

Cross-National Research Papers

Sixth Series:

Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to
Socio-Economic Challenges: Changing Family
Structures, Policy and Practice

6. European Case Studies in Family Change, Policy and Practice

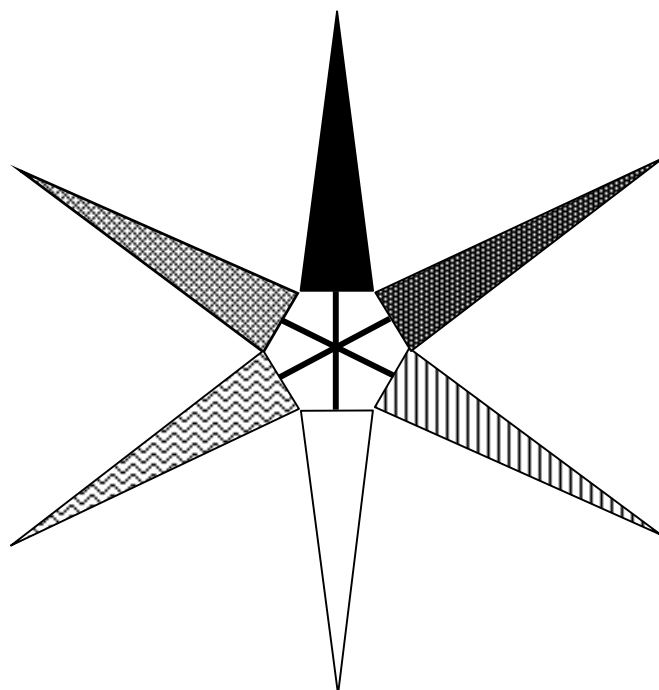
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Edited by

Louise Appleton and Linda Hantrais

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Series Editor's Foreword

The papers included in this sixth series of *Cross-National Research Papers* build on the contributions published in the fifth series. They develop with greater breadth and in greater depth work previously carried out on the relationship between socio-demographic trends and policy responses in Europe.

The materials from which the present papers are derived were compiled for a three-year research project funded by the European Commission under Framework Programme 5 (HPSE-CT-1999-00031). The research extended earlier work for the European Commission, Directorate General 5, Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, between 1997 and 1998.

The primary aim of the IPROSEC project, launched in 2000, was to inform policy by developing a greater understanding of socio-demographic change in selected European Union member and applicant states, the social and economic challenges such changes present, and the policy responses formulated by national governments and at European level. The research was particularly concerned with changing family structures and relationships. The project team undertook to observe and analyse the policy process, inputs, outcomes and impacts, with a view to assessing how policy learning occurs, and how, in turn, policy development influences socio-demographic change. In keeping with the aims and objectives of the Cross-National Research Group, which was established in 1985 as an informal network of researchers interested in the theory, methodology, management and practice of cross-national research on topics in the social sciences, the project was also designed to document the cross-national comparative research process.

The IPROSEC project brought together researchers from a range of disciplines, from different parts of the European Union and from three candidate countries, with experience in carrying out cross-national comparative projects. The papers in this sixth series track the development of the project and provide an appropriate means of disseminating comments on the operation of each stage of the research, while also reporting interim findings.

Linda Hantrais

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* * * * *

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1. Family Policy Responses to Socio-Demographic Change in Europe

Louise Appleton

At the close of the twentieth century, most governments in the Western world were facing similar challenges as a result of population decline and ageing, changing family structures, gender and intergenerational relations. The rate and pace of change have varied between EU member states and candidate countries, as have perceptions of the challenges raised and the policy responses of governments. The sixth issue in the sixth series of *Cross-National Research Papers* is designed to track and analyse socio-demographic trends, the challenges they present for governments, the responses of policy actors, and the experiences and perceptions of families themselves in countries participating in the IPROSEC project: France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the UK, Estonia, Hungary and Poland.

Each of the country case studies draws together the findings from the different stages of the IPROSEC project. Using socio-demographic data collected in the first stage of the project, the papers identify the most significant trends with reference one or more of the four themes: population decline and ageing, changing family structures, gender and intergenerational relations. Material from surveys and interviews with families, undertaken during the fieldwork phase of the project, is used to record the perceptions family members have of the efficacy and legitimacy of family policy. The views of families are compared with those of elite policy actors from the political, economic and civil society sectors, and consistencies and inconsistencies are highlighted.

The papers are organized according to the relationship between the challenges resulting from socio-demographic changes and policy responses. The collection begins with a case study of France, a country where the relationship between policy needs and provision are quite closely matched, due largely to the integration of policy networks and the explicitness of family policy in everyday French politics and society. By contrast, the final paper in the collection, the Greek case study, depicts the situation in a country where family policy is weakly developed, where policy intervention in family life is much less invasive, and where respondents expect to depend on their own resources and those of their family network to deal with the needs of their members. Between these two extremes are examples of varying degrees of interdependence between policy actors, and differing levels of provision that respond, to a greater or lesser extent, to the needs of people from different geographical and sociological backgrounds.

The first paper presents the situation in France, where family policy is well established on the policy agenda, and where a close partnership exists between policy actors. Addressing the four themes of population decline and ageing, changing family structures, gender and intergenerational relations, Olivier Büttner contends that, in all cases, the French state and electorate are aware of the need for policy and accept the intervention of the state. Building on this consensus, policy is adapted to meet changing socio-demographic trends;

while the normative family is becoming less rigidly defined, families are being given greater choice as to how they organize their lives, with support from publicly provided services. The state has, thereby, become the facilitator of choice. Despite the long tradition and strong consensus between policy actors, the author suggests, however, that parties from the right and left tend to differ in their approaches to the forms family support should take.

