, we may conclude, certain about our inexactitude if little else, that no comprehensive, convincing or satisfactory explanation exists to account for variation or fluctuation in rates of fertility—either through time or across space—and in particular that no clear relationship can be established between any country’s rate of fertility and the form or value of its child support package.”

According to John Ditch, one of the reasons why our systems fail to provide incentives for fertility is probably the utilitarian postulate underlying these benefits. In fact, this connotation of maximised interests seems unlikely to respond to the logic of the players involved, be it with regard to fertility or with regard to their attitudes on employment and public assistance. “The link between packages of financial support (or access to other key resources) and human behaviour extends beyond fertility to include, for example: ‘popular’ assertions that unemployed people will not work, or seek work, if benefits are too generous; that young people will have little interest in schooling if they know that social assistance will support them after they leave; that some claimants pretend to have illness or disability in order to get enhanced benefits; that young women will get pregnant in order to obtain public housing; that the availability of benefits to support lone parents encourages marital breakdown; that young men are feckless because they do not have to face the financial consequences; that families abandon responsibility for older people when public care is available. Underlying all these assertions is a belief that human beings are utility maximisers.”

Moreover, we have to follow Anne H. Gauthier and explore the frontiers and limits of family policies in the various EU Member States, as well as their recent development. In her opinion, any discussion of the impact of public policy on couples—and, more precisely, on fertility—requires a redefinition of the traditional approach to family policies. This is especially true in view of the increasingly blurred borderlines between family policy and other public policy domains (old age, employment, gender equality, etc.). Within the context of current demographic and family patterns, family policy can no longer be restricted to financial packages and family-related services within the framework of government policies. We have to take into account local policy incentives by territorial authorities or even private, profit, non-profit and non-governmental enterprises and organisations, etc. Also, shouldn’t we consider the national or local measures taken in other public policy areas such as community facilities, housing, education, the law, etc.?

As Anne Gauthier puts it, “There is no agreement in the literature as to how to define family policy. According to a narrow definition, family policy could be said to include benefits and services that are exclusively targeted to couples with children and/or to single parents. Such a definition encompasses cash and in-kind benefits such as direct cash transfers to families, tax relief for families with children, maternity and parental leave, child-care facilities and subsidies, as well as family law. According to a broad definition, family policy can be expanded to all public policies that may potentially affect the well-being of families including policies and services related to public transport, immigration, food safety, etc. Most family policy studies have tended to opt for a narrow definition, partly for reasons of data availability, and partly for reasons of space.”

It is difficult to make comparisons in such a large field. That is why we have to admit that our information and data resources are limited. Anne Gauthier’s paper covers three main types of family benefits: cash benefits, maternity and parental leave benefits, and child-care facilities. For reasons of space and/or data availability, it does not cover benefits related to housing, health and education, nor services to families and family law. Based on these data, we may raise crucial questions on the current processes in Europe. Are we witnessing a convergence of family policies as adopted by Member States? Here, Anne Gauthier maintains that, although we see a growing *rapprochement*, there are still major country-specific differences.

What is common to all countries is the importance of reconciling work and family life. There is also a general tendency away from a universal system of allocation that used to be the norm in the 1950s and 1960s, towards an increasingly redistributive system with a growing number of means-tested benefits. Another common trait is that schemes for maternity and parental leave have greatly improved. Across all 15 countries, the duration of maternity leave has increased from 16 weeks in 1975 to 24 weeks in 1999, while cash benefits have increased from 78% of regular earnings in 1975 to 84% in 1999. Since the 1980s, we have also witnessed the provision of more child-care facilities for infants in response to a growing demand for such services.

