

Family Observer

European Observatory on

Family Matters

Social protection & social action

The family roller-coaster ride

Family interest groups

European citizenship?

Social report 2000

Family research

Employment & social affairs



European Commission



Economic, technological, and societal developments have been remarkable over the last few decades. Today, more than ever before, it is generally accepted that there are important interactions between these trends. As the future unfolds, we need to ensure that the positive developments, like those provided by the information revolution are exploited to the full, and not allowed to create tensions in our societies. The Lisbon extraordinary summit *Employment, Economic Reform and Social Cohesion — towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge* has been an important step in recognising the role of social policy in the strategy for the European Union. By setting social cohesion as one of the main elements of the European strategy for the future, the Lisbon Summit has reaffirmed the European citizen that the Union remains funda-

mentally committed to an inclusive and cohesive society.

In fact over the last ten years, some important social challenges have emerged. The European population is ageing. Across Europe, women have a new role to play in the economic and social life. The combination of increasing education and changing attitudes means that employment rates of women are converging to those of men. Between 1988 and 1998, they rose from 45 percent of the working-age population to 51 percent whereas those of men declined from 74 percent to 71 percent. At the European level, this increased participation of females is likely to continue. However, women still have particular problems in gaining equal access to the labour market, and also in reconciling professional and family life.

Even though changes in lifestyle have been very significant, 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 to find today 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 much longer with their parents. Last but not least, a recent study on several EU Member States has shown that problems related to the family environment in which children are raised, may be one of the main causes, together with youth unemployment, of 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. I am confident that the new political climate following the European Council of Lisbon will create more favourable conditions for promoting the debate on all issues related to social cohesion and social inclusion including population trends and family issues.

The European Union has an important role to play in identifying the similarities and differences in the ways that Member States react to these changes. It can also keep stimulating a Union-wide debate on the subject of the family by encouraging Member States to share information and pool their experiences while, at the same time, respecting the principle of subsidiarity. Within this last



In January 2000, I was entrusted with the challenging task of chairing the co-ordination team of the European Observatory on Family Matters. Established to monitor the development of families in the European Union, the Observatory is a key actor in the European system of social reporting. To fulfil its extensive mandate, the Observatory works along several lines. Every year a special topic is selected as monitoring focus. For 2000, we analysed fertility trends, a topic also addressed in the last issue of the *Family*

objective, the *Family Observer* is called on to provide its valuable contribution, by serving as a platform for discussion and exchange of experience and ideas between Member States

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The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission, Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs. All gender-specific terms used in the text also comprise the other gender.

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Observer. In 2001, the Observatory's work will concentrate on social quality and family forms. The objective is to provide the European Commission and the public at large with information on developments in the areas of family and partnership, taking into account aspects of gender and generational relations. The Observatory's homepage (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family/observatory/home.html) and the *Family Observer* are the main channels for disseminating the results of our work. We hope that this strategy will not only contribute to a knowledge-based policy in Europe but will also enrich the public debate on the role of family in our society.

Rudolf Richter
 President, Austrian Institute for Family Studies
 Chairman, European Observatory on Family Matters

on demographic issues and family matters.
Gabrielle Clotuche,
 Director of Social Policy, DG for Employment and Social Affairs,
 European Commission

Portuguese EU presidency

Under the Portuguese EU-presidency, the European conference on *Maternity, paternity and reconciling professional and family life* was held at the University of Évora in May 2000. The main results are summarised below:

- A balanced participation of women and men in professional and family life is a fundamental prerequisite for the equality between women and men.
- Motherhood, valued highly in society, must not lead to the discrimination of women on the labour market.
- The time invested in paid and unpaid work must be approximately the same for women and men.
- As long as women have to take on the lion's share of family work, there will not be true equality between women and men at work.
- However, cultural resistances are particularly deep-rooted in this area and solutions have to be adjusted to the realities in the different countries.
- National and European laws must take due account of the reconciliation of professional

and family life for both genders and create conditions that enable fathers to become increasingly integrated into family life. Paternity leaves play an important role in this connection.

- With reference to Community Law, the Treaty of Amsterdam already stipulates the equality between women and men by its new measures to simultaneously implement the stronger participation of fathers in family life and of mothers in working life; the legal bases are contained in articles 2, 3, 137 and 141.
- Promoting the reconciliation of professional and family life has the following advantages:
 - It creates new jobs in care services for children, the elderly and other persons dependent on care.
 - It makes work places more attractive for employees, increases productivity, and decreases absenteeism and sick-leaves.

Maria do Céu Cunha Reso
 President, CITE (Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment, Ministry for Equality)

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Dear reader,

The second *Family Observer* prepared by the European Observatory on Family Matters might strike you as somewhat different compared to the first issue: The cover has changed from green to 'mauve'. The change of colours indicates that Unit E/1 of the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs, headed by Paolo Bacchielli, is now in charge of the Observatory. The Observatory network has also seen some changes: Rudolf Richter (of the University of Vienna and President of the Austrian Institute for Family Studies) became Chairman of the Observatory at the beginning of this year. New National Experts were appointed for Greece and Sweden: Christos Bagavos (Panteion University, Athens) and Eva Bernhardt (Stockholm University). We would like to use this opportunity to thank their predecessors, Helmut Wintersberger, Loukia Moussourou, and Ulla Björnberg for their commitment and valuable contributions.

The Tyrolian artist Christine S. Prantauer, introduced to you in the first issue, has also illustrated this second issue of the *Family Observer*. This time, she shows us women's everyday life: Such routine activities as shopping or washing the dishes are taken so much for granted that they are hardly ever documented. This might explain why we often consider these chores worthless...

At the beginning of 2000, the European Commission compiled for the first time a comprehensive report on the social situation in Europe. In the future, such reports will be published annually. The European Observatory is substantially involved in the preparation of the family-related parts of these reports. You will find excerpts of the Social Report 2000 on page 32 ff.

Happy reading!

Irene Kerthaler and Sylvia Trnka

The family roller-coaster ride

Family indicators

What is the impact that policies have on families? How can we assess that impact? A report on the origins of family impact monitoring.

Peter Cuyvers and Gabriel Kiely

Politicians would be rather disappointed if their actions were not to have any impact on the individuals and organisations that make up society. This important but hidden assumption has been documented by the recent surge in studies concentrating on the effects of policy measures on such issues as the environment or emancipation. Consistent with the belief that they are indeed able to influence what happens, politicians frequently consider the targets of their measures to be weak. However, one has only to broaden one's perspective a little

to see that this assumption is actually unfounded. Policies introduced to support a country's economy or its economic actors do not adhere to this view; nor do the ministries of the interior or of foreign policy, let alone the ministry of defence assume that their target groups are weak or on the verge of extinction.

Does this imply that it is totally unnecessary for a government to bother about families or the impact that policies have on them? On the contrary! Families function in a social environment constructed by a number of actors, and the government or state system

certainly is an important element. The infrastructure for all families and the support for weak families have always been issues of governmental concern. Political activities, such as changing from a professional to a conscription-based army (or vice versa), deciding on a minimum age for education, making laws on equal wages for women and men, cannot but have an enormous impact. However, when speaking of impact and effectiveness in the field of families, the focus is usually on more overt and visible actions involving families with certain types of problems.





H istorical review

In Europe, family policy was introduced as a formal part of national policies in the period between the two World Wars, above all to satisfy the needs of workers and to support their role as breadwinners. In some countries (e.g. Belgium, France and Sweden), the concern about declining birth rates and/or the wish to raise them also played a role.

Other countries (e.g. the Netherlands) held the position that governments should not interfere in the private family sphere.

The next wave of interest in family affairs set in after the Second World War. It mainly focused on education and (dys)functional families. Austria, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany and Luxembourg decided to create ministries for family affairs. In countries like Spain and Portugal, the family theme was 'accommodated' in a special directorate or government unit. It is obvious that countries with family ministries, e.g. Austria and the German

Democratic Republic, also were the first (and until now, the only) countries to issue family reports on a regular basis (GDR: every five years; Austria: every ten years). Other countries also studied the situation of families in their territories. Like the GDR report, the biennial Italian report prepared by the *Centro Internazionale Studi Famiglia* did not restrict itself to the presentation of data but also focused on analysis. Of course, reports on family developments and such related aspects as demography, income and education have been prepared in numerous countries, but they have not yet achieved a formal national status.

In the past decade, debates on the equality of women, a rising awareness of child abuse and the continued paradox of poor families living in strong welfare states have all caused governments to become more active. This also holds true for the debate on 'family values' in general. It does not come as a surprise that the first initiatives to move from family reporting to family impact analysis were taken in the US, where the debate has its origins. In Europe, the European Observatory on National Family Policies was established in 1989. Among other things, it took on the task of assessing the impact that policies have on families. Over the past few years, the idea of family impact monitoring seems to be gaining ground.

Governments have become increasingly aware of the 'family dimension', and there is a growing need for feedback on the interaction between policy activities and family development. The theoretical body of knowledge on family impact analysis is not yet very impressive, and practical experience is even scarcer. Considering the numerous dimensions of family policy and the complexity of the family as such, there is no doubt that assessing family impacts is far from simple.

A model for monitoring impacts on families

This article describes the initial steps made in the *Family Impact Monitor* project run by the Netherlands Family Council and the Belgian Centre for Population and Family Studies. This project emanated from an international expert conference organised in 1995 by Wilfried Dumon in Leuven. The overview of existing impact-analysis methods presented at this meeting showed that the main distinction was the 'subjective-objective' dimension. The Irish case (see box) is an example of the subjective method. The implementation of real-life experiments in certain regions exemplifies the objective method.

A grant from the EU was used to develop an inclusive model. It not only comprises the different aspects of the process 'from politicians to families' but also a feedback system designed to provide the political level with clear data (by way of indicators) for

family-policy benchmarking. In addition, two other characteristics are essential. The first is linked to the issue of 'value'. As a combination of specific activities directed to a number of goals in a specific field, every government policy is based on values and linked to opinions on the way society should work. Especially where families are concerned, differences of opinion on policy issues are often rooted in value orientations. These differences have to be taken into account when evaluating the impact of policies, while the specific method of evaluation has to be objective and scientifically correct. The second characteristic concerns the relationship between the government and families. This relationship is not a one-way but rather an interactive process: No element can be seen solely as a passive recipient of external influences.

Values and definitions: the hidden start of family policy

A literature study preceding the project showed that the process of developing and implementing family policies can be divided into three steps. All authors mention the first of these steps, i.e. agreement on a certain value system concerning families. The second step relates to taking specific action and comprises a number of phases. Defining the 'scope' of the (family) policy action (i.e. the range of policies or the groups that are legitimate elements or subjects for political action) is closely related to the value system. Within this range, a number of 'targets' must then be identified before they can be translated into specific political action (be it a new law or an information campaign) in the third step. However, the political debate on the selection of scopes, targets and actions is often 'blurred' because there is no clear-cut statement regarding the first step, i.e. the agreement on family values.

Open debates on family values are rare, but there is a useful 'intermediary' between policy and practice: the definition of the term 'family'. In his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations at the start of the International Year of the Family in 1994, the Secretary General announced that no attempt had been made (or rather that attempts had been fruitless) to arrive at a world-wide definition of 'family'. Instead,

The birth of family impact monitoring: three examples

In Belgium, the **Flemish** Minister of Family Affairs underlined the importance of family impact analysis in 1996. His successors introduced special 'child effect reports' to be prepared in connection with each major government initiative.

In the **Netherlands**, in 1996 the government commissioned the compilation of the biennial *Signalling Report* on family development. The report was commissioned by Parliament in 1997 and again in 1999.

In **Ireland**, the Commission on the Family recommended an unprecedented multiple approach for assessing family impacts in 1998. First, any proposals put forward by the government should be accompanied by a 'family impact statement' to be included in the explanatory memorandum accompanying all new legislation. Second, any evaluations of government activities at the central, regional or local levels should contain an impact analysis: In other words, they should be measured against a number of key principles underlying all family policies. Though these proposals have not yet been implemented, all major political parties have subscribed to them in their programmes.

an interesting metaphor was chosen: A family was defined as the smallest democracy at the heart of society. This is a political statement of the first order, since it clearly supports the rights of individuals within families and illustrates the sociological trend characteristic of the 20th century, namely individualisation.

In his analysis of the developments in family policies in EU countries, Wilfried Dumon points out the shift in the focus from the bond between partners to the situation of children. In the Netherlands, for example, the recent political debate on (the lack of) family policy and a ministry for family affairs briefly introduced the definition problem into the debate. The Dutch government accepted a new definition focussing on the position of children: *A family is any unit of one or more adults who are responsible for the education and/or taking care of one or more children*. The opposition, i.e. the Christian Democrats, opposed this with their own definition: *Any unit in which an adult has taken a long-term responsibility for another adult and/or the taking care and education of children*. The interesting point is not the way the conflict went (the Christian Democrats accepted the govern-



ment definition), but the clear juxtaposition of family definitions focussing on partnership and on parenthood.

the empirical fact that people share a dwelling and co-operate from an economic point of view. The next step goes even further, since the focus shifts entirely to the

government activities officially acknowledged as being directed at families and meant to have an effect on them. Implicit policy is used for the combination of any other policies from which one could expect or predict effects on families, but which are not being acknowledged as such. Naturally, any political activity might also have an unintended impact on families. For impact analysis, this seems to leave no other option than taking into account all government activities — which clearly would be a hopeless task!

“UNO: The family is the smallest democracy at the heart of society”

ment definition), but the clear juxtaposition of family definitions focussing on partnership and on parenthood.

The literature survey carried out at the start of the monitoring project showed that one can look at the family from various angles. First of all, there is the 'classical' (nuclear) family formed by marriage. Secondly, there are 'modern' family definitions that focus on children irrespective of the number, sex or formal status of the partners. Thirdly, it is possible to avoid all ideological debates by focussing on 'units' or households, i.e. on

individuals who should be treated as such irrespective of their living arrangements. Finally, there are definitions building on the idea of 'networks' in society, both in a modern way (friends) and a more classical way (family).

Political activities

In their standard work on family policy in a number of western countries, the American experts Sheila Kamerman and Alfred Kahn distinguish between 'explicit' and 'implicit' family policy. Explicit policy stands for

When starting the family impact-monitoring project, we prepared an inventory of all official political activities carried out in Belgium in the field of law over a period of five years. The result was a list of 3,500 activities (i.e. 700 per year or two per day). This does not include activities not in need of legal changes, nor does it include specific decisions at the highest level. The result was that you simply cannot avoid selecting activities that may be expected to have the greatest effects. Panels of experts are one way of handling this choice, though this approach involves two major risks. The first one is the selection process. Especially when it takes place in close co-operation with government agencies, it tends to focus on

the more explicit political activities and hardly ever is allowed the time and the money to assess effects in all the other areas. The second problem is the lack of coherence

families. For instance, parents reported that enabling both partners to stay at home during the first years of their children's lives was more effective than child-care

Another example are the 'lifecourse income differences' that can be found between various types of families and other households. We have been trying to assess these differences on the basis of modern lifecourse development in most western countries. In short, the modernisation of the lifecourse shortens the phases in adult life during which children are part of the household. This 'real family phase' is preceded by periods in which young people live alone or (most of the time) as couples.

"Lifecourse income differences are a potential family-policy indicator"

over a longer period, as well as the lack of international comparison.