The second paper also illustrates the close relationship between policy actors in the formulation of family policies and the acceptance among Swedish families of increased state intervention in some areas of family life. Olga Niméus focuses on the first three themes of the project, illustrating the link between population decline and ageing, changing family forms and changing gender relations associated with women's greater participation in the workforce. She demonstrates how extensive public policy, especially the provision of public services such as childcare, has been adapted to the changing needs of families, facilitating, among other things, the balance between work and family life. Nonetheless, Niméus contends that the workplace remains gender segregated and that women continue to carry the main responsibility for caring, despite efforts to promote gender equality in both the workplace and the home through public policies. As in France, efforts to respond to the issues of population decline and ageing, changing family forms and changing gender relations also differ between political parties, though they share an overwhelming view that families should be supported and given greater choice in the way they organize their lives.

The third paper, which reports on the situation of families and family policies in the United Kingdom, illustrates the UK's move towards greater acceptance of state intervention in family life and the development of partnerships between policy actors. Elizabeth Monaghan, Elizabeth Such and Moira Ackers focus on the two themes of population decline and ageing and changing family structures, arguing that such issues have been addressed by a more 'hands-on' policy approach since the implementation of some of the initiatives of the Labour government's green paper *Supporting Families* in 1998. In particular, the UK has witnessed the introduction of explicit policies to encourage women into work, to institute parental leave and to regulate working time, with the aim of tackling child poverty and social exclusion, and strengthening communities by obliging families to meet their responsibilities. Paradoxically, therefore, while the state has intervened more directly than before in family life, its policies have been designed to increase rather than replace the responsibilities of families towards their members. However, families expect public services to play a greater role in assisting them in their daily lives, and the match between the intentions of the government and the aspirations of families is not so close in the UK as in France and Sweden.

The mismatch is more evident still in the papers that follow. The two contributions on Germany and Ireland, for example, demonstrate the close relationship between policy actors and their policy responses. In the German example, Jutta Träger focuses on the themes of population decline and ageing and changing gender relations, demonstrating the need for state intervention in response to the decline in fertility and low female economic activity rates. While the right and the left are divided in their responses to these issues between the stay-at-home mother and the working mother with children in day care, families themselves call for greater intervention to support them in their desire to have

children through better living conditions and infrastructures to assist with the care, education and financial costs of raising children. In short, German families demand a holistic approach to family life, since single policies fail to meet all their needs. Furthermore, disagreement is also found over who should provide that assistance. As in the UK, families contend that the state has shifted responsibilities onto families themselves, which, for many, is detrimental to their survival. Families would prefer to see improvements in the partnership agreements between different policy actors, enabling civil society in particular to play a greater role in crisis situations, but with the backing of the state.

Similarly, the paper on Ireland illustrates the ambivalence between the changes that have occurred in Irish society and the policies being implemented. Julia Griggs examines the four themes of the project, contending that, while the issues arising from population decline and ageing and changing intergenerational relations are not yet being felt to the same extent in Ireland as elsewhere in Europe, policies have already been implemented to help cope with the problems that are likely to arise in the future. By contrast, changes in family structure and gender relations are reported throughout the country, but the issues are not being addressed by the state, largely because of the influence of conservatism being promoted by the Catholic Church and the 1937 Constitution. Change is also being impeded due of the reluctance of families to see the state intervene in family life. In contrast to the situation described in the previous papers, however, the reluctance to accept state intervention in Ireland also extends to intervention from the Catholic Church as a civil society actor. Instead, the call for effective partnerships is addressed more explicitly at secular civil society organizations.

The Estonian paper pursues the theme of the shift in responsibility for family well-being from the state to families themselves, in a context where economic restructuring and the withdrawal of the state, following the collapse of Soviet rule, have provoked a return to traditional families values, self-reliance and mutual aid, both horizontally and vertically. Kati Karelson and Katre Pall argue that transition has provided a stimulus for family empowerment and an opportunity for civil society to assume a more proactive role. However, distrust of the state extends to non-governmental organizations, with the result that families continue to rely most heavily on their own members not only in coping with adversity but also in managing everyday life.

In Poland, the third candidate country in the project, the experience of transition has brought into sharp focus the many paradoxes facing policy actors. In their paper, Małgorzata Potoczna and Lucyna Prorok-Mamińska identify the need for greater support for families to offset the effects of population decline and ageing, but they argue that economic restructuring and the associated rolling back of state and employer intervention in family life have removed vital resources from family policy. Women have been the main losers, as high unemployment and inadequate welfare support have provoked a return to the legacy of traditional conservative values buttressing the male breadwinner model. Rather than seeking explicit family-friendly policies, families are demanding the provision of job opportunities and of more effective public services, including education and health care, which are expected to create more favourable conditions for work–life balance and lead to families being able to turn their attention to family building.

The paper on Hungary reveals some interesting overlaps with Ireland and Estonia, including the increasing heterogeneity of family forms, but policy is lagging behind the new social situations of families. As in the other Central and East European countries, Judit Takács contends, Hungary has witnessed a rolling back of the state. In contrast to the first five papers, however, as in Estonia, Hungarian families, rather than private or civil society organizations, must take on the responsibilities of family care from which the state has withdrawn. Families in Hungary are more accepting of this role. Nonetheless, they see the need for holistic policy intervention to address the many factors contributing to the combined causes and effects of declining fertility rates, including women's employment.

The reliance on family support networks is also a strong feature of the three papers on Spain, Italy and Greece, but, because of the changing roles of women, families feel less able to fulfill these duties and call for greater state support. Monica Badia argues that women in Spain are entering the labour market in greater numbers and, in the absence of flexible working hours and part-time contracts, the burden for child and elder care is more difficult to bear. However, the underdevelopment of the welfare state in Spain is preventing policies from being implemented that might assist families, more generally, and women, more specifically.