Anne Gauthier's summary reads as follows: "The analysis of hard and soft indicators ... suggests indeed some convergence, not so much in the actual level of support for families, but in the nature of state support for families, and in the prioritised items. In particular, the emphasis on the theme 'family and work' was found in all countries. All countries launched some initiatives on this theme, and all discussed the issue of reconciliation between work and family responsibilities. Such a cross-national consensus is unique in the history of family policy. Only in the immediate post-World War II period was a similar consensus observed, at the time with regard to universal state support for families and children. Over the following decades, on the other hand, ideological differences were wide, and family policies evolved in diverging ways. For instance, while the Scandinavian countries opted for a high level of state support for families, that emphasised the issue of gender equality, Germany continued to support a much more traditional gender division of labour, instead emphasising a male breadwinner-housewife model. And while France's family policy was driven by pronatalist objectives, Britain opted for a non-interventionist model, restricting its intervention to cases of abuse or severe distress. These large cross-national differences in the nature and level of state support for families were very visible throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, the convergence noted above has increasingly blurred the distinction between these different 'models' of family policies. There are still major cross-national differences in the actual level of support provided for families, but the recent emphasis on family and work, and the related changes in maternity and parental leave schemes, have brought closer countries belonging to different 'models' of family policies. Britain for instance no longer perfectly exemplifies the liberal non-interventionist model, and Germany has started to move away from a model based on a traditional gender division of labour. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse in details the determinants of this convergence. But several factors are obvious including the major role played by the European Commission in seeking 'windows of opportunities' and in pushing ahead the theme of family and work."

6.2 Career strategies, employment policies and impact on fertility

Eva Bernhard also insists that the female employment dimension is the main factor determining fertility-related attitudes and behaviour. The changes that have taken place in national labour markets, such as the development of highly feminised third-sector jobs, have had major repercussions on families. They have also had a great impact on the 'place' assigned to women and men in European society, even though the rhythm of these changes has varied greatly from one country to the next. "Between 1960 and 1990, the European labour force grew by 30 million; 25 of those were women. Thus we have seen a profound restructuring of social organisation where all European countries have moved in the direction from the breadwinner-housewife system to a system characterised by dual-earner households. Different countries have moved along different trajectories and at varying speed,⁵ so we find different levels and different patterns of female labour force participation in different countries. Currently, among the 15 EU countries, about two-thirds of women in the age group 25–49 years are employed. The lowest rate is found in Spain (50%) and the highest in Sweden (close to 80%). The differences are even more pronounced when it comes to the percentage working part-time (of all employed women 25–49 years): from 8% in Greece to 75% in The Netherlands."

This progression in female labour-force participation, as well as the ways and means of reconciling work with family plans and fertility, have all generated a number of strategies. They depend on the degree of par-

⁵ Rubery, J. et al. (1999): *Women's employment in Europe: trends and prospects*. London & New York: Routledge.

ticipation sought, the satisfaction gained from work (these two variables being linked with the level of educational attainment), career outlooks and, mainly, the provision of child-care facilities for infants.

“Confronted with the choice between three labour market possibilities (to participate part-time, full-time, or not at all), a new mother in Great Britain, and in many other countries, is much less likely today to quit her job for an extended period of time. According to Dex and Joshi,⁶ her decision will be conditional on alternative possibilities of child care, the intrinsic satisfaction of market and domestic work, and her own employment and earning power until retirement. Women who can earn a high wage are likely to take short breaks from employment and to sustain employment continuity. This is of course related to their educational level. We also find substantial differences by education in expected years in employment after age 25. Dex and Joshi found a polarisation in women’s labour force participation following childbirth: a divergence between highly educated mothers with high wages and those with the least education and low wages. They conclude that in Great Britain a mother will be more likely to continue full-time participation, the higher the potentially foregone earnings are by ending or interrupting her full-time employment. This mechanism is likely to apply in other European countries as well.” (Eva Bernhardt)

This tendency towards a greater, more sustained participation by women in the labour force thus depends mainly on the policies developed to facilitate a strategy to keep women in continuous employment. However, substantial differences still exist between men’s careers and women’s. According to Eva Bernhardt, “It is clear that women’s employment activity in all European countries, and most notably in Scandinavia, is more and more often characterised by continuity. Continuous work patterns among mothers have been shown to be correlated with the expansion of parental leave arrangements. ... Women generally divide their time between home chores and paid work in quite a different way than men do. ... Even if men are found to increasingly share household chores and child care with their wives (or partners)—more so in some countries than in others—the pervasive picture of women doing more unpaid work and less paid work than men has not really changed. ... It has generally been found that women’s domestic work time declines when they are in the paid labour force, while men only marginally increase their housework even if they have a wife working full-time. Thus, the gap has narrowed, not because men do that much more housework but because women do less.”