The voice of the family

The research we undertook into the family microcosm as part of the monitoring project revealed one striking point: Surveys are perhaps the worst method for assessing what goes on at the family level. They are a perfect instrument for straightforward questions (What political party did you vote for?) but are unsuitable for charting such complex issues as family interactions and decisions. Our example relates to one of the most crucial family issues at present, namely the changing division of work between female and male partners. Supported by grants from the Dutch government and the EU, we set up a study on the effects of family interaction (or rather partner interaction) regarding decisions on family planning and the division of labour. In order to check the exact mechanisms, we did a number of so-called 'confrontation interviews'. First, both partners completed the population survey. Then they took part in an interview session with two interviewers (one female, one male) and discussed the differences in their answers. Our in-depth research on partner interaction processes showed that, in order to be effective with respect to such goals as an equal division of tasks (or even having more children), government activities should not be directed at the family image often portrayed in literature or invoked in political debates but rather at the real needs of

arrangements to prevent the huge dropout rates of mothers from the labour market. This part of the impact-monitoring project is indicative of the fact that analysis at the governmental level is far too technocratic to really understand how families function.

'Family inflation rate'?

So far, we have focussed on the scientific process of charting and analysing the field of family policy, and on identifying the three key aspects we need to know in order to understand what is going on. From a scientific point of view, this is very satisfying. However, from the perspective of impact analysis, it is not enough. What we need is a structural feedback mechanism for governments. This implies the availability of methods to continuously test family development against a number of criteria. In our model, we call this the trail of 'family indicators'. Essentially, family indicators have the same function as indicators in such other areas as economics. Based on the agreement between scientists and politicians, there are a number of indicators, e.g. the gross national product, the inflation rate or exchange indexes like the Dow Jones or the Nikkei. At the macro level, such indicators are used to continuously measure the success or failure of activities not only in the economy but also in a number of other areas (e.g. education). It goes without saying that a successful indicator cannot be constructed in a couple of weeks or even years but has to develop and prove its practical value for all parties concerned.

Broadly speaking there are two different but not mutually exclusive approaches to monitoring the impact of government actions on families. The first of these is the scientific measurement of the impact on families of policies and actions measured over time. This approach is being developed by the *Family Impact Monitor* under the direction of Peter Cuyvers of the Netherlands Family Council. The approach relies heavily on the systematic evaluation of government intentions regarding family policies, the policies themselves and the subsequent effect of the policies on families. The second approach focuses on an evaluation of all government policies and actions, including those that do not fall within the realm of family policy, prior to their implementation in terms of their likely impact on families. This approach is somewhat similar to environmental impact statements that are required when making a planning application. It places an obligation on government departments to prepare what are called 'family impact statements' when drafting new legislation or introducing new measures that are likely to impact directly or indirectly on families.

In Ireland, the Commission on the Family in its Final Report to the

It is followed by another new phase of living together in couples whose children have left the parental home. For most individuals, the latter phase stretches far into pensionhood. Since the parenthood phase entails an increase in burden (regarding both finances and time) as well as a decrease in opportunities, it is obvious that there is a difference in the living standards of parents versus non-parents. The question is how big this difference is and how it develops.

In the impact studies carried out in the Netherlands, we were surprised to see how many parents were actually complaining about the huge differences between their pre-parenting phase and parenthood.

In addition, a lot of older people were extremely concerned about their grandchildren growing up under increasingly stressful conditions regarding the availability of time and money. One of the images we chose to describe this problem proved to be

very effective in attracting political attention: the roller-coaster of modern life, entailing a steep ride downhill for people plunging into 'the parenthood dip'.

Graph 1 represents the roller-coaster ride for the years 1977 and 1996. It should be noted that in almost all studies, the incomes of families are relatively high as compared to non-family households, such as singles. However, this is due to a number of different factors. Most singles are students or

Family impact statements: Ireland

Minister for Social Community and Family Affairs in July 1998 recommended that both of these approaches to measuring the impact on families of policies and programmes by the government should be introduced. This dual approach is contained in the wording of the recommendation. It states "...the Commission recommends the introduction of a Family Impact Statement which would set out clearly the consequences of policies, programmes and services for families in all major aspects of Government activity, central and local." This part of the recommendation clearly falls within the realm of monitoring policies after implementation. The second part of the recommendation deals with the need for family impact statements to be prepared before the implementation of new policies. It reads as follows: "As an initial step, the Commission considers that the Family Impact Statement should be included in all proposals put forward for consideration by the Government and in the terms of reference for committees of the House of the Oireachtas (Parliament)".

While not spelling out in detail the mechanism required in order to implement the proposal the Commission makes some important suggestions. Among these is

the suggestion that policies should be measured against a number of key principles which underlie all family policies. In an earlier chapter of the Report these key principles are enunciated. If this suggestion were implemented it would make explicit that part of the family impact analysis which deals with values as expounded by the *Family Impact Monitor*. It would also establish a set of criteria against which to measure the impact of policies on families.

With regard to the impact statement part of the proposals the Commission makes a very practical suggestion, that is, that the statement would be included in the published explanatory memoranda which accompany proposed new legislation. Doing this would require changing Government rules which set out procedures and instructions in relation to any proposals submitted for the consideration of the Government. This change would allow the inclusion of the family impact statements.

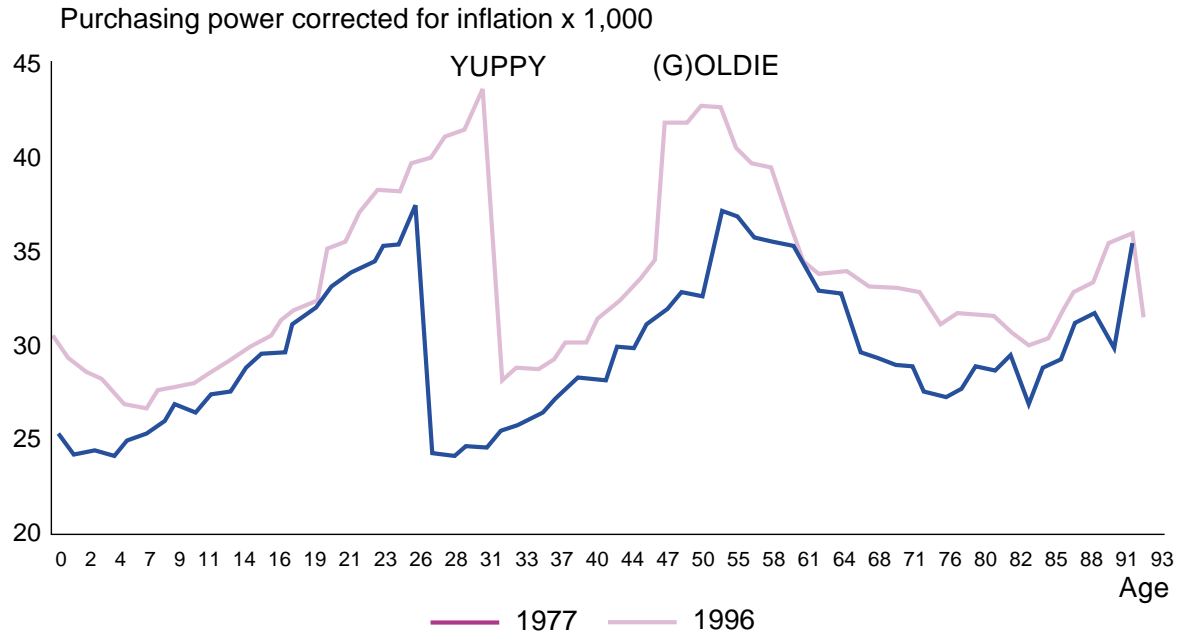
The present Coalition Government are committed to introducing family auditing. In their joint programme for government (An Action Programme for the Millennium) they state that "The new family focus... is designed to make families

central to policy-making" and that "Policies will be evaluated to monitor the effect on families of social policies". In a pre-election position paper (Irish Families in the Millennium) the Fianna Fail party which is the major party in the Coalition Government state that "The decision-making process must consider, from the outset, the consequences policies will have on the family". The position paper further goes on to say: "Just as we propose that all policies be eco-audited, we also propose that policies be family-audited". This is a very explicit commitment to family-policy auditing.

To date the recommendation on family-policy auditing has not been implemented or mechanisms put in place to enable implementation. However, the Family Affairs Unit which was set up by the Government to pursue the findings of the Commission's Report are currently considering the recommendation on family-policy auditing. Given the recent and indeed ongoing public debate about the impact on families of new Government labour policy initiatives and taxation reforms it seems that the process of evaluating new policies in the context of their likely effect on families has already begun. The need now is for this to be carried out scientifically.

1: Lifecycle purchasing power in the Netherlands

Shifts in lifecycle-purchasing power, 1977 and 1996



Purchasing power corrected for inflation in the age bracket 0-100, 1977 and 1996

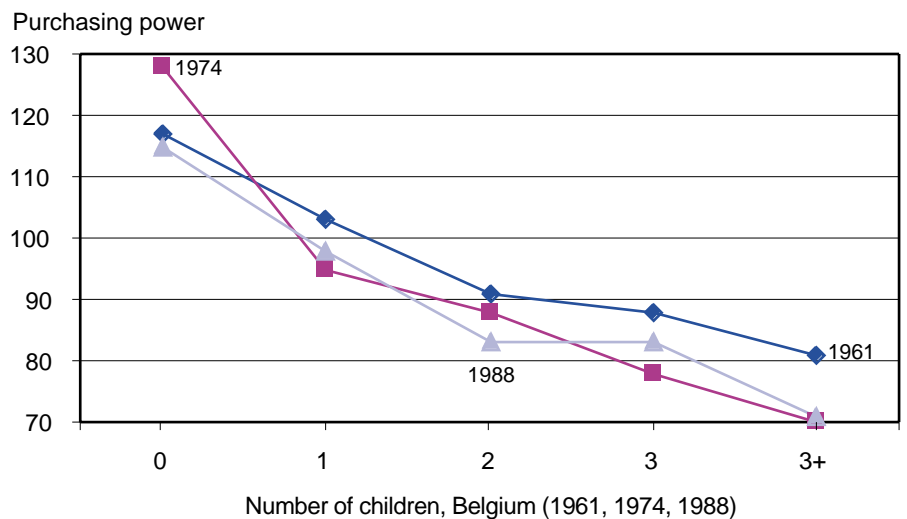
pensioners, i.e. groups concentrated at the beginning and at the end of the modern lifecourse. In order to give an adequate representation of the lifecourse development, we charted the incomes of 'modus groups' by dividing the population into three main categories: singles, couples living together without children, and families with children. Since the modus groups differ greatly regarding age (at ages 25 and 55, more than 60 percent are couples; at ages 35 and 45, more than 70 percent are families), it is obvious that the average lifecourse entails two major moments of change. One is characterised by the birth of the children; the other by their leaving the parental home.

Moreover, we did not use gross earnings but rather so-called 'net purchasing power'. Net purchasing power differs from the gross income of households in two ways. First, it is corrected for the influence of all sorts of government measures, ranging from the tax system to child allowances. As a consequence, families get better ratings because

most of them receive special family allowances or benefits. The second correction

concerns the composition of the household. Since it is clear that the per capita purchas-

2a: Purchasing power of single-earner households in Belgium

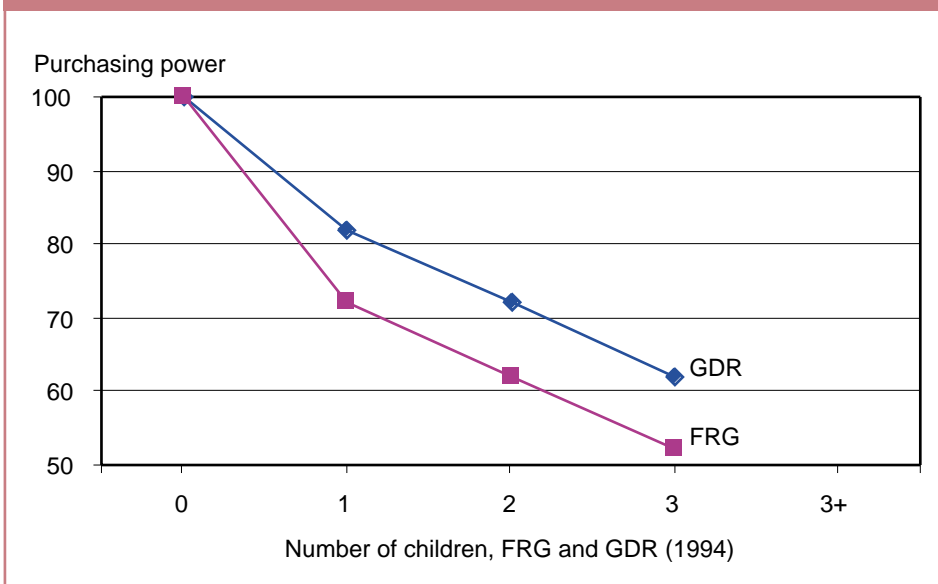


ing power of a family consisting of two parents and two children is smaller than the purchasing power of a single person with the same income, the gross income is divided by a factor depending on the household composition. The factors used in the Netherlands are roughly 1.4 for a couple without children and 2 for a family with two children under 18. (In Germany, for instance, these figures are 1.3 and 2, respectively).

For most families, the family dip in the roller-coaster does not come as a shock. Everyone knows that children cost money and the average family income is high enough to maintain a family at a good level of consumption. Moreover, the people in the dip are the same as the people on the peaks, only in a different phase of the lifecycle. The purpose of life plotting is to be able to look at developments over the years. It is crucial for the sustainability of family welfare that these dips do not get too deep or steep. Graph 1 clearly shows that during the past 20 years, the increase in the purchasing power has shifted to the two new phases in the lifecycle.

We are not yet able to present full international comparisons, since the required data (combining age, household composition and detailed income data) are not

3: Lifecycle purchasing power in the FRG and GDR



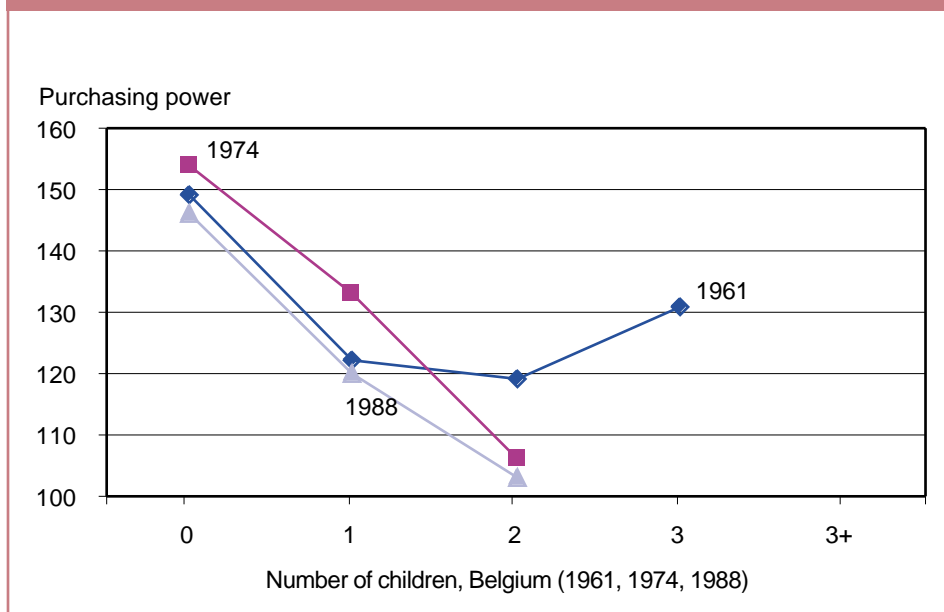
available at a comparative level. However, the results for individual countries show that the general pattern also seems to prevail in other countries.