Valentina Longo and Devi Sacchetto present a similar case in the Italian context. They argue that, despite the changes in family life that have occurred over the last decade of the twentieth century, policy appears to have stagnated and, in some cases, has become inaccessible to many because of high costs. Focusing on the first two themes of population decline and ageing and changing family forms, they demonstrate the geographical diversity in socio-demographic change and the need for policies to address such changes. In particular, they highlight differences between the North/Centre-North of Italy and the South, arguing that, while socio-demographic change throughout the 1990s is most apparent in the South of Italy, the conservative values intrinsic to the local and regional policy environment render them inflexible. In contrast, where fertility rates and family forms have changed in the North and Centre-North, policies are being implemented to some extent at the municipal level to deal with the challenges posed. In contrast to Spain, however, respondents in Italy are more deeply committed to the idea that the family should take care of itself. Instead they argue, the state should help by making services more accessible in terms of cost and geographical coverage and provision.

The paper on Greece also argues that socio-demographic change has brought about a situation in which families are less able to carry the burden of family responsibilities than in the past. However, to a greater extent than in the Spanish and Italian cases, Dimitra Taki and Spyridon Tryfonas contend that, while the need for state intervention is recognized, great reluctance is found to allow the state to intervene, not least because it may threaten family networks that provide the social safety net in Greek society, and also because many people do not trust the state to look after the family appropriately. The paper explores this ambivalence and the search for a compromise between family solidarity and extrafamilial support. The preference is decidedly for additional benefits rather than services to enable families to choose their own forms of support without interference from the state.

2. France as a Family Policy Exemplar?

Olivier Büttner

In relation to other EU member and applicant states, France stands out as the country where population decline and ageing have long been a concern for governments. Over time, however, family policy measures have moved away from being a response to demographic decline, and support has been directed more towards families experiencing economic hardship in an effort to ensure social solidarity. The policy environment today is conducive to family formation and development, and family matters are accepted as a legitimate area for policy intervention and as a discrete field of policy. The rights of people living in alternative family forms have been recognized in law, and intervention by government and employers is widely accepted and expected to assist parents in making paid work and family life more compatible. In addition, non-profit organizations continue to play an important role in supporting families and in protecting their interests in the political arena. Families are very much aware of their rights to benefits and services. They readily acknowledge the importance of the income and support they receive in raising standards of living and in contributing to the work–life balance, even though they remain critical of the level and nature of provisions.

This paper reviews the main features of socio-demographic change in France, covering population ageing, changing family structure, changing gender relations and intergenerational relations, and examines the policy responses of governments. It draws on empirical data collected for the IPROSEC project and, especially, interviews with families, which were designed to explore attitudes and perceptions of the responsibility borne by the state, employers and civil society for family affairs.

Population decline and ageing as policy issues

Early results from the 1999 population census show that falling fertility rates, in combination with increasing life expectancy, are contributing to population ageing, with older people making up 21.3% of the population compared to 19.9% at the beginning of the decade. The proportion of the population aged under 20 has fallen from 26.5% to 24.6% over the same period. The number of people aged 85 or over has been increasing most rapidly, especially among women. Despite these upward trends, France remains close to the EU average as far as its age structure is concerned. The proportion of older people in the population is smaller than in Italy, Greece, Germany and Sweden, and the proportion of younger people is lower than in Ireland, Finland and the UK.

However, the situation with regard to fertility does distinguish France from its European neighbours. Although the fall in completed fertility rates continued during the 1990s, the total fertility rate is higher than in other EU countries, reaching 1.9 in 2001, a rate similar to that in Ireland. The completed fertility rate for the 1955 cohort is also the highest among EU countries (2.13) in second place behind Ireland (2.67) (Sardon, 2002). By the early years of the twenty-first century, France was the EU member state recording the largest number of births, while the proportion of childless women remained relatively stable at slightly above 8% for cohorts of women born in 1940, 1945, 1950 and 1955.

This figure is well below the EU average and places France among the countries with the lowest rate of childless women, together with former East Germany. In its 2003 report, the Haut Conseil de la population et de la famille (2003) indicates that fertility behaviour is increasingly homogeneous across social classes and regions, and that it corresponds to the aspirations of couples of childrearing age.

At the same time, life expectancy has continued to increase and reached 82.7 years for women and 75.2 years for men in 2000. Women in France today have the highest life expectancy at birth among EU countries, equal to the level found in Spain. However, life expectancy has been growing more rapidly among men (due to the availability of treatment for AIDS and the reduction in the number of accidents) than among women (due to the growing prevalence of cancers related to smoking), thereby reducing the gap between the sexes, although, at seven years, it remains the largest in the EU.

The data show that, compared with other EU member states and the candidate countries, France is in a relatively favourable situation with regard to population growth and ageing. Demographic issues have been considered as a legitimate area for policy intervention for over a century, and it may be that the concern of governments and the policies pursued have helped to stave off population decline and delay population ageing, even if the aim of policy today is no longer explicitly to increase the fertility rate.

Changing family forms and policy responses

Marriage rates in France have been declining since the 1960s, albeit with a slight increase from the 1990s. At 5.1 per 1000 in 2000, the rate is very close to the EU average. As in Nordic countries, marriage is no longer the strong institution on which the family is based, and cohabitation has become widespread, mainly among younger people.