This rebalancing of male and female paths, as well as the gender-specific way in which time is divided up between family life and work life, takes on very different speeds depending on the country. The ‘new gender contract’ is particularly noticeable in Northern Europe, although substantial progress still needs to be made. Eva Bernhardt describes the new gender contract in Sweden in the following way: “Women and men are supposed to take equal responsibility for the support of the family. Thus both women and men are expected to work and to contribute to the family economy. But women need not work full-time, and men should not work part-time for any length of time. It seems, therefore, that even in a relatively gender-equal society like Sweden the majority of women are willing to give priority to the family (and the children), and let their working life play a secondary role, during a certain phase of their lives. Gender equality (defined as giving men and women the same possibilities, rights and obligations in all essential areas of life) is a priority area in Sweden. In a recent governmental report to Parliament, it is emphasised, however, that the top position held by Sweden should not mislead us to think that we have reached the goal. Even if considerable progress has been made towards a gender-equal society, persistent gender structures from a society characterised by male dominance and female subordination continue to influence the choices that men and women make with regard to work and family life.”

Some authors, such as Cecile Wetzels,⁷ try to evaluate the factors that might influence women’s strategy of reconciling work and fertility. Wetzels asserts that young women in Europe increasingly educate them-

⁶ Dex, S. & Joshi, H. (1999): Careers and motherhood: policies for compatibility. In: Cambridge Journal of Economics, 23. pp. 641–659.

⁷ Wetzels, C. (1999): Squeezing birth into working life: household panel data analysis comparing Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and The Netherlands. Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers.

selves for a lifelong labour market career. How is it possible to fit giving birth into a planned career trajectory that does not allow for long interruptions? According to Wetzels, the most important factors influencing the decision on *if, when and how* to enter paid work after giving birth, are whether taxes are jointly or individually assessed, day-care subsidies, availability of quality child care, duration and replacement ratio of parental or maternity leave, organisation of the school day care and after-school care, availability of (part-time) jobs, and finally regulations regarding leave for sick children. Of the four countries compared in this study (Germany, Great Britain, The Netherlands and Sweden), Sweden is the country that has worked out a policy mix that most benefits the two-earner family, while Germany has chosen policies that most benefit the one-earner family. It was found in all the countries that the longer the education of the woman and the more labour-market experience she has before the birth of her first child, the more likely she is to have a continuous career in the labour force. Labour-force participation, hours of work and wages in the period around childbirth were found to be crucial for a woman's career later on. The human capital accumulated before a woman has her first child will determine her earnings both during and after mothering. German and Dutch women remain in continuous employment (with only maternity-leave interruptions) only if they are well educated. If not, the breadwinner ideology and social institutions relegate them to a position of homemaker.

If these factors have a clear impact on plans to have children, we may also ask ourselves whether and to what extent women restrict their fertility levels to remain in the labour market and to live up to their job-related ambitions. Here, too, the Swedish example is worth investigating. "Taking a look at the contemporary Swedish scene does not seem to confirm the hypothesis that high work ambitions have a negative effect on birth plans. Among childless young adults (26 and 30 years old) high work ambition generally had no effect on birth plans (if anything it made women less likely to hesitate about having children). ... Clearly, young adults in Sweden are confident that they will be able to reconcile work and family life." (Eva Bernhardt)

The only visible impact is within the third-birth fertility context. Pinelli et al.⁸ found some evidence of a negative effect of employment on third-birth fertility in Sweden. This was a comparative study with FFS data from Italy, France, Hungary, Sweden and the USA, analysing first, second and third births. The results show that in Hungary and Sweden, where it is more common for women to work and where women's work has more support from institutions in terms of services and working conditions, it is possible for women to work without giving up maternity. In Italy, France and the USA, on the other hand, the situation is the reverse: not only do fewer women work, but those who do work also are less fertile.

Eva Bernhardt has identified three basic strategies adopted by women regarding fertility plans:

- 1) *The career strategy*: Women who opt for a demanding career will restrict their fertility. These women will have no children or possibly one child.
- 2) *The combination strategy*: Women who want to work continuously but who are willing to adopt some sort of scaling-back strategy, at least while the children are of pre-school age. These women will have more children in a more family-friendly society.
- 3) *The homemaking strategy*: Women who quit working at the birth of the first child, or at least interrupt their activity in the work force over a long period (many years). These women will have more children than women who work continuously, without necessarily having large enough families to counteract the effects of (1) and (2). The homemaking strategy will become an increasingly unlikely option, even in countries where it is now relatively common, if for no other than economic reasons.