Graphs 2a and 2b show the differences in purchasing power of households with and without children for Belgium in three different years, and for two groups of households (single and dual earners). Graph

3 depicts the same information for the FRG and the GDR. It is clear that the Dutch pattern is also found in these countries. (Since we still lack the age-group splitting for these countries, we can only show the downhill ride.) Graph 4 is based on Eurostat figures and shows what we call the 'family compensation index' for the European Union.

The income figures used in graph 4 are identical with those in the other graphs. For reasons of comparability, they are indexed on the average European individual (= 100). The graph shows that, in all 13 Member States, the purchasing power of couples without children is higher than the purchasing power of families, but that the differences between countries are huge. In Portugal, one could speak of a relatively 'flat' situation, since both couples and families do not deviate greatly from the index figure 100. In the Netherlands — but also in Ireland, Italy, and the UK — these differences are much larger, implying that the roller-coaster rides through the lifecourse show the steepest grades downhill there. It should be noted, however, that these figures only give a crude impression, since stratification for age and number of households is not possible at this stage. Nevertheless, we think they show that it is possible to develop comparative indicators at the macro level.

2b: Purchasing power of dual-earner households in Belgium



4: Purchasing power in Europe

Purchasing power



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The family and society's infrastructure

In our project, we have identified four basic trails that are indispensable in family impact monitoring:

- the (often hidden) value systems in the family field at the governmental level,
- the inventory of specific family-policy activities,
- making the 'voice of the family' heard as an essential element in assessing impacts, and finally
- translating the abundance of information into a small number of family indicators that will provide the feedback tool that governments need if they really want to know how the effects on family function over a longer period.

Working on family impact assessment is necessary for a number of reasons. First and foremost, families provide society with an essential element, namely stability. Just as private companies need an infrastructure (roads, airports) to perform, private living

arrangements in a complex society need this infrastructure with respect to such things as social insurance schemes, access to education, possibilities to combine family and work, etc. However, apart from some exceptions, governments do not think of families as 'social partners' in the construction of society. They prefer to take the achievements of families for granted, and only worry about families when deficiencies cause trouble for society — for instance, by

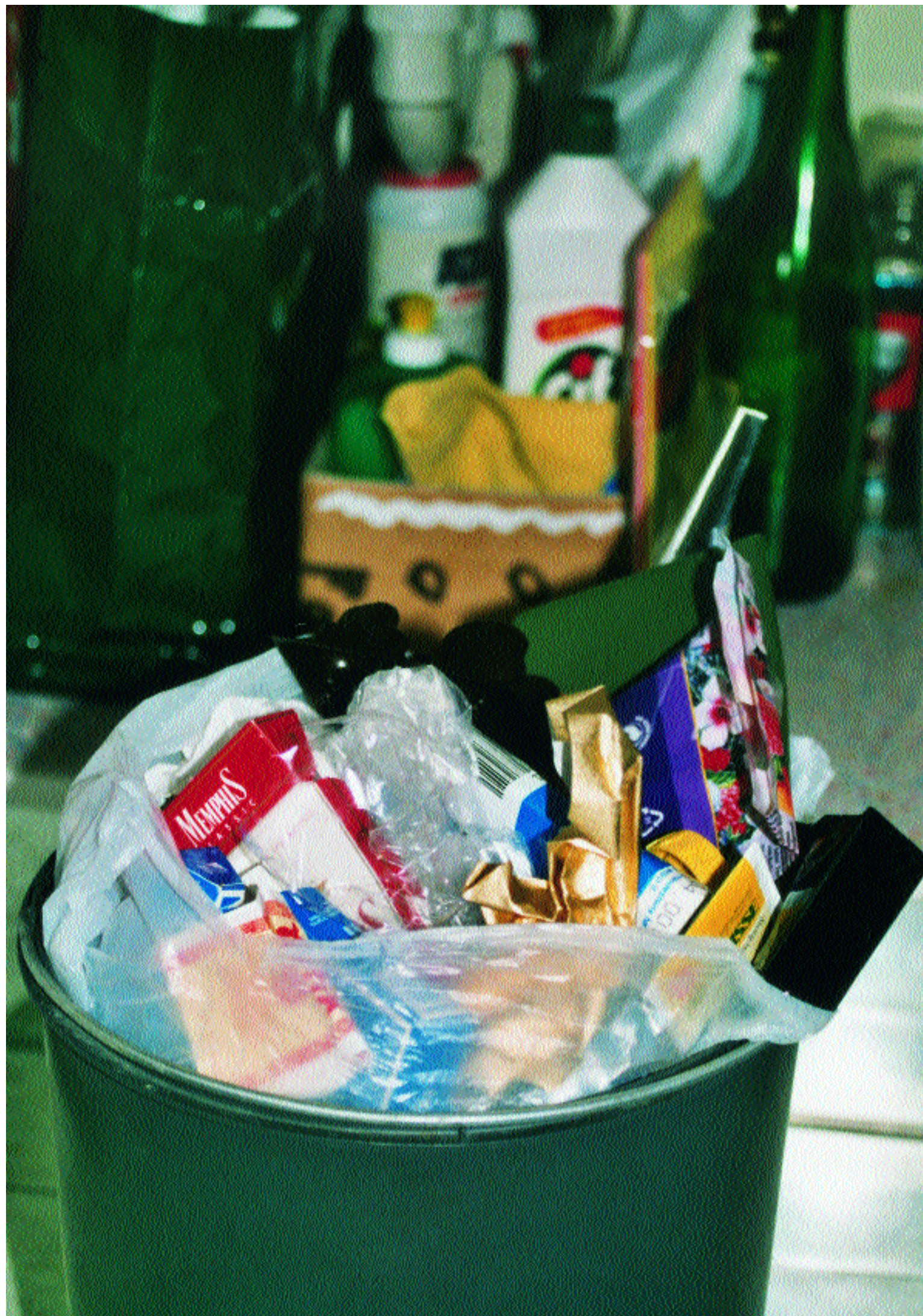
producing crime. Building up a scheme for the assessment of policy effects will provide us with an important tool to improve the awareness of family effects at the political level. Given more time, it may also play an important role in improving the situation of families. Until then, we may have to warn parents-to-be to buckle up before they start their roller-coaster ride.



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Family interest groups and their role in shaping European policy

Family organisations

Who represents the interests of families in a democratic system? It is a well known fact that children have no vote in elections and parents hardly ever go on strike as it would be their children who suffer.

Claude Martin

At first sight, family interest groups appear to differ greatly from one country to the next. Notwithstanding, a closer inspection reveals that none of them plays a negligible role. This holds true at two levels, if not more: on the one hand, in policy decisions on all matters related to the family sphere; and on the other, in the delivery of assistance to families. This setting makes them highly interesting as an object of policy analysis.¹ Owing to the frequently ideological component involved in the political activity of

family organisations, it seems difficult not to take sides. When examining the available literature, we realise that researchers either focus on taking stock or opt for an orientation that is primarily normative. Therein lie most of the difficulties with their studies. However, perspectives capable of avoiding the dichotomy of description and prescription are hard to come by.

Comparative analysis

In a study conducted for the European Commission in five Member States of the European Union (Belgium, France, Germany, Portugal and the UK), Martin and Hassenteufel have tried to find a way to get round the above pitfalls by concentrating

on the role played by some of these organisations in social and family policy. The study focuses on family organisations in the five countries, highlighting two aspects: their ways and means of establishing links with the policy domain, and the degree of their involvement in the policy-making process. Special priority has been given to the role of counselling and lobbying, i.e. the interest group logic developed by some of these organisations.

The objective has been to highlight specific 'configurations' in some EU Member States singled out for the exemplary or special links established by their family organisations with the political arena. In fact, the authors have tried to identify the groups



¹ This article includes a number of passages from a contribution published in the French journal *Mouvements*.



these organisations actually represent and the main axes of their policy orientation. What is the factual backdrop against which they try to defend a position? What methods are used to become part of the policy-making network?

Citizenship regimes and the protection of family interests

To determine the role of family organisations in policy-making and their attitude in

the light of changing social security systems, we might go back to the concept of 'citizenship regimes' introduced by Jenson. This notion refers to the manner in which public issues are defined at their interface with the state machinery and, likewise, how the demands and expectations of citizens are defined. Such definitions presuppose the appointment of legitimate collective players, the identification of limits for policy intervention in our society, and a hierarchically organised legal system. Citizenship regimes demarcate the borderlines between the 'private' and 'public' domains. This is how they provide political orientation and organise the policy debate.

In a civil society and civic culture, the political activities of family organisations

encompass all family matters. Also, they have a say in how the responsibility for protection and the resources available are distributed among families, the service sector, communities, and the government. This is why family organisations are competing with other interest groups that do not recognise themselves in the attitudes and political activity espoused by the former: just think of women's, youth or homosexual movements.

Family organisations within the triangle of social security

To conduct a comparative analysis of the role played by these interest groups within the different social security systems, it is

necessary to reformulate the existing typologies of the welfare state. Although the countries selected for the study represent different types of welfare-state systems, a given system alone allows no foregone conclusions as to the structure of family organisations and the configuration of family interests within a country. Belgium, France and Germany have come to be known as conservative/corporatist states. The United Kingdom is considered a truly liberal country, and Portugal a typical representative of southern Europe. Add the gender perspective and you will realise that the welfare systems of Germany and the UK are based on the 'male breadwinner model', whereas the Belgian and French systems revolve around the 'parent model'. If seen from a 'citizenship regime' perspective, the same systems take on an entirely new quality and may be reclassified around three poles of identification:

- The first pole refers to the legitimacy generated by the actions of interest groups of the 'movement' type in one way or another. Their policy-action logic is structured from the bottom up, i.e. from the grassroots up. Legitimacy in their case is inferred from the demands and desires of the social players that they try to represent

character of these organisations — and particularly the fact that, in many cases, their legitimacy results from their recognition by public authorities — produces an entirely different form of legitimacy and logic for policy action. The participation of these organisations in negotiations and regulations for family policies differs greatly from the above example, where interest groups cultivate their closeness to civil society and citizens in general.

- Finally, the third pole identifies the organisations' proximity to the 'market' and its laws. The logic of policy action in this case primarily consists of developing a perspective for services offered to families. This means that interest groups either want to satisfy actual family needs or compensate for the lack of public response to such needs.

How can family organisations become involved in the public policy network?

One possible way to judge the efficiency of family organisations is to ask whether and to what extent the family-policy sector can be identified as such, and whether it has resulted in the creation of an administrative *ad hoc* mechanism. Certain EU countries do

In certain cases, the integration of family organisations into a policy-making network is as much a sign of their recognition by bureaucratic agencies as the outcome of successful mobilisation attempts (e.g. demonstrations). On the other hand, the question of recognition does not come up in countries that do not have any politico-administrative liaisons in the family field. Below is an overview of the current situation of family organisations in the countries examined:

France

In France, an explicit and ambitious family-policy programme structured around demographic considerations was launched as early as the 1930s. Numerous measures to support large families were designed in close collaboration with national family organisations, which in turn were rewarded with strong institutionalisation and extensive government recognition (and generous funds allocated by the family department). Since 1942, family organisations have been the officially acknowledged and legitimate partners in discussions and negotiations on family matters (*Loi Gounot*). This policy was confirmed after the Second World War, when France's social security system was put in place and a national association, the *Union Nationale des Associations Familiales* (UNAF), was founded. UNAF is a unique body that assembles family administrations and organisations throughout France. As a group, they conceive policies and define the role of public authorities, limits of government intervention in family matters, and pertinent categories of law.

UNAF is the official representative of family interests in France. It is the outcome of an institutional *unicum*; as such, it holds a monopoly position in the representation of French families. This is how UNAF could declare itself a 'family parliament'. It claims to represent one million families that all are members of one or another of its 7,800 grassroots units, which in turn are pooled into more than 60 national movements or federations, out of which eight 'big' organisations act as co-administrators for UNAF.

"Integration into a policy-making network and services for families are important features of family interest groups"

and/or respond to. The question is to determine whether and to what extent the focal groups position themselves as representatives of civil society.

- The second pole used to position interest groups ascertains their proximity to the state machinery and public administration. The more or less institutionalised

not have any explicit family policies (such as the United Kingdom), whereas others have turned them into both an explicit (Germany) and, depending on the period in history, even a central component of the entire structure of their social systems (e.g. Belgium or France). In concrete terms, what does this mean for the respective national family organisations?



Overall, these groups are able to mobilise roughly 30,000 employees and 200,000 activists.

Within these organisations, there are eight that have more general objectives and can be regarded as representatives of the different sensitivities of the familial world. They recruit their members from the entire family spectrum and are the so-called *Loi 1901* organisations.

Despite overlapping borderlines, we may distinguish four basic kinds of organisations:

- The 'rural family' type is targeted at simple people. This model is widespread and is primarily designed to offer and render services.
- The 'blue-collar family' type has a trade-union dimension. This means that such organisations first assert their claims of representation and, as a result, fill positions in certain bodies as official representatives (e.g. economic and social council). *The Confédération Syndicale des Familles* and its 'subsidiary', *the Fédéra-*

tion syndicale des familles monoparentales, are examples of such a type of organisation.

"Since 1942, family organisations have been the officially acknowledged partners of the Government"

- The 'conventional pressure group' type is one that lobbies MPs, makes its wishes known to both houses of parliament, and tries to become a member of the respective committees and working groups on family matters. Examples would be *Famille de France* or, less so, the Catholic family organisations.

The 'autonomous reflection group' type has fewer members and works on a much more

theoretical level, where it tries to become involved in the process of intellectual policy design by organising seminars and meetings.

In so doing, it provides new and novel ideas. An example of such a type would be the Protestant family organisations.

The French model is probably unique for sheer size of representation alone. However, even such a configuration is not unshakeable. There are signs that France may develop something like a civic culture and that UNAF may lose some of its influence.



Belgium

Since the Belgian family benefits and policies were introduced at about the same time as the French ones, there is a certain analogy. Nevertheless, the Belgian family organisations have retained a movement-based, militant component. However much they act as institutional partners to government in terms of defending family interests, they also guard their independence from the existing administrative system.

The configuration of family organisations in Belgium is as follows: On the one hand, there is a very complex distribution of the family agenda among federal, regional and local levels; while on the other hand, representation is further divided between the

Flemish and the Walloons. Moreover, wherever citizen interests are represented, such generalist and federate associations as the *Ligue des familles* or the *Bond* are confronted with other organisations, such as feminist groups with different objectives, modes of influence, mobilisation capacity, and expertise.

Since the beginning of the 1960s, there have been two key movements emerging from a whole series of workers' movements and representing the two ethnic groups (Flemish and Walloons). One is the *Bond* (its full name being *Bond van Grote en van Jonge Gezinnen*), comprising almost 320,000 members and families in Flanders and Brussels, or roughly 20 percent of the entire Flemish and Brussels population and 14,500 volunteers (1995 figures). The other is the *Ligue des familles nombreuses et des jeunes foyers*, later renamed *Ligue des familles*, subdivided into local chapters

comprising a total of 140,000 families and 6,000 volunteers. The resources of these organisations are substantial, be it in terms of financial means, mobilisation capacity, relational network, or know-how.