As in other EU member states, family formation is being postponed. The mean age of women at the birth of their first child has been rising since the 1960s, reaching 28.7 years in 2000. Delayed first birth is sometimes explained by choice, but more often it is attributed to difficulties young people experience in finding jobs (Meron and Widmer, 2002). The mean age of women at childbearing had reached 29.4 years in 2000, slightly above the EU average, but below the Nordic countries, Spain, Italy, Ireland and the Netherlands. Teenage fertility rates have been falling progressively and reached 50 per 1000 women aged under 19 in 2000, which is very low compared to other EU member states.

The divorce rate has also increased, as elsewhere in the EU, reaching 2 per 1000 population in 2000, a rate slightly above the EU average (1.8), but well below the UK and Finland (2.7), Belgium (2.6), Denmark (2.5), Sweden (2.4) and Germany (2.3). In 2000, 38.3 marriages in every 100 ended in divorce, a proportion much lower than in Nordic countries, Belgium or the UK, but higher than in southern Europe.

The proportion of births outside marriage is relatively high (40.7% of live births in 1999), reflecting the large number of unmarried couples, especially among the younger generations. Children are increasingly being legally 'recognized' by their fathers: paternity is acknowledged for one in three children

even before birth but, in a growing number of cases, parents are not subsequently contracting marriage (Munoz-Pérez and Prioux, 1999).

Lone-parent families with children under 15 represent 10.1% of all families, a figure that is lower than in Ireland or the UK (14.8). As a result, 8.7% of all children (aged 0–14) were living in lone-parent families in 2000, compared to 19.8% in the UK. However, a significant difference was noted in the mid-1990s: while a large proportion of lone mothers in France were divorced (43%), in the UK, they were mainly never married (38%) and, in Ireland, they were predominantly widowed (61%) (Bradshaw *et al.*, 1996).

Irrespective of family forms, the everyday lives of families and their well-being are considered as legitimate topics for political and public debate. A broad cross-party consensus is found in France in favour of government intervention to support family life. Family policy has a redistributive function, both horizontally between families with and without children, and vertically between wealthier and poorer families. Policy is also concerned with the welfare of children, especially when the parents are in paid work. The aim is to assist parents in carrying out their parenting duties, while also contributing to the education and socialization of children.

The diversification of family forms is, however, raising questions about the definition of 'the' family. An important task for government is to modernize family law to take account of changing family structure, because legal texts are no longer adequate to deal with the new situations that have arisen. Since 1995, work has been in hand to ensure that the definition of the 'family' in the *code de la famille* is brought up to date, extending to discussion about a change in the title of the *code de l'action sociale et des familles* (Chauvière and Bussat, 2000). Efforts to modernize family law were intensified in the late 1990s, and a national conference was organized on the subject in May 2000. A number of comparative studies were commissioned between 1995 and 1999 (Gillot, 1998; Théry, 1998; Dekeuwer-Defosse, 1999), covering 15 related themes reflecting major policy concerns: medically-assisted reproduction and research on embryos, the right to information about genetic origins, abortion, universal access to medical care, cohabitation contracts, social/civil partnership contracts, parental authority, transmission of family names to children, adoption, legal conditions for divorce, divorce without recourse to the law, inheritance rights, the consequences of divorce for inheritance, penal responsibility of minors and survivors' rights.

During the 1990s, three major developments occurred in family policy in France, mainly in response to changing family forms and the increasing need for more and more childcare. Allowances were targeted at specific population groups and became means-tested. Childcare provision was diversified, and priority was given to extending private facilities by encouraging recourse to approved childminders as an addition to *crèches*.

As policy has been targeted at families most in need, it has begun to lose its universal character, at least insofar as families are concerned, for allowances have always been paid only from the second child. Attempts by the government in 1998 to introduce means-tested family allowances encountered strong opposition, which led to the decision being reversed. Instead, the ceiling was lowered on tax reductions under the family quotient system. The targeting of low-income families has resulted in some political groups and family associations criticizing the government for undermining French family policy by

abandoning universal familist values and for progressively diluting family policy by incorporating it into social policy.

Policy has also taken greater account of the financial burden on families resulting from the presence in the home of 'young adults', since children are leaving home at a later age. French public policy is thus responding to the reduction in the amount of time parents have available because women are economically active, and to the postponement of the age at which children become independent from their parents.

Changing gender relations

As in other EU member states, gender relations are changing, but not to the extent that gender differences have been eliminated in education, employment and family life.

The gender distribution in education continues to reflect the expectations parents have of their children (Duru-Bellat and Jarousse, 1997). Girls are less likely than boys to fall behind their age group in terms of academic achievement. At school, boys are more likely to study technical subjects than girls, who most often take subjects preparing them for employment in the service sector, particularly in health-related areas. In higher education, women outnumber men (119 women for 100 men), but to a lesser extent than in Denmark, Italy, Portugal or Sweden. More women (25%) than men (10%) hold higher education qualifications (Glaude, 1999), but the disciplinary divide persists, and women are less likely than men to have access to in-service training courses and to be employed in firms where training is actively promoted (Génisson, 1998; Secrétariat d'Etat aux droits des femmes et à la formation professionnelle, 1999).

As in other EU member states, women's activity rates are related to their level of education. In 2000 for the 25–49 age group, 88.2% of women with tertiary level education are in the labour force, compared to 73.7% with an upper secondary level education, and 55.8% with a lower level of education (Eurostat, 2001, table 14). These figures are very similar to those in other countries. However, a broad difference is found in the activity rates of young women in the 15–25 age group. Economic activity rates for women in this age group are relatively low in France since a much larger proportion of young people in this age group are in education and training: 69.9% of women compared to the EU average of 65.4% (Eurostat, 2001, table 6). Employment rates for women aged 25–49 are also above the EU average (Eurostat, 2002).