Within such a perspective, it becomes evident that employment policies are nowadays among the main options of effectively intervening in fertility levels and achieving replacement fertility in Europe. As John Ditch explains, "We know that financial packages make little difference to the number of children women

⁸ Pinelli A. et al. (2000): Interrelations between partnership and fertility behaviours. Paper presented at FFS Flagship Conference in Brussels, May.

have. The size of the package may influence, at the margin, the timing of her first child. Of greater significance in shaping fertility patterns is the availability of employment, predictable and stable levels of income, child care, family-friendly employment, a stable relationship and prevailing social attitudes which value children in, and for, themselves. ... There is a relationship between fertility, the structure of labour markets and the dynamics of labour force participation; more particularly, we know that the articulation of this relationship is mediated by the availability of child care, access to birth control and policies which aid the reconciliation of employment and family life.”

In Eva Bernhardt’s opinion, achieving replacement levels will depend on the care arrangements our developed societies provide for our dependants. Unless we pay greater attention to the fact that we are living in societies where men and women want continuous involvement in their career, we will probably run the risk that women will choose not to have children or to have them very late in life, i.e. to have only a few children.

“A recent OECD conference on *Changing labour markets and gender equality: the role of policy* (October 1998 in Oslo) concluded that lifelong on-the-job training and other efforts to improve the competence of individual workers, males and females, is not enough. It has to be complemented by family-friendly workplaces and effective commitment, not the least on the part of employers, to offer women better career prospects. Labour market policies in many countries strive actively to create a working life without gender differences and discrimination. In order to make replacement fertility a reachable goal, it is, however, crucial to create satisfactory societal arrangements to take care of our dependants—children and the elderly. In the future, labour market policies will have to cope with a world where both male and female employees have active family responsibilities, which they want to combine with their commitment to the labour market.” (Eva Bernhardt)

In her contribution, Jo Murphy-Lawless develops an analogous perspective by focusing on the essential contributions of feminist analysis that help us understand women’s needs relating to infants and encourage us to explore previously uncharted terrain. Taking Irish society and its profound and recent changes as an example, she highlights the persistent inequality women encounter when trying to reconcile work and motherhood. *Inter alia*, she calls for new ‘maternity policies’, questioning the idea that women have any real choice in their attempts at combining work and childbearing: “Choice, what choice?,” Suzanne Franks⁹ asks. “Franks argues that for the majority of women who have entered the workforce over the last two decades, who have come from low and middle-income families, their ‘choice’ is in fact a necessity, and they do this double burden without any of the support networks which higher-income women can purchase for themselves. ... Folbre whose book is aptly titled *Who Pays for the Kids?* makes exactly that point—the costs do not vanish, whether individuals struggle to pay them or whether the state intervenes. But if the state does not intervene and women falter in the face of overwhelming burdens, then society as a whole pays dearly in the future for this lack of investment at the critical points in a young child’s development.” (Jo Murphy-Lawless)

The issue of new maternity policies in terms of job opportunities and new ways of sharing caring work needs to be resolved by Europe’s societies. Without government intervention and without the necessary changes in employment policies to provide greater flexibility at the plant level, the onus of commitment for any couple will rest solely on the woman, thus threatening her fertility plans and aspirations.

⁹ Franks, S. (1999): *Having none of it: women, men and the future of work*. London: Granta.

7 New policies and principles for action

7.1 Prerequisites for public intervention

According to Peter McDonald, “there is a wide range of policies that might be used to stop or reverse the downward slide of fertility rates. In advance, however, several points need to be made:

1. Low fertility exists in countries with widely differing institutional structures. Policies to support fertility must work from these pre-existing structures. For example, if child care provided by low-wage, undocumented immigrants is a factor related to higher fertility rates in the United States, this does not mean that this is a policy to be recommended for Sweden which has a long-established, high-quality, state-subsidised child care system. In other words, there can be no single cross-national model for success. Each country must seek its own institutionally-appropriate approach. Also, each country must deal with the realities of its own political economy. Strategies will not be accepted if they are not supported by the populace. For example, while I argue that changes in the level of gender equity within the family are an essential element of a fertility strategy in any country, family organisation is fundamental to cultural identity and revolutionary change is rarely a possibility.
2. Second, as far as possible, policies to support fertility should be based upon a theory or theories as to why fertility has fallen to low levels in a particular setting. Given that fertility-support policies are likely to be expensive in one way or another, some understanding of the nature of low fertility will provide greater efficiency in policy implementation. ... Beyond this, it is my view that well-designed market research also has a place in the definition of new policies. That is, we should ask young people what they think would make a difference to their decision-making.
3. Countries should have some notion about what it is that they are aiming to achieve. Inevitably, demographic sustainability (at least zero population growth) is an ultimate aim for all countries. The question is how far into the future is ‘ultimate’? Or expressed differently, how much of a decline in the size of the population or the labour force is the country willing to sustain before demographic sustainability is achieved?”