Germany

In Germany, the situation is a paradox: Although the creation of a Ministry of Family Affairs in the 1950s (in itself a strong political signal) and the existence of parliamentary committees on family matters show that families are recognised as a major public-policy issue, it is exactly this policy sector that is most poorly represented within the government machinery. Somehow, families have a place in the policy debate,

but only a secondary one. Within such a context, the impact of family organisations must remain limited, even though they have close contacts with the government and its administrators in family affairs. True, German family interest groups are an integral part of a specialised public-policy network; but this very network constitutes only a marginal segment of policy-making.

In Germany, we find several generations of family organisations:

- Organisations dating from the 1920s, such as the *Deutscher Familienverband* (DFV) with less than 20,000 members.
- Organisations dating from the 1950s, including the two large denominational organisations: the *Familienbund der Deutschen Katholiken* (FDK) comprising 30,000 members and 15 Catholic associations, and the *Evangelische Aktionsgemeinschaft für Familienfragen* (EAF) comprising 24 Protestant associations.
- Organisations dating from the 1970s, such as the *Verband Alleinstehender Mütter und Väter* (VAMV), an association of single-parent families comprising 9,000 members.

- The first type safeguards the interests of families in general, e.g. DFV, EAF and FDK.
- The second type represents a certain type of family, e.g. the VAMV as representative of lone mothers and fathers.
- Finally, there are groups representing a specific partial aspect of family life, such as those that safeguard the interests of children (e.g. *Neue Erziehung*, *Deutscher Kinderschutzbund*, *Deutsche Liga für das Kind*).

Naturally, the resources of these specialised organisations and groups are much less impressive than those of the previous

German associations have substantial political resources. This is true of the FDK and its CDU backing, or of the EAF and its SPD backing. Moreover, both organisations have great expertise.

Portugal

The Portuguese configuration is much less structured. Following the Portuguese Revolution, there was no political

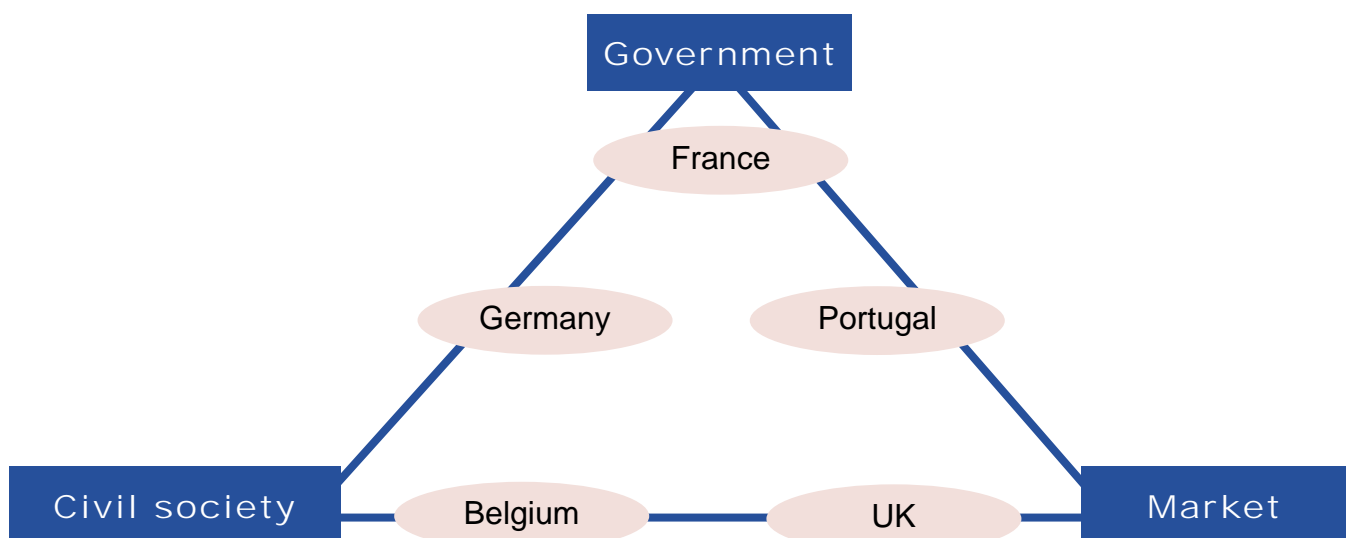
“German family interest groups are a specialised network at the margin of policy-making”

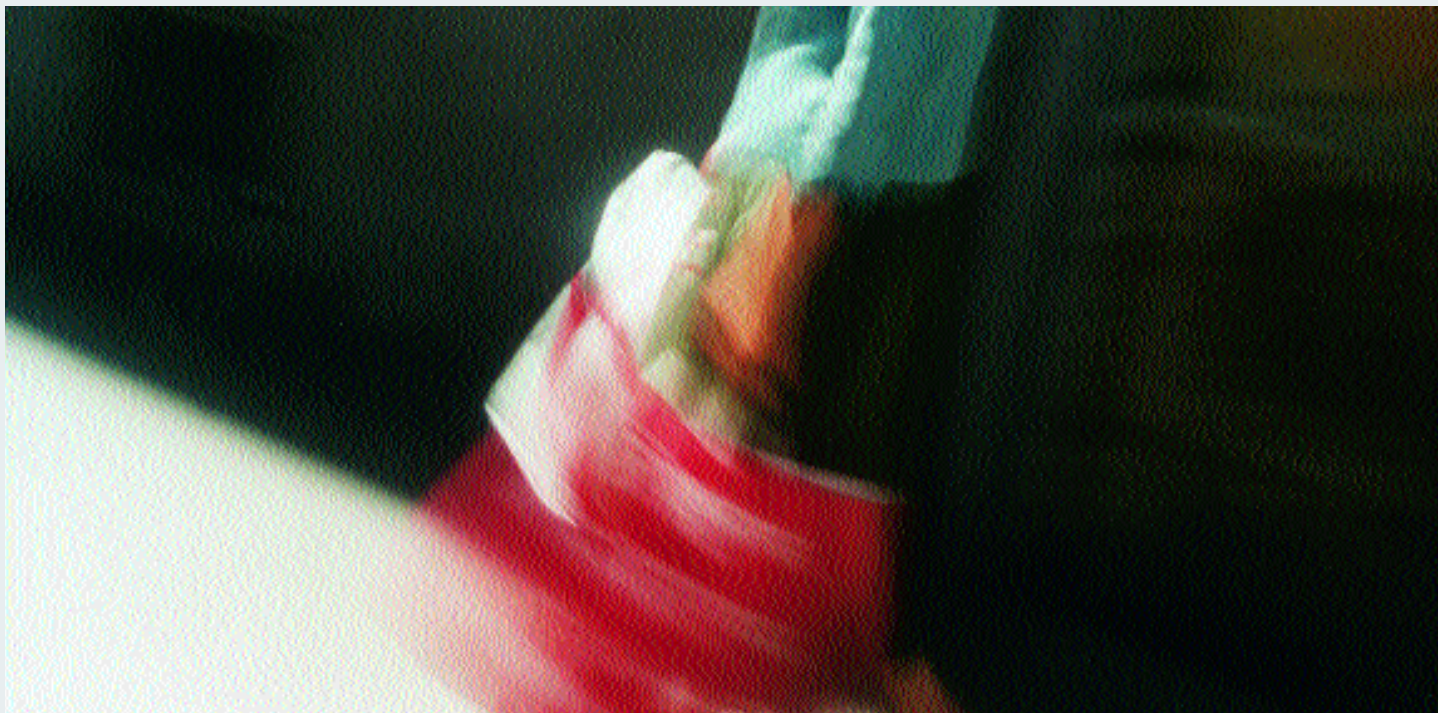
However, these organisations exhibit entirely different approaches to family issues:

examples, especially in terms of their mobilisation capacity. However, some of the

commitment to family issues — a fact certainly due to the ‘familialist’ ideology of

Positioning family interest groups





Salazar's New State (*Deus-patria-familia*). Yet we may pinpoint two periods beneficial to the development of family policies:

- Between 1980 and 1983, a state secretariat for family affairs was established.
- More recently, under the new socialist government in office since 1996, a law on family associations has been adopted. In

organisations tend to evolve top-down rather than bottom-up.

The interesting trait of Portugal's most important family organisations is that their primary objective is not to represent family interests. One example could be the *Misericordias* that, not long ago, celebrated

Secretary of State for Family Affairs (1980–1983) and President of the World Organisation for Families. Its apparently weak structure also results from its late beginnings: 15 years of association work in this area are few compared to the experience accumulated by similar organisations in other countries. By reason of their disputed legitimacy, the political or other resources available to these organisations are slim.

“Portuguese family organisations are still teething”

In addition, this has been accompanied by the creation of a national family council and a system of consultation and negotiation between NGOs and the government concerned with family matters and assistance for citizens in need.

The budding Portuguese family organisations are still teething, however, even as attempts are being made to organise and structure them in such a way that they can become true partners in policy discussions. Within this kind of environment, family

their 500th anniversary and that are very active in the medico-social and health-services sectors. Another example could be the so-called ‘private social solidarity institutions’ (IPSS).

More examples of family organisations as such are the National Confederation of Family Associations (CNAF) with roughly 4,000 members and comprising almost 40 national associations of varying size and importance. CNAF is the outcome of an initiative by Ms. Costa Macedo, former

U nited Kingdom

Our last example is the United Kingdom, which does not have any explicit family policy. Family issues are addressed within the realm of social policy, relegated to family-related policies designed to combat poverty. There are no administrative structures targeted at families: Family affairs are part of the agenda of the Department of Health. This is why the question of family interest groups and representation does not arise in this context: The United Kingdom has quite another logic. Interest groups hardly ever position themselves as partners in policy-making; rather, they see themselves as independent organisations singling out

specific social problems, seeking original solutions to them and, in so doing, exerting impact on the political environment. The range of organisations also representing families is highly complex and goes back to the work of charities that, since the 19th century, have played a major role in social

for numerous people. Some of these organisations also play a major role in generating know-how and research expertise.

Using the proposed poles, we may draw a triangle depicting the place and role of

dered by such denominational organisations as *Misericordias* and are often paid for by the government.

“It remains to be seen whether social changes will give more weight to interest groups representing a variety of family forms”

policies. Hence, the United Kingdom has no real family organisations, but rather a whole series of initiatives offering services and/or mutual assistance and support. What it does have, however, are organisations representing specific target groups. Examples could be the following:

- *Organisations safeguarding the interests of children*: Their key representatives are the National Society for the Protection against Cruelty on Children, the Child Poverty Action Group, the British Associations for Adoption and Fostering, the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations, and Children in Scotland.
- *Organisations safeguarding the interests of women*: e.g. the National Federation of Women Institutes and Family Welfare.
- *Organisations for older people*: e.g. Help the Aged.
- *Organisations representing the interests of lone mothers or fathers*: e.g. the National Council of One-Parent Families or Families Need Fathers.

In the UK, efforts to introduce an institutionalised representation of family interests have failed so far. However, existing organisations sometimes have considerable financial means and a logic of service production that turn them into employers

family organisations in policy-making. This is how we can position the national configurations examined within this triangle. Three countries are each close to a different end of the triangle: Belgium to the ‘civil society’ pole, France to the ‘government’ pole, and the United Kingdom to the ‘market’ pole. Germany and Portugal exhibit more contrasting configurations: The former is right in between the dynamics of social mobilisation and the logic of government institutionalisation, whereas the latter is situated in an area where government and market converge, even if services are ren-

C onclusions

The development of ‘citizenship regimes’ seems to be gaining momentum at a time of increasingly rapid changes and a search for new points of reference in policy-making. The question now is whether the reorganisation of European social welfare systems also involves a renewal of the collective players who traditionally have defined the categories and situations used to organise the social rights of our citizens. Aren’t we witnessing a gradual loss of legitimacy on the part of conventional collective players (e.g. trade unions) and the emergence of new partners in the policy-making process?

In the social and family-policy sector, another question seems to be whether the position held by family organisations as representatives of families is being weakened. The entry of new actors and groups that defend — as in France — the rights of cohabiting adults (by advocating the *contrat d’union civile* and, more recently, the *pacte civil de solidarité*, better known by its acronym ‘Pacs’) or of homosexual couples, etc., show that a redistribution of ‘influential’ voices is about to take place in public forums.



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European citizenship?

Social quality

How does Europe affect its citizens' everyday lives? Is there a link between individual quality of life and the European idea?

Giovanni B. Sgritta



Together with the foundation of the common market, the Treaty establishing the European Union envisages two important pillars of the European house: foreign policy and common security on the one hand, and justice and domestic affairs on the other. However, up till now, little progress has been made on either front. There is still a long way to go before we can speak of a real integration of the Member States. Besides, even if we were to reach concrete results in the creation of these two pillars, there would still be an essential component missing from the 'crooked house' of United Europe.

As European institutions grow in importance, the risk increases that European citizens will become more and more indifferent and alienated. Experts call this process the 'post-Maastricht disenchant-

ment'. Euro-pessimism? Not exactly. Public opinion polls prove that Europe is still an abstract idea for many people, detached from their individual interests and far from the reality of everyday life.

It is a widely-held belief that the European institutions are incapable of making a determined and effective impact on the problems that the citizenry consider most important: social security, employment, housing, income distribution, access to services, family policies, defence of the environment, poverty, communications, etc.

In order to bridge this gap between European citizenry and Community institutions, Europe must take yet another step in addition to the institutional agreements reached for the creation of the Economic and Monetary Unions. What is already valid for large parts of economy and law should also hold true for the social sphere and, in general, for the citizens'

social quality. In short, having created Europe, we must now create European citizens. Making use of their active and passive right to vote every five years constitutes the first small step, but definitely not the light at the end of the tunnel.

The risk of losing its legitimacy hangs like a sword of Damocles over the head of the European Union. There are two fundamental reasons for the crisis of legitimacy threatening Europe today: First, the lack of a real federal constitution leaving the autonomy of the Member States still basically intact — one involving a wide range of topics crucial for the life of the citizens. Second, a deficit of democracy that *de facto* excludes public opinion — and thus the organised expression of civil society in the different countries (in the form of parties, trade unions, opinion groups) — from involvement in the formulation of European policies and decision-making.

It is no coincidence that both factors figure among the fundamental ingredients of the idea of *citizenship* as proposed by T. H.

production, but rather on the concrete recognition by the State of their rights as citizens.

“Europe needs a constitution and democratic possibilities for citizens’ participation”

Marshall at the beginning of the 1950s. Marshall used this term to describe the path taken by the European nation-states towards the achievement of civil rights (in the 18th century), political rights (in the 19th) and, finally, social rights (in the 20th century). The granting of these rights ratifies the membership of the citizens in the community.

According to Marshall, the status of citizenship lays down the basic premise for the participation of citizens in democratic life. There is no real democracy if everyone is not guaranteed a minimum of equality and the satisfaction of their basic needs. The development of civil and political rights goes hand in hand with the recognition of a people’s right to organise and to intervene in public decisions. The introduction of social rights is connected with a growth in the level of well-being and of state-provided assistance. These are the essential premises for citizens’ participation and integration into the social community.