Compared to the Netherlands, the Nordic states and the UK, the proportion of women working part time has traditionally been low in France. The rate increased in the 1980s and 1990s to reach 31% in 2000 (5.4% for men), which is slightly below the EU average of 33.3% of women and 6.2% of men (European Commission, 2000). Although in the mid-1980s, part-time work was concentrated in the 25–49 cohort of women in France (51.3% of women in employment in this age group worked part time), now it is more equally spread among all cohorts of women: 33.6% of women aged 15–24; 30.6% of women aged 25–49 and 31.2% of women aged 50–64 worked part time in 2000 (Eurostat, 2001, table 34). Such a distribution shows that part-time work is no longer a means of reconciling work and family life, but a working arrangement adopted by all age groups. In 2000, 14% of women employed part time worked

less than 15 hours a week on average, and 54% worked more than 15 hours and less than 29 hours: 32% worked more than 30 hours (INSEE, *Enquête sur l'emploi de mars 2000*). This profile of women with long part-time hours is close to the profile of women in part-time work in the Nordic countries, especially Denmark and Sweden. The reason for women working part time, in two out of three cases, is that they prefer part-time work, whereas 23.5% state that they could not find a full-time job (Eurostat, 2001, table 38).

Women continue to be concentrated in a small number of occupations: teaching, intermediate level health-sector jobs, and as employees in commerce and personal services. These are all areas where career prospects are relatively limited, where salaries are below average (Concialdi and Ponthieux, 1999), and where part-time jobs are more prevalent (Meurs and Ponthieux, 1999). Women are also more exposed to unemployment than men, but the higher the level of educational achievement, the more likely women are to have employment patterns similar to those of their male counterparts. Lone mothers have higher activity rates in France (82%) than in every other European country, and 67% work full time. Women account for 35.7% of earned income in France, which is less than in Sweden, Denmark and Finland, but much more than in the UK, Ireland and the Mediterranean states. However, women are under-represented in decision-making positions: they accounted for only 10% of members of parliament and 29% of government in 2001 (compared to 44 and 50% in Sweden, 35 and 36% in the Netherlands, 38 and 43% in Denmark, and 32 and 39% in Germany) (Eurostat, 2002).

The growing rate of economic activity among women in France, particularly among mothers, has created a situation requiring a policy response, and has given rise to debates about the measures needed to enable women to combine paid employment with family life. Attention has focused largely on the issues surrounding dual earning, with women working mostly full time and without any interruption after childbirth. Whereas family policy measures were centered on working mothers during the 1980s and 90s, gender equality became a major issue in family policy in the 1990s under the socialist government, increasingly with reference to the sharing of responsibilities between fathers and mothers. Improvement in gender equality at the workplace has been sought in conjunction with greater equality within the family. Since women are more and more involved in the labour market, and the total time devoted to economic work by both parents is growing, work-life balance has become a major issue in public debate. Discussion has concentrated on three main issues, demands for more public childcare support, more time to spend on care and leisure, and a more equal sharing of parental responsibilities.

Changing intergenerational relations and policy responses

In 2000, 3.6% of the total population were aged 80 or over. The figure is lower than in Sweden and in the UK. The number of older people over the age of 75 living in residential care homes increased during the 1990s, reaching 10% in 1999 and 20% after the age of 80. At the same time, 41.1% of the 16–30 age group lived with their parents. However, the proportion living in extended households was relatively low (5.4%), especially when compared to southern European countries.

Changes in the age distribution of the French population in recent years are associated with the lengthening of the period during which young people are in training, later entry into the labour market, delayed access to independent living arrangements, later partnering, delay in the arrival of the first child. These changes not only apply to well educated young people, as in previous years, but to different social categories. The 'social lift' seems to have broken down for the generations born after the 1960s: at an equivalent age their standard of living is lower than that of their parents, and inequalities are more marked. The situation could have serious consequences for intergenerational relationships, unless the economic upturn at the beginning of the twenty-first century changes the situation.

Today, the third age is no longer synonymous with poor health, disability or incapacity. Old age does not correspond closely to retirement: both physically and mentally old age no longer starts at the age of 60. The fourth age has been postponed. According to INSEE, by 2050 the number of people over 60 will have doubled, those over 75 will have trebled and those over 85 will have quadrupled. These changes affect not only intergenerational relationships but also the arrangements families are able to make to care for dependants. Families are increasingly likely to be composed of four generations, though they are unlikely to be living together (Charpin, 2000).

Care for dependants presents a new challenge for state and family as far as the sharing of care responsibilities is concerned. The demand for an increase in state support for childcare has been growing since mothers have become more involved in economic activity, while the demand for eldercare has also been increasing. In response to the later age of emancipation of young adults, the question is raised about who is responsible for them. Should the government pay family allowances up to a later age or should it create, or revise, allowances for young adults themselves? More generally, how can the burden on families be alleviated? As no political consensus exists over the response to this problem, no decision has been taken. The project by the socialist government to introduce a youth allowance (*allocation autonomie jeunes*) is no longer a priority for the present government. The topic was not on the agenda of the 2003 *conference de la famille*.

One response to the problem of care for older dependants was the introduction of a new elder care allowance (*allocation personnalisée autonomie*, APA) in January 2002 to replace the former allowance (*prestation spécifique dépendance*). All dependent people aged over 60 are entitled to the allowance, whatever their income and degree of dependency. The allowance is intended for the purchase of services or equipment and can be used to pay care providers, either in the care receiver's own home or in a residential care home. Family members can be paid to provide care, except for legally registered partners (Kerjosse, 2002), which may affect relationships between the generations by associating care-giving with a monetary exchange.