7.2 The ‘toolbox’ of public policies to impact on fertility

Peter McDonald has proposed the following ‘toolbox’:

Financial incentives

a) Periodic cash payments

This includes all child-related payments made in the form of cash. Principally this takes the form of regular payments to parents for each child.

b) Lump sum payments or loans

This can include payments at the time of birth of a baby (baby bonus, maternity benefit), at the time a child starts school or at some other age.

c) Tax rebates, credits or deductions

This includes tax reductions or credits based on the presence of a child. These measures can be targeted to children of different ages or children of different birth orders.

d) Free or subsidised services or goods

The services are education at all levels, medical and dental services, public transport, and recreation services such as sporting, entertainment, leisure or artistic activities.

e) Housing subsidies

This can take the form of periodic cash payments such as housing benefits, lump sum cash payments as first-time home-buyer grants or mortgage reductions at the birth of each child, tax rebates or deductions for housing costs, or subsidies to housing-related services.

Work and family initiatives**a) Maternity and paternity leave**

The right of return to a position following leave related to the birth of a child: current policy has many nuances such as its duration, whether the leave is paid and at what level, how much of the leave is available to mothers or to fathers, whether fathers are 'forced' to take some part of the leave, and whether there is a right of return to part-time work.

b) Child care

Provision of free or subsidised child care. It is an element of the family-friendly employment policies. It should be equally available to those who are not employed, as this may provide them with opportunities for training or for job seeking.

c) Flexible working hours and short-term leave for family-related purposes

Flexible working hours with a view to the employee's family responsibilities: also, provision might be made for short-term absences related to the care of a sick child, school occasions or taking children to unavoidable appointments.

d) Anti-discrimination legislation and gender equity in employment practices

There should be employment legislation that prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of gender, relationship status or family status. Individual rather than family taxation is likely to prevent the emergence of work disincentives for second earners in the tax system; hence, it is to be encouraged.

e) Work hours

Employees should not be expected to have their work hours changed at short notice, or to have meetings or work-related social occasions scheduled at times that those with responsibility for young children would have difficulty meeting. Work hours need to be set in concert with school hours.

Broad social change supportive of children and parenting**a) Employment initiatives**

Stimulation of jobs for women and young people, especially jobs in the service sector: part-time work with *pro rata* employment benefits and job security is also likely to provide more options for parents.

b) Child-friendly environments

Traffic calming, safe neighbourhood policies, public recreational facilities such as playgrounds, provision for children in places of entertainment and in shopping centres in order to build a child-friendly environment.

c) Gender equity

Non-gender specific workplace policies, gender-neutral tax-transfer policies including social insurance, support of workers with family responsibilities irrespective of gender, removal of institutional remnants of the male breadwinner model of the family, acceptance of fathers as parents by service providers and more general recognition and support to fathers as parents.

d) Marriage and relationship supports

Other policies already listed may give young people greater encouragement in the formation of relationships, but there may also be more direct initiatives. Relationship education may be helpful as well as relationship counselling. There may also be room for economic incentives to marry, such as housing assistance.

e) Development of positive social attitudes towards children and parenting

Giving a clear and simple message, formulated in terms of good public policy, that people desiring children will be supported by society without creating inequities to the childless, voluntary or involuntary.

7.3 Alternative child-care policies

Using the Finnish case as an example, Sirpa Taskinen presents some alternative child-care policies. She identifies three basic alternatives for taking care of children:

1. the parents (mother, father or both),
2. somebody else (at home, e.g. a grandmother, nurse etc. or at a day-care centre),
3. a combination of the above (flexible working hours, tailored day-care services).