In other words, citizenship is the set of subjective rights that constitute the entitlement of all citizens in equal measure, regardless of their position in the market. They are granted to citizens exclusively in relation to their democratic right to express their opinion in public; as such, they constitute the minimum threshold of rights that nobody should be without in a democratic system.

Social integration is no longer exclusively dependent on the individuals’ position on the market or on their contribution to

In the course of the 20th century, all the Member States that now make up the EU went through these experiences: some sooner, some later, some faster and some slower. However, in the mid-1970s, the institutional compromise on which the European welfare states were based began to waver. New experiences, new actors and new needs appeared alongside the traditional movements of collective protest. Citizenship was enriched by new dimensions and became linked to self-fulfilment, the environment, and the demand for better social quality. Meanwhile, the globalisation had multiplied and increased inequalities.

At the same time, it had weakened the role of politics in regulating citizens’ welfare. Moreover, people nowadays want more — but they also want different things from those they demanded in the first post-war decades. It seems that the traditional answers of politics are no longer sufficient to meet these needs.

Towards a social Europe?

How can the EU contribute to reversing the course of this legitimacy crisis and the weakening of politics? What must be done to reach the goal of ‘European citizenship’, without which the Union would end up reduced to a mere defence mechanism for the global market? What must change so that the citizens of the Member States will feel that they are key actors in a project that can have a real impact on their quality of life?



This article will address these difficult questions only indirectly; its aim is much less ambitious. It wants to stress that the process of constructing the EU must, above all, confront the difficult task of restoring credibility in supranational institutions by reducing the gap in the standard of living of the citizens of the Member States. Europe must show itself capable of checking the trend under way in the different countries towards increasing inequality, risks and all forms of insecurity. In this case, the citizens will appreciate the effort and believe in Europe.

This does not mean that the EU does not already fulfil a valuable and indispensable role in regulating and defending the economic interests of its Member States. It only means that this role, although necessary, may not be enough to re-launch and develop an existing project: that Europeans see their being citizens of Europe as worthwhile and something to be proud of. As anyone familiar with the problems of European



integration knows, the jury is still out on this point.

The process of integration has certainly made great progress. On the one hand, national governments have given up important prerogatives in the monetary and economic fields. On the other hand, however, the lack of a democratically legitimated European government makes it difficult to take essential decisions. Who guarantees the socio-economic cohesion between the stronger and weaker Member States, as well as the economic competitiveness of the Union in the context of globalisation? The latter cannot be separated from the defence of the basic European achievements of social protection and solidarity, essential characteristics of the European model.

Opinions on future developments differ. Some think it essential for the nation-states to retain their responsibility to act in these areas and to find the most suitable solutions

according to the traditions, history, values and characteristics of the individual

countries. Others believe that as long as these responsibilities (social security, family

Money! It may not be everything but you gotta have it

The availability of income is only one aspect of the quality of life of a person, a family or an entire nation. It is only a means to reach certain ends. However, there are two reasons why it should not be underestimated. The first is that income makes it possible for people to obtain the goods and services widely shared in the community and essential for a decent standard of living. The second reason is that many of an individual's resources (considered in terms of basket of goods, income and wealth) do not depend on her/his working capacity. Rather, they depend on action and policies by the State to increase the personal well-being of citizens through transfers and services, either in cash or in kind. Thus, as much as possible, at least this part of the resources available to individuals and families should be shared by all those who are defined as or who consider themselves citizens of the same political community. Within certain limits, inequalities in the possession of those goods considered necessary for an adequate standard of living are perhaps tolerable. Above a certain threshold, however, there may be undesirable effects. The most serious of them is that the most disadvantaged people may feel excluded and not be motivated to become involved and participate fully in the life of the community.

policies, equal opportunities for women and men, culture, etc.) are not incorporated in the process of integration, the European Union will remain an unfinished project, with marked inequalities prevailing between the Member States and clashing with the homogeneity of the market.

society for European citizens that is economically successful, but at the same time just and participative (...). In order to be enabled to participate, citizens need to have access to an accepted level of economic security and social inclusion, to live in cohesive communities and be

characteristics of these inequalities? What are their dimensions? Who are the most disadvantaged social subjects, and who are the most favoured? What degree of inequality can Europe — a United Europe — tolerate in its midst without risking its survival?

“Especially for women it is important that social rights are also dealt with at the European level”

A good example illustrating this position is that of equal-opportunity policies. The social rights guaranteed to European citizens mainly concern the rights of workers. The social rights that do not derive from the status of a working person are (almost) completely ignored — or, at best, the subject of recommendations. These especially include the rights of women who do not have a paid job, a product of the profound imbalance still prevailing in many countries when it comes to sharing family responsibilities. Most of the legislation that makes it possible for women to join the labour market, involving reconciling family duties with those of a career, is still firmly anchored in national legislation governing the terms of care services, in informal support and in gender culture.

The importance of a European dimension in such areas as equal opportunities, reconciliation of family and work, social security, etc., is also fervently underlined by a group of experts from the European Foundation on Social Quality. In a document presented on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Amsterdam, they “solemnly declare that the European Union should urgently give priority to its social quality”. They want “a

empowered to develop their utmost skills.

In other words social quality depends on the extent of economic, social and political citizenship enjoyed by the people of Europe.”

Radicalism? Utopia? Not exactly, considering that day by day the trends of globalisation are putting in jeopardy several of the successes achieved in individual countries in the areas of social protection, income maintenance, access to health care, assistance for weaker citizens, and families with children. An adequate policy of intervention in these spheres is becoming (or will soon become) an inescapable necessity in the construction of a European identity.

In fact, there have been moves in this direction by both the European Employment Strategy and the new social provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty in providing recognition that the EU, jointly with the Member States, has a fundamental responsibility to combat social exclusion.

A Europe of differences

Now the moment has come to document how great the differences between the Member States actually are. What are the

The results of the first two comparative surveys conducted by the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat) in 1994 and 1995 in 12¹ and 13² Member States, respectively, give a sufficiently accurate description of living conditions. Let us start with the national populations: As we know, each shows different characteristics in terms of size, density, rate of growth, presence of immigrants, degree of ageing, etc., as well as in terms of the structure and composition of living arrangements.

There are significant differences, for example, in birth and fertility rates. Some countries (e.g. Germany and Italy) are by now at negative growth; others have a growth rate close to zero; still others (such as Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France and Finland) have growth rates of around or over 3.5 per 1,000 inhabitants. Less variability is found in the age structure of the Member State populations. In any

Who can make ends meet?

The Eurostat survey also provides interesting information on some not strictly monetary aspects related to standard of living. The questionnaire asked interviewees if their household was able to make ends meet. On average, 49 percent replied “with difficulty” and 51 percent “easily”. However, here again, the countries are not all equal. Indeed, some are more equal than others: Over 70 percent of the citizens of Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland find it difficult to make ends meet, as compared to only 37 percent of all citizens in the other European countries. In the households of the first group, once they pay their bills, 74 percent have no money left for savings (as opposed to 51 percent in the second group).

case, there is a marked trend towards an increase of the share of elderly people: On average, the proportion of those over 60 rose from ten percent in 1960 to 15 percent in 1995.

The combined effect of declining fertility and a lengthening average lifespan has obviously increased the burden that care for the elderly places on the active population. The European average old-age dependency rate (calculated as the proportion of the inactive to the active) is around 50 percent but this varies greatly from Member State to Member State, with particularly high values in Sweden, Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands. Important differences are also recorded in the type of living arrangements, particularly with regard to single-person households and single-parent families. The proportion of the former remains well under ten percent in Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) and in Ireland but reaches values around or above 20 percent in the Scandinavian countries. Central European countries are in an intermediate position, with levels of around 15 percent of all households. Regarding one-parent families, the variability is much less but does follow the geographic distribution recorded earlier.

Obviously, the differences do not end here. Without exaggerating, one can say that they can be found across the entire socio-demographic spectrum. Throughout Europe, no

- 1 The following countries were included in the 1994 survey: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom; in a subsequent study by J. Vogel (1997) the results of this survey were added to those derived from other surveys carried out by the national statistical offices of Finland, Sweden and Norway.
- 2 In 1995, Austria joined the Member States that took part in the first wave of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). Unfortunately, for 1995, we do not have the comparison with the results of similar surveys carried out in Sweden, Finland and Norway.

Is staying warm a luxury?

The survey also set out to analyse to what extent European households cannot afford some basic necessities. Once again, the situation in the south was by far worse than in the rest of Europe. On average, 47.5 percent of Greeks, Italians, Spanish and Portuguese declared that they cannot afford to keep their home adequately warm (6% in the others); 50.7 percent cannot afford to pay for a week's annual holiday away from home (vs. 23%); 69.7 percent cannot replace worn-out furniture (vs. 28%); 33.7 percent have to buy second-hand rather than new clothes (vs. 9%); 25.5 percent cannot have friends or family for a drink or meal at least once a month (vs. 14% in other countries).

As one can see, the sums add up and always come to the same conclusion. It is thus no surprise that when answering the question of whether they were happy with their financial situation almost twice the number of people interviewed in the south replied with a "no": 65% vs. 33% in the north.

All these difficulties become particularly acute in families that include old people and children, as well as in single-parent families and those with many children.

two countries are the same, even if the differences between the various Member States tend to cluster around a limited number of 'families of nations': the

for the percentage of women ages 25 to 59 outside the labour market (in general, very high in the countries of southern Europe, once again including Ireland). Likewise, the

"In southern Europe, 33 percent are happy with their financial situation vs. 65 percent in the north"

Scandinavian area, the countries of central-northern Europe, and the countries of southern Europe, to which Ireland is often assimilable. To push the point a bit, these groups can be reduced to just two models: the countries of the south plus Ireland on the one hand, and those of central and northern Europe on the other. This simplification is particularly appropriate if one considers, for instance, the level of family instability or the percentage of out-of-wedlock births, both lower in southern Europe plus Ireland. This also holds true

quota of unmarried young people who live together is much lower in the countries of the south, while the age at which young people move out of the parental household is much higher in this area.

There is no point in continuing these comparisons to prove that the European countries differ from one another from a demographic point of view. This is not what is important here, since these differences are the reflection of the historic, social, cultural and religious circumstances of each nation

and, in any case, may be considered a source of positive enrichment for Europe. The point is that these differences give rise to many others that affect living conditions and the basic well-being of European citizens.

Living standards of 'European citizens'

Now let us see how things actually are, starting with income distribution. The European Community Household Panel (ECHP) contains two indicators: one for total household income (which includes income from work, private income and social transfers) and one for the total personal income of all persons aged 16 or more. Both were converted, to enable a comparison between countries, in terms of purchasing power standards (PPS)³. As could logically be expected, the differences between the countries are very great. In the year prior to the survey (1994), the average amount of income of all households in EU Member States, expressed in terms of PPS, amounted to 20,903. Divided by the number of persons living in the household, this corresponded to a *per capita* income of 8,127.

These two values are included in a range extending from a minimum of 14,793 per household (Portugal) to a maximum of 39,315 (Luxembourg). In terms of *per capita* income, the same countries demonstrated the minimum of 4,867 and maximum of 14,836. In short, the lowest incomes are about half the European average, and the highest around twice the European average. A huge gap, indeed — especially if one considers that these are averages and that these differences remain more or less unchanged, even when calculating median values. This means that the citizens of

Luxembourg have access to a basket of goods and services permitting a standard of living about twice as high as that of their 'European compatriots' in Portugal.

The differences between the other Member States are less marked. What is striking, however, is the difference between the Latin countries and the other Member States. On average, the households in southern countries have an average income (still in terms of PPS) equal to 16,621, while the others reach an average of 24,121. The difference between the two groups is 7,500 PPS, which goes down to 5,600 if Luxembourg is excluded from the evaluation of group income. Things do not change if calculations are based on the income of persons over 16.

Other interesting elements of comparison between the Member States can be obtained by looking at the source of income. If total income equals 100, the bulk of this (averaging 67%) in all Member States is made up of income from work; the rest comes from private income (averaging 5%) and from social transfers (averaging 28%). On the whole, income composition does not differ among the Member States. However, in southern Europe and in Ireland, a larger slice of total household income comes from self-employment (averaging 15.6% as opposed to little over 6% in the remaining

countries). In these countries, the share of income made up of old-age and survivors' pensions is above the European average, while family-related transfers are far below the average.

The percentage of households that benefit from an old-age/survivors' pension is much higher in the southern countries (an average of 45 percent of Latin households receive such a transfer) than in the rest (averaging 34%). However, the situation is the opposite — in favour of the countries of central and northern Europe — if one excludes pensions and considers the total of other social transfers. This holds true in particular for family transfers, which are received by around 40 percent of all households in some countries (Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria) as compared to a mere three to seven percent of the households in the Mediterranean countries (excluding Portugal).

Even greater differences are found with regard to other forms of transfers, education, social assistance and housing allowances. In particular housing allowances are almost non-existent in the southern European area (paid to as little as one percent of all households), whereas almost 20 percent of Danish, English and French households receive them. This is not the place to discuss the reasons for such a

Europe's poor house: the south

In spite of having a greater average number of people per household, the homes in southern Europe have fewer rooms per dwelling. About ten percent of all households in the south live in overcrowded dwellings (1.5 or more persons per room) as compared to just 2.6 percent of the households in other countries. In Portugal, for example, 16 percent of the households have no bath or shower (European average: 2%), 14 percent do not have an indoor flush toilet (European average: 2%) and 22 percent even lack hot running water (European average: 3%).

The list may be continued *ad libitum*: 24 percent of southern households complain about shortage of space, 12 percent say that they do not have enough light, 12 percent and 19 percent of the households have problems due to a leaky roof or damp walls or floors, etc. More than 20 percent complain about pollution caused by traffic and industry. On average, almost one third of the families says that their housing costs are a heavy burden, as opposed to only 13.5 percent of the remaining countries of the European Union. In Greece, shortage of income results in 37 percent of all rental households being unable to pay their rent on time during the last 12 months, and 30 percent of all occupants have had problems paying their water and electricity bills (European average: 5%).

³ The Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) converts every national monetary unit into a common reference unit of which every unit can buy the same amount of goods and services across the countries in a specific year.

disparity. It is obvious, however, that these data show the co-existence of completely different welfare models within the same European context: The models in the countries of southern Europe privilege the elderly population; they have developed a strong system of occupational and remunerative guarantees to favour employed workers, though showing little sensitivity towards the condition of young people looking for their first job; and they tend to rely on solidaristic support by the family. Other models display a totally different approach.

From this point of view, the results of the Eurostat survey are more than eloquent. In the countries of southern Europe, the proportion of persons in households receiving an income from work is higher than the average in the other countries (81.2% vs. 78.7%); the percentage of persons who receive an old-age/survivors' pension in these countries is considerably higher than in the others (38% vs. 26%). In contrast, the share of persons who benefit from unemployment or family-related transfers in the Mediterranean countries is far below the average in central and northern Europe (8.7% vs. 16%; or 6% vs. 51% excluding Portugal). It goes without saying that the mean amounts of such transfers (measured in terms of PPS) are generally less generous in southern European Member States than those handed out by the other European countries, even though they are paid to a large number of people (as is the case with pensions).