Public perceptions of family policy

The in-depth interviews carried out for the IPROSEC research demonstrated that respondents had a good knowledge of family policies in general and of their own rights in particular¹. They were also well aware of the overall thrust of family policy in France and of its legitimacy. The interviews confirmed that the

state has a popular mandate for its intervention in family life and showed, at the same time, that public expectations are rising continuously.

All the respondents, irrespective of age, sex, family and social status, considered that public policy plays a central role in family life. A typical comment was that of a female respondent in her late thirties, with three children, whose husband was senior civil servant:

Yes, the family is a question for the state to deal with. For childcare, crèches, family allowances. Lots of things. Improvements can only come from the state. We can't do anything ourselves. It's natural that the state should look after families, crèches and schools. It's natural because children are citizens of tomorrow; they will be the ones paying taxes. They're the ones who will make the country function later on. That's why the state has to get involved. So, it's natural there should be facilities for children. It's the same with older people. It's natural for the state to look after them.

Employers are not given the same legitimacy, as reported by another married mother with three children in a reconstituted family, employed in the catering trade:

That's not the role of an employer. An employer is an employer, not a mum and dad. Of course, if you have a large company, you can provide a crèche. But, in absolute terms, it's not their role. But employers aren't stupid either; it's better if they improve the working conditions of their employees. There should be crèches available. It's not for employers to provide them. But, it's true that, if a firm is employing thousands of workers, then why not provide a workplace crèche? It makes life easier and better. It's more practical. Why not? People work better. It helps improve working conditions.

Many respondents are in favour of employers and civil society being involved in the delivery of family policy, but only as a complement to action by the state, for they express a certain amount of caution and mistrust, as reflected in the comments of another married mother with three children working as a teacher:

Yes, employers should be concerned about family life with regard to working hours and the atmosphere at work. Everything that happens affects everybody. If the atmosphere is poor during the working day, you can understand why, when you get home, you don't want to be hassled and why you want to be available for family and children. So, it has an effect on the family.

The state is seen as the only actor capable of guaranteeing social equity and solidarity through its redistributory role. Respondents are of the view that policy measures should be reinforced to help older children, and that preference should be given to services and facilities rather than cash benefits, because they are more likely to reach children instead of being appropriated by another member of the family. These expectations mark a shift away from the traditional aims of family policy, which were to encourage childrearing and impose certain patterns of behaviour. Although public opinion still seems to be aware of current or future demographic problems, few people believe they should be a major priority for family policy today. In this area, and with regard to living arrangements, public policy should be neutral and should preferably focus on childcare support.

The most obvious effect of family policy for respondents is the support provided for mothers in employment through benefits and childcare services. Although nursery schooling is seen as neither a family nor a social policy, it is considered to be important in enabling women to return to work. Care for young

children is a major focus of attention for parents. Expectations are very high and, for some people, they take the form of the demand for a free public service for childcare on a par with nursery schooling. The involvement of the state is seen here as being the best way of guaranteeing the same standard of provision throughout the country in terms of qualified personnel and infrastructures. The state is also the agent for reconciling family and work, and it is considered to have primary responsibility for young children when their parents are out at work, as suggested by an older divorced woman, who had taken early retirement and was living in an unmarried cohabiting relationship with two children:

The state can offer encouragement by promoting working hours that enable families to have a harmonious family life without too much stress. In this respect, the 35-hour week is ideal. School hours need to be reviewed. Infrastructures need to be made available for families. That's a way of encouraging families. I am against bonuses because the choice to have children is a private matter, but you shouldn't have to say I'm not going to have any children because I won't be able to find a place in a crèche or with a childminder. This means the state needs to provide the means to raise children but should not use pro-natalist policy to persuade people to have them. But it does need to make it possible for men and women to have the number of children they want by creating the necessary conditions.

Two different currents of opinion are expressed in French people's expectations of state intervention in family life. On the one hand, the emotional dimension of family life is being reinforced at the expense of institutional frames of reference in definitions of the family. This reinforcement is linked to a form of privatization, in the sense that freedom of choice is being sought in family life in opposition to any effort by the state to promote marriage or childbirth. On the other hand, the demand has increased for state intervention to take over part of the functions of families, particularly childcare, as well as elder care for relatives who are no longer able to live independently. The demand for society to carry out more of the functions of families is found irrespective of age, family or socio-economic status. As a result, the public-private relationship is moving in two directions. The normative family is becoming less rigidly defined, while families are being given more choice as to how they organize their lives. At the same time, they are relying more on the state or on public services as the best form of support in cases of family breakdown and conflict. The counterpart of greater individual freedom in the choice of lifestyles is the increased risk of social exclusion and poverty that families may experience. Attitudes towards lone-parent families are telling in this respect: consensus is found about the need to support lone parents insofar as they are more likely than other families to be in danger of falling into poverty, and not simply because they have only one parent.

Families as actors and targets for public policy

The different approaches reported here to the question of family policy in France reveal a strong coherence in attitudes, perceptions and reactions towards state intervention in the family sphere. This can be explained by the importance of family matters on the French political agenda. It is also a result of the form of governance of family policy that is based on: a broad partnership between political and economic actors and family associations representing a

large part of non-governmental organizations in this policy field. Although France has a long tradition of political and media debate over state support for families, and a consensus is found over the responsibility of the state towards families, tensions are high with regard to the forms such support should take. Parties from the right tend to focus state support on the traditional model of the family, with women caring for their children at home, whereas parties from the left tend to encourage mothers to enter the labour market by offering childcare support to working parents. However, despite disagreement between policy actors, consensus reigns among political, economic and civil society actors and families themselves that the French state should remain the guarantor of common well-being and social justice.