“In Finland, there are several possibilities for the families to take care of their children—and the crucial thing is that there are several alternatives. What suits one family is not necessarily good for another. Parents can choose to look after the child themselves with the help of the child home-care allowance, or they can place their child in a day-care centre run by the municipality. It is also possible to choose the private day-care allowance and arrange for child care privately in a private nursery or have a nurse at home—which, however, has become more and more rare. Child-care alternatives comprise a diversity of measures: paid maternal, paternal and parental leave, unpaid/partially paid leave, shortening of working hours, flexible working hours, home-care benefit, private care benefit, subsidised day-care services by the municipalities (day-care centres, evening and night-care for the children of shift workers, child minders (caring for children at their own homes), staffed playgrounds, after-school clubs). None of the benefits or services has been universally accepted either by politicians or by the general public. At almost regular intervals, there is a public discussion about the ‘right’ form of day care for children and the ‘right’ place where the mothers of young children should be—and nowadays, fathers as well.

Municipal day care: Providing day care for children has a long history in Finland. The 1973 Law on Day Care made day care a part of public social services. The law decrees that the municipalities have to make the services available to all families with children. Day care is given at day centres by day-care workers and at staffed playgrounds. Most municipalities also run evening and night-care facilities for the children of shift workers, as well as after-school care for school children in the afternoon. Since 1996, preschool children have had a subjective entitlement to a municipal day-care placement if the parents so wish. The charges for day care depend on the parents’ income, the size of the family, and the time spent in care. The highest rate for one child is Euro 168 a month. Free day care may be granted on certain conditions. Especially opposed to the idea of municipal day care are right-wing political parties, and there were campaigns against what was called the ‘institutionalisation’ of children. In the early period after the law took effect, municipal day care could be provided to only 10% of the children under school age, but the situation rapidly improved. Nowadays, practically all children in need of day care can be placed. A great majority of parents (85% in a recent survey) were content with the day-care system. However, less than half (46%) of all children under school age actually use municipal day-care facilities. The number rises with the age of the children: 70% of the six-year olds use municipal day-care facilities, about one-fourth is cared for at home, and some 5% attend a private day-care service. There are several reasons for this. Maternal, paternal and parental leave have been extended several times; in total amounting to about 10.5 months. After that, one of the parents may stay home and use his/her right to unpaid leave. Thus, there are very few public nurseries for babies under one year of age, since the families most often want to take care of their small babies at home. Such other benefits as those listed below also greatly affect the use of municipal day-care facilities.

Home-care and private care allowances: In 1985, a new benefit called home-care subsidy was introduced for children who were not placed in municipal day care. The purpose of this benefit was to provide support for child care at home after the parents’ benefit period had ended. Parents with children under three years of age were granted the right to choose, on a subjective basis, whether they wanted a municipal day-care arrangement or a home-care subsidy. If the child is not placed in municipal day care, parents can choose to receive an allowance to care for their child at home, provided they have a child under age three. In this case, they can get financial help to allay the costs of the child care for any other preschool children they might have. As an alternative, they can opt for a private day-care allowance if their (preschool) child receives private care from a person certified by the municipality (either a private child-care centre, a family child-care provider or a caregiver whom the parents have hired). However, child home-care allowance and private day-care allowance

are not available at the same time. The monthly allowances consist of a flat-rate benefit (Euro 254 for the home-care allowance, and Euro 119 for the private care allowance), as well as an income-related supplement and a sibling rise. In addition, some municipalities might grant an extra supplement for home care. The allowances are payable from the end of the parental allowance period until the time the child starts school. When it was introduced, home-care allowance was—and still is—a very controversial political issue. The Conservatives and the Centre Party favoured home-based care; the parties of the left supported municipal day care. The opponents of the home-care allowance argue that—in spite of partial means testing—it favours wealthy people and farmers who would care for their children at home anyway. Some also see favouring home care as a dangerous tendency to push women back home at the cost of their career opportunities. Others see the benefit as an important chance for the family to choose the most suitable alternative for their situation. Even if the sum is rather small, it facilitates both a family's economic situation and its day-care problems. It permits the children to stay at home and not be dragged out of their bed early in the morning when the parents go to work. The opponents, however, point out that not all homes are ideal places for children and that even the small ones would benefit from the company of peers and day-care education.