Living conditions and participation

The list of inequalities is long. As a rule, the communities living in a state of greater want are also those where the differences in the standard of living are greatest. The Gini-coefficient is a measure of inequality in the income/earning shares: the higher the level

of the coefficient, the more unequal the distribution. In the southern European countries plus Ireland, this index reaches the highest values: on average 34, as compared to 28.75 in the other countries. The results do not change if one considers the pro-

results? Doubtlessly a great deal. Living conditions that force part of the population to live in a permanent state of poverty and privation, to face difficulties every day in balancing the family budget, to live in inadequate dwellings and without some of

“Poor living conditions — poverty, inadequate dwellings — reduce the rights of citizenship to little more than a sham”

portion of households above and below the two income thresholds, i.e. those at the extreme ends of the scale. Both the proportion of households that dispose of an equivalised income⁴ below 50 percent of mean, and those that disposes of an equivalent income of 150 percent or more are systematically higher in the south than in the rest of the European Union. How much importance should we attach to these

the basic amenities and facilities, and which oblige young people to remain in the parental home after they have reached adulthood, certainly do not encourage civil growth and participation in a democratic community. In these conditions, the rights of citizenship are reduced to little more than a sham.

In addition, everything indicates that these effects would be even more accentuated if



⁴ The aim of equalising household income is to adjust for the varying size and composition of households.

inequalities of status and resources within the same society should grow.

In fact, as research on social psychology shows, the sense of belonging and one's identification with a reference group (be it community, nation or supranational institution) all depend on comparison. When the relative distances between individuals, groups or nations go beyond a certain limit, individuals tend to auto-exclude themselves, to refuse to participate and to refuse to relate to in any project they see as alien to their own interests and condition. Indeed, they will only join in if they see a real chance to improve their

of cultural integration and to provide adequate answers to the marginalisation/exclusion of less-protected categories.

To confront and deal with this huge variety of situations, interests and ways of life is already a difficult problem at the level of the single Member States. With the abolition of frontiers and the progress made towards a United Europe, the difficulties are bound to increase. At the same time, it will become more and more

"If Europe wants to be successful, it must prove that it can combine economic and social goals"

social condition and to better their social identity through their participation. Those who govern Europe know this. Instruments and programmes have been developed and put into action to distribute resources to countries suffering from the worst social problems, as well as to the most disadvantaged areas.

But are these measures enough? Obviously, they have not kept the gap between citizens and Euro-institutions from widening. Above all, they are fated to be powerless in the face of the negative effects produced by the challenge of the global market: unemployment, increased inequality, growth of poverty, job precariousness, greater insecurity. Now that market risks have taken on the role of the principal regulating power of our society, it is unthinkable that national governments and supranational organisations concern themselves exclusively with the economic sphere. Their intervention should be as incisive, if not more so, on the political, social and cultural fronts: Growing globalisation increases differentiation, making it necessary to face new problems

complicated to mediate between so many diverse requirements and to obtain any consensus from the citizens on decisions taken at a supranational level. If Europe wants to be successful, it must prove that it can combine economic and social goals; it must be able to offer tangible proof of its effectiveness to all those it intends to represent, apart from the free circulation of capital and the creation of a common economic area. Basically, showing tangible proof means improving living conditions and the quality of life for 'European citizens' and eventually finding sustainable and adequate solutions to social problems, even beyond those the national governments have shown themselves capable (or incapable) of achieving up to now.

Perhaps something is already moving in this direction. Encouraging signs, though only verbal as yet, have come from a meeting of key players from Member States and Community-level organisations that took place in Brussels in May 1999. The aim of the conference was to discuss how to use the scope in the Amsterdam Treaty for

Community action to combat social exclusion and promote a *Europe for All*. Among the topics discussed during the conference were reduced citizenship, fundamental rights, participation, recognition of unpaid work and support for the independence of those doing it, as well as Community policies to complement and support efforts in Member States to promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity. Concluding the conference, Odile Quintin of DG Employment and Social Affairs stated that Community action in this field "must have the capacity to support and influence the policy-making process at the national and local level". She also emphasised the need for strong political commitment, mainstreaming social inclusion in all Community instruments, and the need to link the fight against poverty and social exclusion to the promotion of fundamental rights.



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How social is Europe?

Report by the EU Commission

In 2000, the European Commission for the first time presented a comprehensive report on the social situation in Europe. Below a summary and a few excerpts relevant for family matters.

Constantinos Fotakis

The Report presents a broad description of the social situation of Europe based upon harmonised information. This allows reliable, comparative analysis of different social developments across Member States and promotes the debate on prospective social policy issues at the European level. Moreover, the analysis of the social situation provides the necessary background for deepening the analysis of the employment situation and social protection. In this way, the report establishes a link with the Employment Report and the Social Protection Report.

The first section of the Social Situation Report 2000 presents a set of harmonised social indicators ranging from demographic-related issues to employment and income conditions for each Member State. The indicators provide an overview of the social situation. In addition, they serve as a powerful tool for the monitoring of social developments over time.

Section two provides a more in-depth look at the main social developments. Analysis and research is presented on four thematic areas which are closely related to societal development — population, living conditions, income and social participation. These

presentations provide the reader with background information for the discussion of the evolving needs of tomorrow which follows in the third section.

What are the main social trends?

The European population is ageing. In most EU Member States both fertility and mortality rates are falling. The number of babies born in the EU fell in 1998 to around four million — a new post-war low. Indeed, the total fertility rate for the EU has fallen from 2.59 in 1960 to 1.45 in 1998 and is now among the lowest fertility rates in the





world. During the same period, the proportion of older people (65 years and over) in the population has risen from 11 percent to 16 percent. All the signs are that this trend will continue well into the 21st century. By 2010, there will be twice as many older persons (69 million) as in 1960 (34 million).

Changes in household type and family size and structure have also been very significant. People are marrying less and at a later stage in their lives. Divorces are more frequent than in the past. These changes mark a departure from the conventional model of the married couple with children

towards smaller-sized and more frequently changing household forms such as childless couples, one-person and single-parent families.

Another important behavioural trend, within this context, has been the *changing role of females in economic and social life*. The combination of increasing education and changing attitudes means that employment rates of women are converging on those of men. Between 1988 and 1998, they rose from 45 percent of the working-age population to 51 percent whereas those for men declined from 74 percent to 71 percent. At the European level, this increased

participation of females is likely to continue. However, women still have particular problems in gaining equal access to the labour market, in career progression, in earnings and in reconciling professional and family life.

Some inequalities persist...

In terms of earnings, despite the progress made over the last 20 years, research shows that there are still considerable inequalities. In 1995, on average, the gross monthly earnings of a woman were 26 percent less than the earnings of a man. In addition, the inequality structure of earnings by age

shows that pay differences between men and women increase rapidly with age. This is mainly due to the occupational structure of older women which is more concentrated in lower-paid clerical positions than the aver-

change, new forms of work and family life, the transition to a knowledge-based society, is raising the profile of the social dimension in achieving economic efficiency and social equity.

“Europe’s success will depend on how well it manages to combine economic and social goals”

age. Overall, income inequality rose in most Member States over the period 1980–1995 after a decline in the decades before 1980. However, the recent rise in inequality was not universal. Income inequalities are closely linked to the risks of social exclusion and poorer living conditions. If income inequalities widen as forecast, the proportion of people in low-income groups, like the elderly and single-parent families, will grow too. Low-income groups are vulnerable. They tend to have poorer health and less access to health care. This may generate additional demand on welfare systems.

...but social welfare is reducing inequalities

Expenditure on social protection in 1996 accounted for 28.7 percent of Community GDP, compared with a figure of 25.4 percent in 1990. The bulk of this is spent on pensions and health care. Social benefits, excluding pensions, reduce the percentage of ‘poor’ people in all the Member States, but to very differing degrees. More recent figures (1996) show that social transfers other than pensions reduce the percentage of the population on a low income in the European Union from 26 percent to 17 percent.

Some implications for the future
The pace of change that we are undergoing in relation to globalisation, demographic

Europe’s systems of social transfers have been quite effective in containing household poverty. However, social exclusion remains a major concern for Europe. The report indicates that particular groups of society are still facing social problems. Investing in people is proving to be an effective way of building inclusive societies where everyone can contribute, and benefit.

In conclusion, the Report has shown that socio-demographic trends may exert increasing pressures on the overall balance between the demand and supply of social services. This will imply a substantial increase in the demand for a wide range of services such as social care, human resources development and health care. Europe has a potential opportunity to respond both to the growing social needs and promote economic growth and social cohesion since these trends also provide a stimulus for job creation in the services sector. However, particular attention should be given to the affordability of these services for the more vulnerable groups in society. The role of the growing third sector could be of particular importance in this respect.

The Report has received very positive comments from both the academic community and policy-makers. In addition, in the beginning of the year, we have had some encouraging developments at the European level. The Lisbon extraordinary summit

Employment, Economic Reform and Social Cohesion — towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge clearly recognised the importance of social policy in the strategy for the European Union. By setting social cohesion as one of the main elements of the European strategy for the future, and by calling for a monitoring of the social developments by a set of social indicators, the Lisbon summit has reassured the European citizen that the Union remains fundamentally committed to an inclusive and cohesive society.

Are there different family characteristics in the EU Member States?

Although the tendencies towards household disintegration, individualism and reduced family dependence are common to all the Member States of the European Union, the household/family situation is far from being homogeneous. Different societal models preserve important differences in the way the family or the collective organisation define the frame of living conditions:

- The most conventional family patterns and household forms exist in the *southern Member States and Ireland*. In these Member States, there are fewer incidences of divorce, unmarried cohabitation and extra-marital birth. Household forms change less frequently and their average size is bigger, ranging from 3.1 to 3.4 people per household. One-person households are only about one tenth (between 8.7% in Portugal and 13.5% in Ireland) of the total number of households, whereas four or more person households account for over 40 percent. This is due to the high proportions of younger people aged 16–30 living with their parents (up to two thirds in Italy) and of the number of three generation households (highest in Greece, with over 20% of total number of households). On the other hand, households formed by a couple without children or headed by a single-parent are of little importance.

Finally, the Mediterranean Member States also show the lowest share of family/child benefits within total social benefits: 2 percent in Spain, 3.6 percent in Italy, 5.6 percent in Portugal, 8.3 percent in Greece, compared with an EU average of 8 percent in 1996. This suggests that many functions (especially caring) are still covered by the family.

- The *Nordic Member States* are the opposite, with more development in the transition towards the new types of smaller households. These Member States are characterised by a high proportion of one-person households (between 29% and 31% of total number of households) and only 20 percent of households with four

or more persons. Nordic Member States also show the lowest proportion of children aged 16–30 living with their parents (between 24% and 34%) — with more incidence of ‘couples without children’ households — and the lowest share of three generation households (3%). Changing household forms are due to high incidence of divorce (more than four in ten marriages contracted in 1980 are expected to end in divorce, compared to two in ten for the 1960 cohorts). As a consequence, the relative importance of single-parent households is high, whereas the ‘couple with children’ household is not so prevalent. Unmarried cohabitation is very common and about half of the births are from unmarried parents. Finally,

the Nordic Member States show a significant development of family-interventionist public policies: Family/child benefits represent over ten percent of total social benefits.

- Between these two ‘extremes’, the *other EU Member States* show household characteristics with intermediate levels of development of the new family patterns and differing family-friendly public institutions and policies. Various mixes of family allowances, child-caring facilities, parental leave regulations, family-friendly fiscal settings, school attendance timetables, basic revenue grants, etc. determine specific national models.

Households and families

Proportion of persons living in households by type of household. 1995

	EU-15	A	B	DK	FIN	F	D	EL	IRL	I	L	NL	P	E	S	UK
Total	100	100	100	100	-	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	-	100
<i>1 adult without dependent children</i>	11	11	11	17	-	12	15	7	7	8	10	14	4	5	-	11
... Male	4	4	4	8	-	5	6	2	3	3	4	6	1	1	-	4
..... aged under 30	1	1	0	2	-	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	-	1
..... aged 30–64	2	2	3	4	-	2	4	1	2	2	3	3	1	1	-	2
..... aged 65 or more	1	1	1	2	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	2
... Female	7	7	7	9	-	7	9	5	3	5	6	9	3	3	-	7
..... aged under 30	1	1	0	2	-	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	-	0
..... aged 30–64	2	2	2	3	-	2	3	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	-	2
..... aged 65 or more	4	4	4	5	-	4	5	4	2	3	3	4	2	2	-	5
<i>2 adults without dependent children</i>	23	20	24	29	-	24	29	20	15	17	21	29	18	15	-	26
... both younger than 65	13	13	12	19	-	14	18	8	7	8	13	19	8	6	-	16
... at least one aged 65 or more	10	7	12	10	-	10	11	12	7	9	9	9	11	9	-	10
<i>3 or more adults without dependent children</i>	14	14	10	8	-	9	12	18	13	21	14	9	18	21	-	13
<i>Single-parent with dependent children</i>	3	2	4	4	-	4	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	1	-	6
<i>2 adults with dependent children</i>	36	30	43	35	-	43	33	35	40	35	39	40	35	35	-	36
... 1 child	11	10	14	12	-	13	12	10	7	13	13	9	14	10	-	9
... 2 children	17	14	19	16	-	18	16	21	14	16	17	19	16	18	-	17
... 3 or more children	8	6	11	7	-	12	6	4	18	6	9	11	4	6	-	10
<i>3 or more adults with dependent children</i>	12	22	8	7	-	9	8	18	23	18	14	6	22	24	-	8

Dependent children include all children up to the age of 15 plus all those persons aged under 25 who are economically inactive (mainly in education) and who are living with at least one of their parents.

Source: Eurostat-European Community Household Panel (ECHP).