Note

1. This analysis is based on a series of in-depth interviews conducted during the second half of 2001 with a sample of 42 families selected according to the criteria of age, socio-economic group and family types, using the IPROSEC interview guidelines. The aim was to examine the decision-making process within families and perceptions of public policy in relation to socio-demographic characteristics. Questions were asked about knowledge and awareness of policy measures, take-up, opinions about the acceptability and legitimacy of government intervention, the impact of policies on family and working life and the role played by families as policy actors.

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3. The Changing Family Model in Sweden

Olga Niméus

This paper presents a short review of socio-demographic trends in Sweden throughout the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Demographic development in Sweden, as in many other European countries, is characterized by decreasing fertility and mortality, and increased longevity. At the same time, fundamental changes are taking place in family formation and in women's labour market participation. The aim of the paper is to present this development from the family's point of view, and to relate it to the concerns and reactions of policy actors, drawing on the findings from the IPROSEC study¹.

Population decline and ageing

During the 1990s, Sweden experienced a dramatic fall in the birthrate. The total fertility rate (TFR) decreased from 2.1 in 1990 to 1.5 in 2000 (Eurostat, 2001, tables E-4 and J-8). The decline in fertility is usually explained by harsh economic times and cutbacks in the welfare system (Ds, 2001). Unemployment also reached a high level. In 1995, the unemployment rate was 8.8% (SOU, 2001).

Young adults, in particular, experienced difficulties in finding jobs. One important way of tackling the problem of unemployment was to encourage young adults to remain in education. As a consequence, childbirth has been postponed (Hoem, 1998). By the turn of the twenty-first century, the average age of first-time mothers was 28, an increase of seven years since 1970 (Ds, 2001). The reasons for postponement of childbirth given by respondents in the IPROSEC study included economic insecurity and the wish to remain independent. All the childless interviewees, however, stated that they wanted to have children in the future.

Other contemporary studies also show that the great majority of young people in Sweden are planning to have children in the future. However, because of the postponement of the first birth, Statistics Sweden estimates that the rate of childless women will increase from 15% for women being born in 1960 to 17% for women born in 1980. This will, in turn, have an impact on the TFR, and it is seen as doubtful whether women born in 1970 will have time to attain the same average number of children per woman as those born in 1960. However, it is difficult to make such estimations due to changing fertility patterns (Ds, 2001; Jönsson, 2003).

Unlike many other European countries, the completed fertility rate (CFR) – the number of children per woman during her total fertility period – has remained almost constant in Sweden since the 1930s. With only minor fluctuations since then, Swedish women have, on average, given birth to two children. This can be compared to other nations, such as Germany, Italy and Spain, where the CFR has decreased considerably over the same period and now reaches only 1.54, 1.56 and 1.63 children per woman for the 1964, 1962 and 1963 birth cohorts respectively (Eurostat, 2002, table 1).

One of the main reasons for the unstable TFR in Sweden, compared with the CFR, is the large variation in the average age of mothers at the birth of

their first and second child (Ds, 2001). The high birthrate at the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was influenced, among other things, by the introduction of family policy reforms favouring short intervals between births.

Frequent debates have taken place in the media regarding the low fertility found in Sweden. Increasing fertility rates and coping with an ageing population have also engaged policy actors. However, neither political nor economic policy actors interviewed for the IPROSEC study advocated direct intervention to increase the low birthrates. Instead, the role of policy actors should be to create favourable living conditions, especially for families with children suffering most from the economic recession of the 1990s. Political opinion is divided along party lines as to how policy actors ought to tackle the problem. The Liberals, Conservatives and Christian Democrats, as well as the employers' federation, prefer alternative ways of organizing childcare to public provision, which is the cornerstone of the Social Democrats' family policy. The non-socialists want to give more support to parents to stay at home to care for their children by providing cash benefits and tax reductions. They also advocate greater freedom of choice in establishing private day-care centres.

The Social Democratic government has paid a lot of attention to fertility issues. They have reviewed the economic family support system and several studies have been undertaken to analyse factors influencing people's decisions about whether or not to have children. To provide a more favourable situation for families in 2002, the new Social Democratic government established the position of Child and Family Minister, responsible for different family benefits and services, children's rights and old age pensions (Swedish Government, 2003b). The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs sees increasing flexibility in parental leave insurance and giving parents the right to decide about part-time work, as important ways of making it easier for parents to combine work and family life. This, it is hoped, may, in turn, help to improve fertility.

As well as declining fertility rates, the population in Sweden is ageing. The high life expectancy of 77 years for men and 82 years for women, in 2000, combined with low fertility rates, has resulted in Sweden, together with Italy, having the oldest population in the European Union (Eurostat, 2001, tables G-4, G-5, J-18, J-19). In 2000, 17% of the population were aged over 65 years, and this age group is expected to increase to 25% within 30 years. In the 2020s, when the large cohorts born in the 1940s reach old age, a dramatic increase in the number of persons over 80 will take place. The increasing proportion of older people, combined with the shrinking labour force, is expected to place higher demand on publicly-financed services and the tax-financed welfare system (Heggerman, 1999; Nordström, 2000; SOU, 2002).

The majority of the interviewees in the IPROSEC study supported publicly-financed elder care and measures to provide support in the form of home-helps to enable older people to live at home as long as possible. The interviewees felt that they could not take care of older people themselves, and they preferred care to be arranged by the municipality. Multigenerational living is rare in Sweden, and this form of household arrangement was not mentioned as an alternative by respondents. One of the interviewees, who was married with two young children, told of his experiences from his own childhood of having his grandmother cared for in his parents' home:

With regard to my own parents, I hope I can be there and help them. And you should do as much as you can. Then it is, of course, very good to have public

home helps. My grandmother lived with my parents until I was 12. It was very good but it was also very tiresome, for my dad anyway. So you should not romanticize the picture of having the older generation in your home. On the other hand, if you live in the same town then you can support them as much as you can. That is okay. That is something you want to do. Besides, some things are better done by professionals.