Child-care leave: When the parental allowance has been exhausted, parents can take a child-care leave with full employment security to look after a child under age three, though both parents cannot be on leave at the same time. Employers are not required to compensate employees who are on child-care leave. After the leave, employees are entitled to return to their previous job or a comparable position. Credits for paid annual leave do not accrue during child-care leave. The minimum length of child-care leave is one month. Employees are entitled to one or two leaves by law, but additional periods are possible with the employer's consent.

Shorter working hours: Part-time work is not common in Finland. However, parents can choose to take a partial child-care leave, i.e. to reduce their working time until the end of the year in which their child starts school. This reduction is not financially compensated. The minimum length of the part-time child-care leave is six months, the specific arrangements being subject to agreement between employer and employee. Only one of the parents can be on partial child-care leave at any given time. The parent taking it is required to have worked outside the home for at least one year before taking the leave, with regular working hours totalling at least 30 a week. There is also a so-called 'temporary child-care leave' for taking care of a sick child.

Flexible working hours: Many companies and offices have flexible working hours enabling people to come later or leave earlier if they have accumulated working hours in their personal follow-up account. In the EU-funded research and development project on *Reconciling Work and Family*, the most common wish concerning working hours among employees in Finland was the chance to save overtime hours for a longer break, i.e. to have a kind of 'working time bank'." (Sirpa Taskinen)

What impact do these measures have on fertility in Finland? In the beginning of her paper, Sirpa Taskinen points out that the intentions of family planning are more often *contraceptive* than *proceptive*. "It seems that day-care arrangements work the same way. One cannot conclude that good day care would tempt people to have more children—to be sure, nobody will have children in order to put them into kindergarten. What is obvious, however, is that lacking day-care facilities do prevent families to put their childbearing intentions into practice."

7.4 Required changes

According to Peter McDonald, "inevitably, new arrangements that support fertility will involve winners and losers compared to present arrangements. As already indicated, middle-aged males may need to be convinced to give up some of their privileges. Also, there may be a need to consider a restructuring of intergenerational transfers. Social insurance systems tend to provide major benefits to middle-aged and older people at the expense of the young. The ageing of the population is putting severe fiscal pressure upon these systems. One policy approach to this situation has been to cut back government expenditure on family and children's services, to increase taxes or social security contributions or to reduce benefits provided by employers. These are all approaches that are not fertility-friendly. An analysis of social security spending in Japan in 1997 revealed

that funding for children and families was 2.3 trillion yen compared with 45.1 trillion yen for benefits for the elderly.¹⁰ A per capita comparison would be even more startling. The same article reports Japan's TFR falling to 1.34 in 1999. Massimo Livi-Bacci is reported in *The New York Times*¹¹ as characterising Europe as 'rich old people supported by the labour of poor young people. No wonder nobody wants to have children'. A more subtle blow to young people is the lowering of progressivity in income tax rates. Less progressive taxation systems provide relatively higher benefits to higher income earners who tend not to be young people on the verge of family formation.¹²

Good fertility policy also involves widespread access to a full range of methods of fertility control. While the Pontifical Council for the Family¹³ in a declaration relating to low fertility decried the spread of chemical methods of contraception, the Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan¹⁴ found that women in Japan were reluctant to marry because the methods of contraception available were mainly male methods. That is, if women are not in a position to control their own fertility, they may not form a relationship with a man. Thus, greater access to the contraceptive pill in Japan is considered to be a pronatalist policy because it would promote marriage. Finally, fertility policies should be considered in the context of non-fertility population and labour supply policies. For most countries, a package involving increased fertility, increased immigration and an increase in labour force participation rates is likely to be a more successful approach than reliance on one of these alone. However, in all countries, all of these principles of action will be resisted to a varying extent by sections of the population. In the end, social acceptance of the proposed policy direction may be a greater obstacle to progress than formulation of the appropriate policies."

7.5 Promoting a policy toolbox vs. inventing a new machine

Peter McDonald believes that reversal of low fertility is about inventing a new machine, not about the kinds of tools that are required to keep the present machine running. In like manner, Demeny¹⁵ states that societies facing depopulation must move 'from the domain of ordinary economic calculus to the domain of political economy: from redistributive jockeying to agreement on fundamental changes in the constitutional contract that sets the rules of societal interaction in a polity'. The right tools will not work on the wrong machine. More fundamentally, the right tools will not work unless there is widespread social support for what it is that the machine produces.