Family care in the future: fewer children, more very old people

At the turn of the millennium, the EU population faces an accelerating ageing process characterised by the following trends:

- *Life expectancy is growing:* In 1998, life expectancy at birth was 80.8 years for women and 74.5 for males, resulting in a larger share of females in the older population.
- *Fertility is decreasing:* With an average of 1.45 child/woman in 1998, the fertility rate in the EU was, together with that of Japan, the lowest in the world, but with differences between northern and southern Member States.
- *Fewer people under 15:* The number of younger people has fallen by one fifth over the last three decades and according to Eurostat demographic projections, this trend will continue at the beginning of the next century.
- *The working-age population is ageing:* The diminishing younger incoming generation and the increase of people aged 50 and over (progressive arrival of baby boomers) will accelerate this trend in the future.
- *In the future the size of the working-age population will decrease:* Progressive retirement of baby boomers combined with the decreasing inflow of young people will reduce the EU working-age population from about 2010 onwards.
- *Growth of the population over 65:* The share of older people has been increasing quickly in the EU (aged 65 and over: 10.6% of total population in 1960, 15.9% in 1998). This trend will be even more important in the early decades of the next century with the arrival of baby boomers into this age group.
- *Even faster increase of the very old:* The growth of people above 80 years has been

the most pronounced trend in the process of population ageing. According to the projections, their total number will increase by one third in the next decade.

demographic point of view) fell in the EU from 58 percent in the mid-1970s to 49 percent in the mid-1990s as a consequence of fertility decline (the decreasing number of

“The share of those aged 65 and over has been increasing quickly in the EU — and this trend will continue”

From the above trends, experts from the European Commission are drawing the following conclusions:

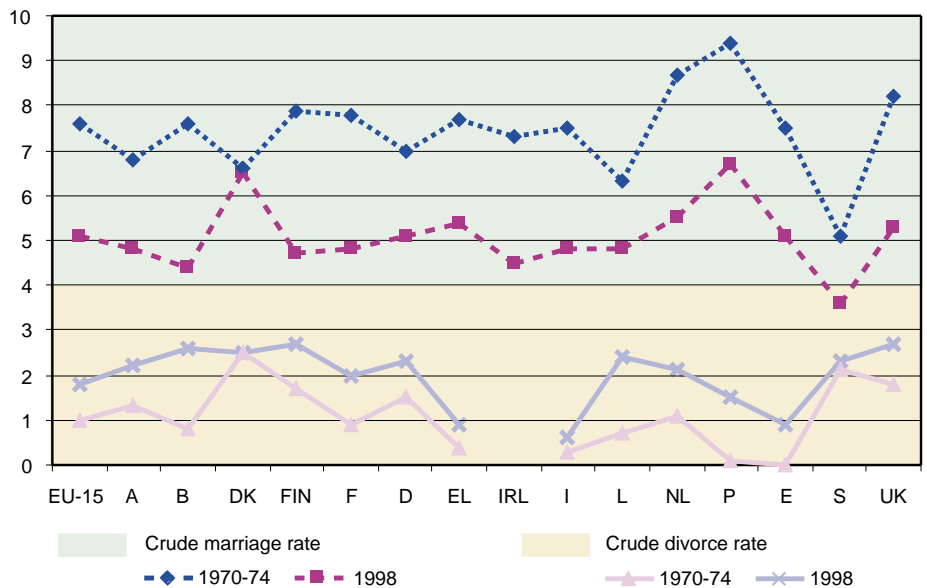
Rising 'dependent' population:

The ratio showing the population aged 0–14 and 65 years and over in relation to the population aged 15–64 (conventionally known as 'dependency ratio' from a purely

young dependant people was greater than the increasing number of older dependants). But this ratio is expected to rise in the next decades due to a faster ageing process caused by the arrival of the baby boomers. In the past, the younger population accounted for the majority of 'dependants', whereas in the 21st century most 'dependants' will be older people due to greater longevity, particularly among women.

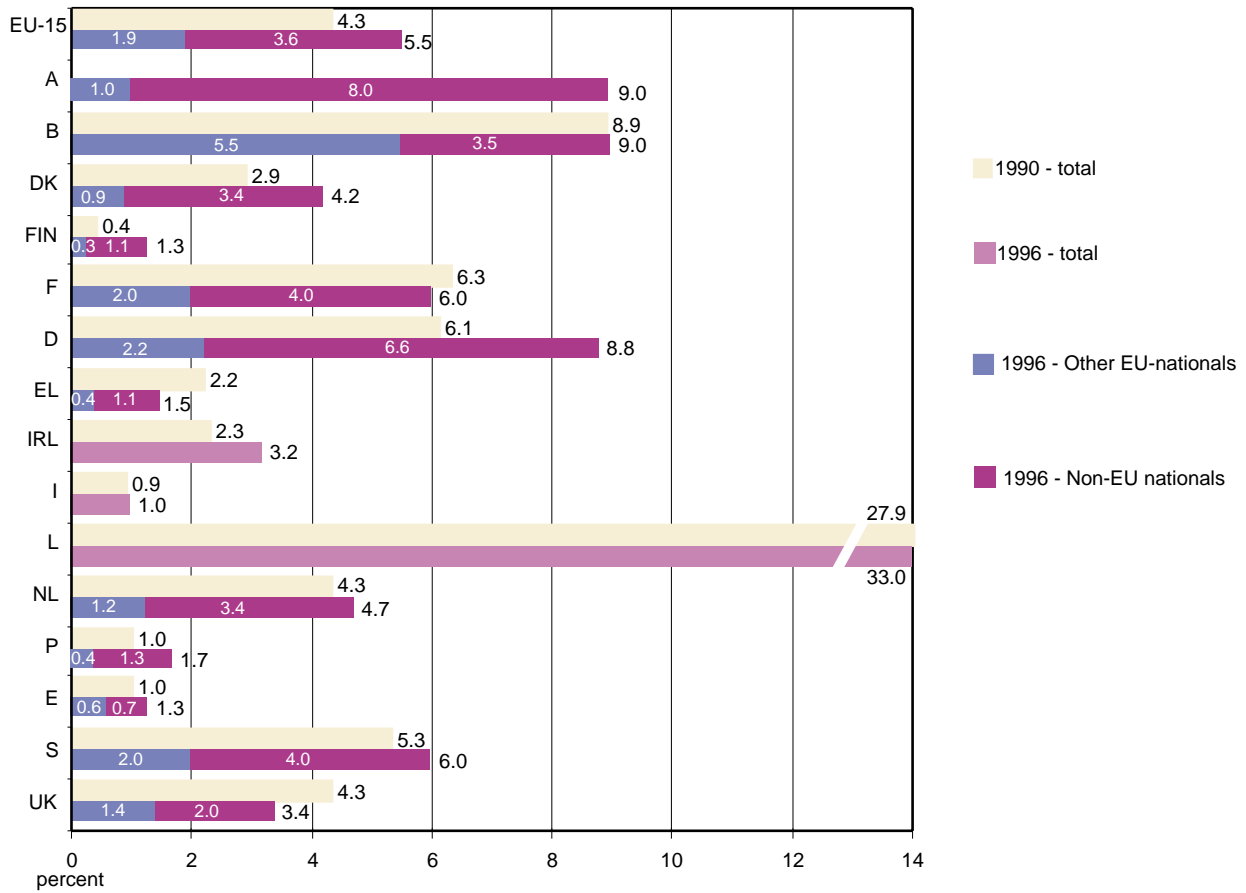
Marriage / divorce in Europe

per 1000 population



The crude marriage/divorce rates are the ratios of the number of marriages/divorces to the mean population in a given year. For a number of countries, data for 1998 relate to 1997. Source: Eurostat-Demographic Statistics. 1995-based (baseline) demographic scenarios.

Non-nationals as a percentage of total population



Population on 1 January. Natural increase equals live births less deaths.
Source: Eurostat-Demographic Statistics. 1995-based (baseline) demographic scenarios.

Evolution of potential informal carers:

There are two main categories of care, i.e. child caring and caring for older people. The European Commission is studying the future need in both categories:

- With regard to caring for children, it is likely that the generations of their parents and grandparents will be under less pressure, due to the declining number of young people.
- However, informal care for older people requires further consideration. In most Member States, the 80 years and above age cohort will still have a high number of children upon which to rely over the next two decades (on average over two per older person).

The Social Report by the European Commission has therefore drawn the

following conclusion: "The demographic trend towards an increasing number of older people, especially those people aged 80 years and above, combined with a decline in the average length of working life due to longer schooling and compulsory retirement, have created potentially new pressures on relations between the generations and, as a result, the future sustainability of pensions, care and health systems may be put under increasing pressures."

Comparing Europe's welfare regimes

Seen 'from below', the social protection systems of the Member States appear to be

highly diverse: indeed so diverse that it may seem impossible to identify common traits and almost pointless to speak of the European social model. Each nation has followed

Fertility rates

The process of fertility decline started in the 1960s, first in the Nordic Member States and one decade later in the Mediterranean Member States. But the Nordic Member States experienced a fertility recovery from the mid-1980s until the first half of the 1990s. Nowadays, the lowest fertility levels can be found in the Mediterranean Member States, with a minimum below 1.2 children/woman in Spain and Italy. This implies that the southern Member States are ageing more quickly than the northern ones.

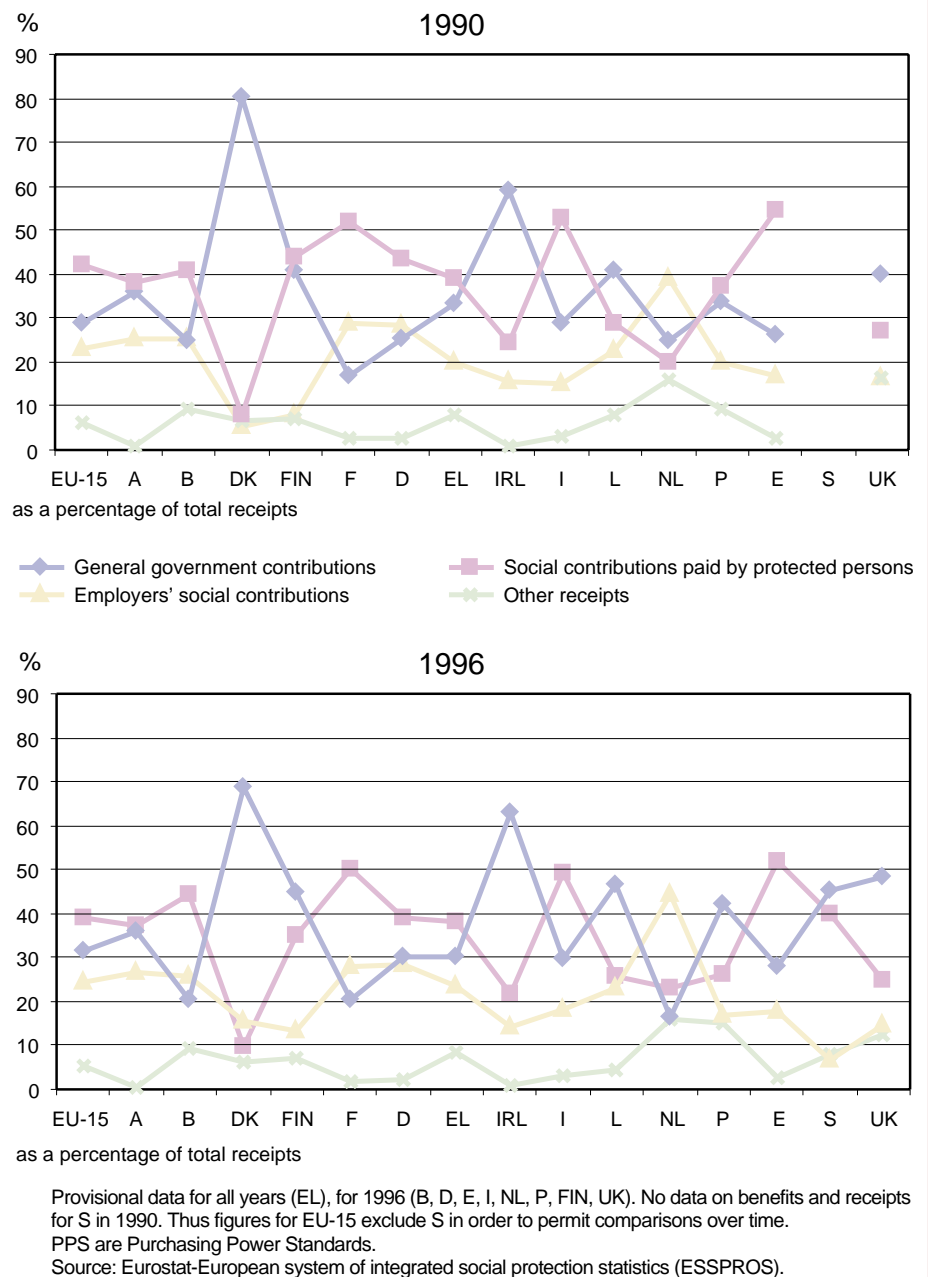
a distinct path in welfare state development, which has left its mark on today's policies (and politics). In the eyes of country specialists, the dynamics of persistence clearly overshadow those of convergence. However, as the rich literature on welfare state 'models' (or regimes, or types) has shown, certain countries are less dissimilar than others. They share in fact a number of institutional ingredients that are systematically linked, that have produced a distinct 'logic' of evolution over time. Drawing on this literature, four different groupings of welfare state (one could say: four different 'social Europes') can be identified: the Scandinavian, the Anglo-Saxon, the continental and the south European. The basic institutional ingredients on which this four-way partition rests are:

- risk coverage and eligibility,
- the structure of benefits,
- financing mechanisms, and
- organisational arrangements.

Scandinavia

In the Scandinavian countries, as is well known, social protection is a citizen's right, coverage is fully universal and everybody is entitled to the same 'basic amounts' (quite high by international standards) at the occurrence of social risks — even though the gainfully employed get additional benefits through mandatory occupational schemes. Besides generous income maintenance benefits, the Scandinavian systems offer a wide array of public social services and active labour market programmes, which sustain high participation rates on the side of both women and men. Public employment is also very extensive. General taxation plays a dominant (though not exclusive) role in the financing of the welfare state and taxing and spending levels are high by international standards. Public assistance plays a rather circumscribed, residual and integrative role. The various functions of social protection are highly integrated and the provision of benefits and services is mainly under the responsibility of (central and local) public authorities. The only sector that remains substantially outside this integrated organisational framework is unemployment insurance, which is not formally compulsory and is directly managed by the trade unions.

Types of financing social protection



United Kingdom and Ireland

The second 'social Europe' is based on Beveridge's ideas and consists of the UK and Ireland. The coverage of social protection is highly inclusive, though not fully universal (except for health care): Inactive citizens and the employed earning

less than a certain threshold have no access to national insurance benefits. These benefits — which are flat rate — are moreover much more modest than in Scandinavia. Conversely, the range of social assistance and means-tested benefits is much more extensive. Health care and social services are

Who suffers from social isolation?

Age: Those aged 80 years and above are three times more likely than the average to experience isolation (6% compared with 2%). In Italy, it is 15 percent of those aged 80 and over, in Luxembourg ten percent, and in Austria nine percent.

Health: Those with bad or very bad health are five times more likely to be isolated than those with good or very good health and more than twice as likely as those whose health is fair.

Marital status: The widowed and separated are more likely than the married, divorced and never married to experience isolation.

Low income: The proportion of people experiencing isolation rises with inability to afford one, two, three... to a maximum of six basic necessities. Those unable to afford all six are six times more likely to be isolated than those who can afford all of them.

the health sector. Only the Netherlands and Switzerland have made this tradition partially hybrid by introducing some

contributions) largely reflect insurance logics — even if not in a strict actuarial sense — often with different rules for different

“The European welfare regimes can be divided into four groups: the Scandinavian, the Anglo-Saxon, the continental and the south European models”

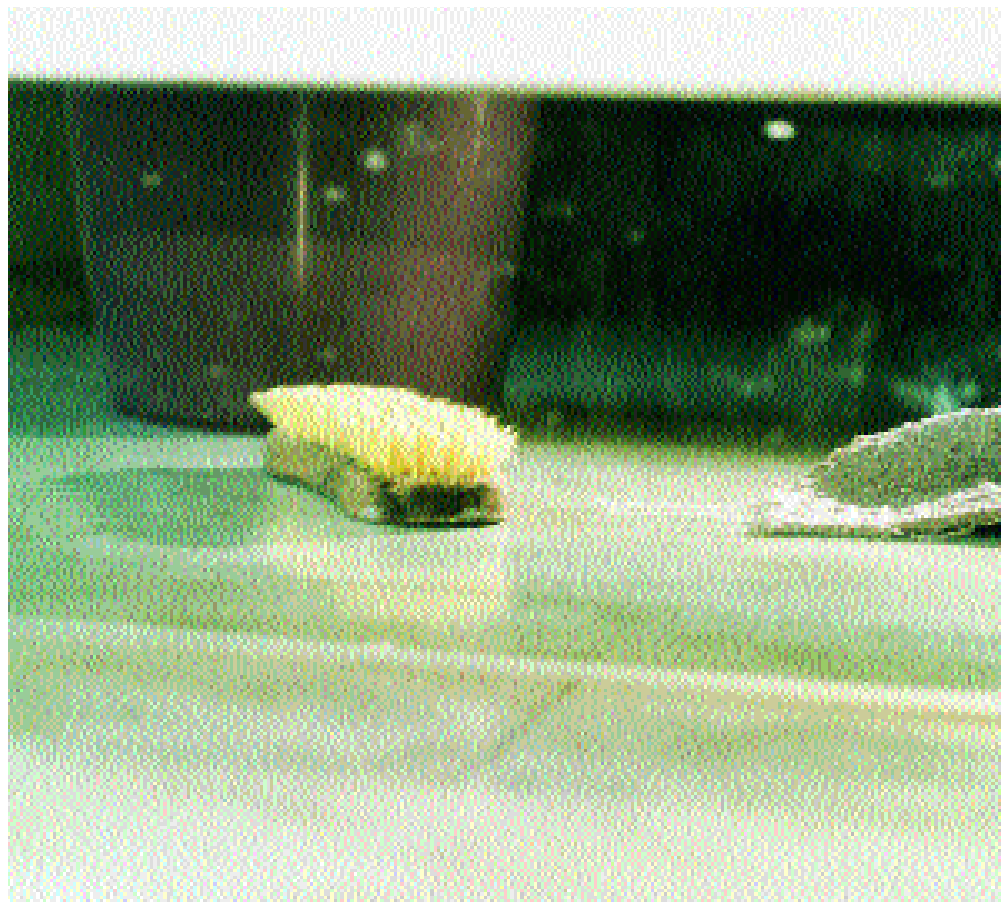
schemes of a universal character. Benefit formulae (proportional to earnings) and financing (through social security

professional groups. Replacement rates are generous and coverage is highly inclusive (although fragmented): thus spending and

financed through general taxation, but contributions play an important role in the financing of cash benefits. Tax and expenditure levels have remained relatively low (at least compared with Scandinavia and continental Europe), and the same is true for public sector employment. As in Scandinavia, the organisational framework of the welfare state is highly integrated (including unemployment insurance) and entirely managed by the public administration: In the UK, the social partners are only marginally involved in policy-making or management.

Continental Europe

This grouping includes Germany, France, the Benelux countries, Austria and (outside the EU) Switzerland. Here the Bismarckian tradition centred on the linkage between work position (and/or family status) and social entitlements is still highly visible both in the field of income maintenance and in



Employment rates of women aged 25–49 by number of children. 1998

	EU-15	A	B	DK	FIN	F	D	EL	IRL	I	L	NL	P	E	S	UK
All women	63.8	73.5	66.4	-	-	68.6	69.1	54.2	55.6	51.0	58.0	69.8	73.2	46.7	-	72.1
Women without children	67.3	75.5	66.2	-	-	73.2	74.3	55.2	59.7	52.5	61.9	73.2	73.6	48.3	-	78.8
Women with at least 1 child aged 0–5	53.0	67.1	67.3	-	-	57.0	50.1	50.4	46	45.7	48.8	60.7	72.0	40.7	-	55.4
Women with 1 child aged 0–5	55.7	67.7	68.0	-	-	62.2	53.2	51.1	49	47.1	52.6	61.9	73.3	41.3	-	59.8
Woman with 2 children, at least 1 aged 0–5	52.1	61.2	68.2	-	-	61.4	48.4	48.3	45.3	41.7	45.0	57.1	71.3	36.9	-	59.0
Women with 3 or more children, at least 1 aged 0–5	37.0	52.7	44.1	-	-	34.9	33.2	42.6	32.0	31.6	29.1	49.0	47.7	24.6	-	40.4

taxing levels are high. The occupation-oriented approach manifests itself also in organisation and management. Trade unions and employers' associations actively participate in governing the insurance schemes, maintaining some marginal autonomy vis-à-vis public officials — especially in the field of health. The majority of the population is covered by social insurance, through individual or derived rights. Insurance obligations come into effect automatically at the beginning of a gainful job —

degree of social protection maturity is different in these four countries: The Italian system took off much earlier than the other three, and this is well reflected in spending and taxing levels (especially for Portugal and Greece). But the southern European welfare states display a number of common institutional traits, which set them somewhat apart from the continental cluster. They share a mixed orientation in terms of coverage: They are clearly Bismarckian in the field of income transfers (with very generous pension formulas) and Beveridgean

gradually replacing contributions as a source of financing for health and social services (again, in Italy and Spain the process has been completed). The family is still highly important in southern Europe and largely acts as a welfare 'broker' for its members.

“ In southern Europe the family largely acts as a welfare 'broker' for its members ”

though in Germany and Austria a minimum earning threshold is required. Whoever falls through the insurance net in these countries can fall back on a network of fairly substantial social assistance benefits.

Southern Europe

The last grouping of welfare states comprises Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. The

in the field of health care, having established universal national health services (fully realised, however, only in Italy and Spain). The safety net underneath social insurance is not very developed in these countries and occupational funds and the social partners play a prominent role in income maintenance policy, but less so in health care, which is largely decentralised — especially in Italy and Spain. Social charges are widely used but general taxation is



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Family research in Europe

One endeavour that all EU Member States have in common is that they do family research. Yet it is a fact that, in some cases, such research is still in its infancy. Another fact is that 'family science' as such has not yet become a proper research discipline. One indicator for this is the lack of agreement on a commonly used definition of the family.

Family

It would be a fallacy to believe that 'family' simply means father, mother and child(ren). Things have never been that easy and are getting even more complex today. What constitutes a family is subject to continuous change, and even among scientists there is no consensus on how to define a family.

Family research

An attempt at a definition was made by Rosemarie Nave-Herz. She defines family research in a more narrow sense as "research by individuals or groups aimed at obtaining knowledge on the subject of the family". In a wider sense, she regards family research as "the traditional stock of knowledge on the family obtained by the process of ... scientific activities and insights".

The process of individual members living together in a family is highly complex. Their living structures are heterogeneous. In order to capture the manifold aspects, we have to resort to several scientific disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, statistics or demography. What is basically required is knowledge of and about the family, with the prerequisite that 'family' needs to be defined before a discussion about family research can be launched.

On the following pages, the *Family Observer* presents family research activities in some European countries, without laying claim to completeness.

Belgium

Family research in Belgium has been concentrating primarily on the social field. Family sociology has a long tradition in this Member State of the EU. Starting out as an originally comparative and descriptive branch of science, it became more empirical in the 1960s. Today, it is a subject taught at almost all universities. Family and population have become an object of increasing public concern ever since the early 20th century. Today, sociology is seen as an instrument to solve social problems. As a consequence, a governmental research centre for population and family was established; its orientation is primarily demographic and sociological. Upon the transformation of Belgium from a unitary to a federal state (1973),

regional authorities were entrusted with family matters and thus are in charge of much of Belgian family research.

Projects

Household budget survey

Every year a sample of 2,500 households are asked to note down all their expenditures and income. In addition, detailed background information is collected (e.g. on the housing situation, or use of

new technologies such as the Internet or mobile phones). The purpose of the study is to determine the structure of the average household budget.

Contact: Dynoodt Ronny
<http://statbel.fgov.be>

Flexible work and its consequences with regard to families

The study primarily examines the effects of various types of flexible labour organisation on family life, dealing with the following issues:

- Which types of flexibility can actually be observed?
- Are they imposed by the employer or demanded by the employee?
- What are the consequences on the family (partner relationships, relationships between parents and children, etc.)?

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Fertility and labour

The project concentrates on two issues: the impact of female labour participation on the timing of births, and the discrepancy between desired and realised fertility. Data are used with a view to evaluating fertility and its political impact.

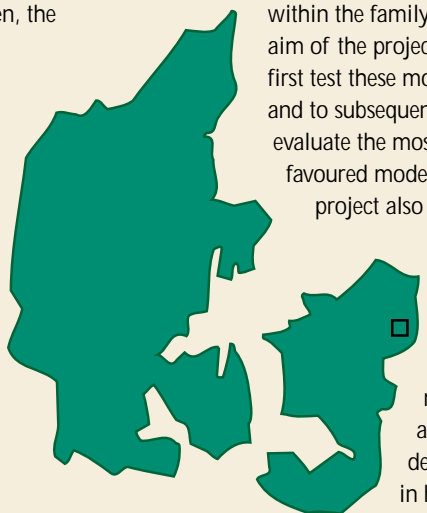
Contact: Marc Callens

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Denmark

Most family research in Denmark is carried out by the National Institute of Social Research (SFI). Additional family research projects are spread over numerous agencies (universities and other research institutes), and are often carried out in collaboration with the SFI. The main issues of family research in Denmark are the situation of modern families, responsibilities in families with children, the transition from childhood/youth to adulthood and old age/retirement, and the economic conditions of families. The welfare state and the family is another subject of research, as is the distribution of resources within family and child research.



No attention, however, has been paid to the participation of children. The question is whether girls participate more in domestic work than boys; and if so, why, and what gives rise to such inequality.

Intra-family allocation of resources in Denmark

In recent years, researchers have developed models based on the rules governing the distribution of

household resources within the family. The aim of the project is to first test these models and to subsequently evaluate the most favoured model. The project also explores the hierarchy of financial management decisions in households.

The deep recession of the early 1990s revealed poverty and malfunctions that at first seemed hard to believe in a country proud of its international reputation as a welfare state. The increasing abuse of alcohol and drugs by young people has similarly gained much attention. All this has turned marginalisation of families, children and youth into a major theme.

Projects

Work-family interface

Work and family represent two of the most central realms of adult life, and for many employed adults, balancing the demands made by these two areas is their most important daily task. This interaction between work and family roles is studied from the viewpoint of women, men and dual-earner partners.

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and their effects on the distribution of paid and unpaid work in families are investigated.

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Reconciling work and family life

The project analyses practices of, preconditions for and obstacles to reconciling work and family life in different kinds of workplaces and in different phases of family life.

The objective is to find innovative methods in the 11 workplaces participating in the study. The project also studies the impact of current trends in working life and social policy on gender equality.

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Projects

How can families and children in a criminal environment be helped?

The background for this study is the identification of 14 groups comprising the most disadvantaged families with children, among them criminal families with children. The objective is to obtain further information that will serve as a basis for measures to secure better support for children in these families.

Child participation in domestic work

Differences between women and men as regards participation in domestic work have been studied in detail in recent years.

Finland

In the past decade, family research in Finland was mostly interested in the reconciliation of work and family. The background is the simultaneous existence of extremely high unemployment and the overload with duties found with those who are working. In addition, Finnish family researchers are interested in the roles and workload of women.



Paid and unpaid work in families

In this study, the division of paid and unpaid work in families and the problems of reconciling work and family respon-

sibilities are investigated. It is part of a comparative research project carried out in several European countries.

In the project, the possibilities of family policy and other related areas

Germany

Family research has become of such great importance in Germany that one might speak of a veritable boom. Most of the research is focused on one *Land*, reflecting the fact that conditions for families are specific for the respective *Land* as well, which makes comparable family research rather difficult. Similarly, the public is more interested in what happens at home than beyond its borders. Nevertheless, changes in Europe over the past years have made for some change in attitudes, and people are beginning to be interested in events taking place in the rest of the continent.

Projects

Family changes and family policies in an international comparison

The project documents and analyses the change occurring in the family and the development of family policies in an international comparison. It provides for the development of country studies, comparative analyses and a data base.

- analysis of the dynamics of single parenting in the lifecycle,
- identification of 'single parents' needs for special support, as well as a survey and evaluation of existing offers.

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Contraception in the lifecycle. Family planning study by the Federal Centre for Health Education

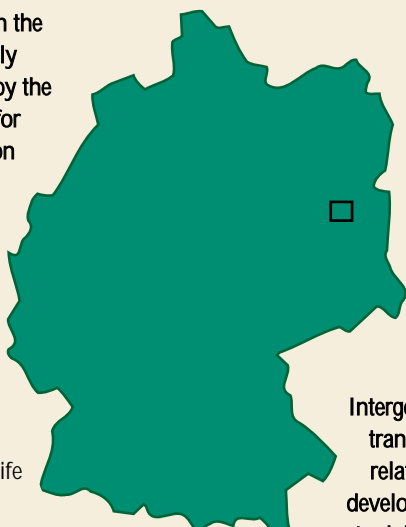
Contraception behaviour and unplanned pregnancy constitute the focus of the project that studies the backgrounds of life worlds and life histories, with a view to supplying knowledge for sexual education and counselling services.

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How does the life of single parents differ from that of two-parent families?

The project comprises a number of steps:

- description of the wide range of situations facing single parents,
- detailed information on the spread and regional distribution of single parents,
- systematic comparisons of two-parent families and single parents,



Intergenerational transfer relationships and developments during post-adolescence

The project aims at analysing the 'post-adolescent' stage, i.e. early adulthood, both from the perspective of the young adults and from that of their parents. It concentrates on the process of leaving the parents' home, young people's struggle for independence and the socio-economic transfer relationship, in particular the payments and services rendered by the parents to their children and the compensation given by the young adults.

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Portugal

Portuguese family research has become established during the past two decades. Initially focussing on in-depth case studies and the analysis of statistics relevant for families, it became more profound in the 1990s. Research on the subject may be summarised as follows: Like everywhere else, Portuguese family research is an interdisciplinary field. No centre or institution has yet emerged which specialises exclusively on the family topic. Family research ranges from basic research to projects commissioned by the government and other bodies pursuing more specific aims.

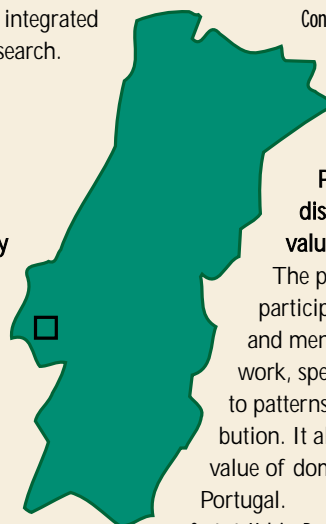
Accession to the EU has resulted in a larger number of family studies, such as the fertility survey. Various national surveys that relate specifically to the family are carried out in connection with case studies. The themes of family research have also become more varied, with a comparative dimension being introduced. Several projects are integrated in cross-national research.

Projects

Child abuse and neglect in the family

The main aim of the project was to construct a typology of abuse and neglect and to relate the different types to the social context of the child's family.

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Families in contemporary Portugal: structures, dynamics and obligations

Among other things, the project analysed family structures, socialisation processes and obligations (within the family and between the different generations), in order to obtain an overview of family types. In this connection, the links between family organisation and social, economic and spatial determinants were studied.

Contact: Karin Wall
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Young Europeans, the future of their work and family life

Besides Portugal, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Switzerland and Norway participated in this study. It looked at how young people see their future employment and how they reconcile work and family life.

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Child labour in Portugal

The main aim of the project was to survey child labour in Portuguese families.

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Patterns of time distribution and the value of domestic work

The project analysed the participation of women and men in paid and unpaid work, specifically with regard to patterns of time distribution. It also investigated the value of domestic work in Portugal.

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