7.6 The effectiveness of policies

Peter McDonald points out that, "it will usually be inappropriate to attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of particular individual policies because the effectiveness of any policy will depend on the broader setting. The

¹⁰ Reported in JOICFP News, no. 314, August 2000: 7.

¹¹ Special report by Michael Specter, July 10 1998.

¹² For example, the new tax system introduced in Australia in 2000 has provided considerably higher benefits to high-income earners than to those with 'beginning of career' incomes. It cannot be expected to have beneficial outcomes for the falling Australian fertility rate.

¹³ Pontifical Council for the Family (1998): Statement on the decrease in the fertility rate in the world, Declaration of 27 February 1998. p. 3 [<http://www.cin.org/docs/fertility.html>].

¹⁴ Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan (1997): On the basic viewpoint regarding the trend towards fewer children. A society of decreasing population: responsibilities and choices for the future. Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japan, 27 October 1997. p. 12. [<http://www.mhw.go.jp/search/doce/other/council/c0126-2.html>].

¹⁵ Demeny, P. (1997): Policy interventions. Paper presented to the Expert Group Meeting on Below Replacement Fertility. Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, New York, 4-6 November. (quoted by Peter McDonald).

condition of *ceteris paribus* is unlikely to be fulfilled across time or across cultures. The proof of effectiveness is whether or not fertility follows the planned course. However, in the end, as stated earlier, it is not so much the individual policies that matter but the nature of the society as a whole. For example, a range of brilliant gender equity policies will be ineffective if unemployment rates for young people of child-bearing age are high. Work-family policies can only work if there is work. Likewise, these same gender equity policies would be put under strain if the direct financial costs of children were very high or if the general tenor of the social setting was child-unfriendly. Societies facing very low fertility need to investigate the particular reasons for low fertility in their country. The next step is to define a broad policy to address the reasons for low fertility. The policy might be based on market research conducted among young people. The final step is to mobilise political support for the new policy direction. Like the recommendations of the Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan,¹⁶ the changes envisaged are likely to be very comprehensive and radical.”

7.7 Principles for action

Policies aimed at raising the current fertility level have to be situated within the specific context of the life plans of couples. Any attempts at modifying couples’ desires in terms of reproduction will go against the prevailing values of modern society and may also result in ultimately ineffective measures. That is why it is absolutely essential to know not only people’s fertility-related intentions, but also the reasons why these intentions have not been followed up.

It would be wrong to assume that fertility is only a matter of women. Fertility levels are the outcome of individual—female and male—‘strategies’ and of joint ‘partner strategies’. These strategic decisions are also determined by parental concern regarding the well-being of their children, which highlights the importance of government involvement in family and child issues. As Sheila Kamerman said in her concluding remarks, any policy designed to improve the well-being of women, men, children and couples can only be favourable to fertility developments.

Any attempts at helping couples make a positive choice through public policies have to consider the often major differences between countries in terms of institutional structures, the factors underlying low fertility levels, the demographic targets to be attained, as well as the indirect and sometimes undesirable effects of such policies.

If fertility is to be seen, at least in part, as a challenge to society as a whole, the policies to be pursued must not relate to either individuals or couples alone. Rather, they have to be mainstreamed into the entire range of social policies. This is why the principles of simplicity, effectiveness, equity, quality and accessibility are to be applied, as should be the case for any other state policies. To ensure their efficacy, we need a whole policy package that affects the various fields of society rather than a number of isolated measures that tend to pervert the original idea.

¹⁶ op. cit.

Contributions to the Annual Seminar 2000:**Low fertility, families and public policies**

You can download the full versions of the contributions from the website of the European Observatory on Family Matters:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family/observatory/home.html

Eva Bernhardt	Female careers between employment and children
Walter Bien	Changing values among the future parents of Europe
David Coleman	Trends and regional variations in European fertility
John Ditch	Fee, fo, fi, fum: fertility, social protection and fiscal welfare
Juan Antonio Fernández Cordón and Giovanni B. Sgritta	The Southern European paradox
Constantinos Fotakis	Presentation of the Social Report 2000
Anne Gauthier	Public policies affecting fertility and families in Europe: a survey of the 15 Member States
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Maura Misiti	Public opinion and the role of the media
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Bernhard Nauck	Social and economic rationales in the decision to have children
Hans-Joachim Schulze	Does burden-sharing of men and women affect the decision to have children?
Sirpa Taskinen	Alternative child-care policies and fertility