Several respondents reported that they preferred to live in a residential home, where older people are looked after, rather than with their children, when they cannot manage by themselves any longer. Others dreamed of collective arrangements together with friends, as exemplified by one divorced woman with grown-up children:

I can talk with my children about how I want to have it. I have many friends; we are a group of women. We're going to rent a house, and we're going to have somebody helping us to cook and care for us.

In spite of publicly-organized elder care, many interviewees supplemented public support with practical help and care to make it possible for their older relatives to continue to live at home. Some of the dependent parents refused to move into special housing, which was regarded as institutionalization. They also disliked the idea of living exclusively with older people.

Changing family forms

Sweden is one of the European countries where the de-institutionalization of the traditional family has been taken furthest. The rate of marriage is low, and unmarried cohabitation is more common in Sweden than in any other European country. In 1998, 23% of couples aged over 15 were cohabiting without being married, compared to only 8% in the European Union (Eurostat, 1998b, p. 118). Since cohabitation among unmarried couples is becoming more and more widespread, it is not viewed as problematic or morally reprehensible. The interviewees in the IPROSEC study regarded as irrelevant whether or not cohabiting parents are married, despite the fact that inheritance laws imply that it is easier if couples are married. One interviewee, who was cohabiting and had one child, reflected on marriage in the following way:

If we were to get married, then it would be for practical reasons. Neither of us is interested in getting married in order to have a huge wedding or something like that. Neither of us is a member of the Church. ... I am aware that we ought to get married [for convenience], but we are not married. Everything would become much simpler. For example, if one partner dies then the other does not inherit as easily as if we were married.

Marriage is still popular among young people, however, and the majority think that they are going to get married sometime in the future (Bernhart, 2001). The mean age for men and women at first marriage has increased considerably. In 1997, it was 32 years for men and 30 years for women, compared to 26 and 24 in 1970 (Eurostat, 1997; SCB, 1999). Young people often start to cohabit and marry a few years after the first child is born. As a result, the rate of extramarital births in Sweden is the highest in Europe. In 1998, more than half of all Swedish births were extramarital, compared to 9% in Italy and 40% in the UK (Eurostat, 2001, tables E-9 and J-12). However, there are still some legal differences between children born outside or within wedlock. Both parents have the right to custody but, when the parents are cohabiting, the father must

formally recognize paternity, whereas this procedure is automatic if the parents are married (Socialstyrelsen, 1998). One young mother commented on the situation, stating that she and her husband chose to get married because they wanted fatherhood to be a legal right from the birth of their first child.

Over the years, the number of divorces has increased. Of all marriages contracted in 1955, only 8% were dissolved 10 years later compared to three times as many for those getting married in 1985 (SCB, 1999). The risk of separation is higher among unmarried cohabitating couples than among married couples, for couples both with and without children. The legal divorce procedure is relatively uncomplicated: childless couples obtain a divorce within 14 days, while couples with children have to wait six months. The great majority of interviewees supported this law, and only a few of them would want to have stricter rules.

As a result of increased rates of separation and divorce, the number of one-person households has increased (SCB, 1999). In 1995, 35% of all households consisted of a single person, compared to an EU average of 28% (Eurostat, 1998a, pp. 36, 38; Eurostat, 1999, table 9). Among women born in 1949, 5% were living by themselves at the age of 23, compared to 18% of women born in 1969. A quarter of women aged 23 living by themselves had never cohabitated (Landgren-Möller, 1997).

In spite of large variations in family constellations in Sweden and the decreasing number of marriages, the predominant family form is still a family where the children live with both biological parents, who may be either married or cohabiting (SCB, 2002a). The great majority (85%) of all children under five live with both biological parents, of whom 60% are married, while the rest are unmarried cohabiting couples. Furthermore, 15% of the children in Sweden live with a lone mother while only 1% live with a lone father, and as many as two thirds of all 17 year-olds still live with both biological parents (SCB, 2002b, p. 13).

Since 1994, same-sex couples have been allowed to register their partnership. A registered partnership has the same legal status as a heterosexual marriage. The vast majority of respondents approved of this law, and only one person disapproved. From 2003, same-sex couples also have the right to apply to adopt a child, either internationally or a relative. In an opinion poll in 2000, 31% of the respondents supported homosexual adoption, while 56% did not approve of it, and 10% were uncertain (*Göteborgsposten*, 2003).

Combining work and family life

Compared to most European countries, female labour market participation is high in Sweden. In 2001, 79% of Swedish women were in the labour force (SCB, 2002b). Swedish mothers with small children also work to a greater extent than mothers in other European countries. As many as 71% of the mothers in this category were working, compared to 35% in Germany and 61% in the UK. However, part-time work is common among Swedish women in general, and among mothers with small children in particular (Ds, 2001). Working part time is a legal right for parents with children under eight years old, and they are entitled to reduce their working hours by 25%. In 2001, two

thirds of employed women had part-time jobs, compared to only 7% of men (SCB, 2002b).

Also within the families interviewed, it was more common for mothers rather than fathers to adjust their working time to reconcile it with family responsibilities. The majority of mothers continued to have a paid job when their children were young, but they often worked part time. In general, part-time work means longer hours in Sweden, compared to many other European countries, and some of the mothers had planned their working life so as to have time for both family and work. Although many women adjusted their work to family life to a greater extent than men, they tended to see work as an important part of their life. One mother with two children, who had spent several years at home taking care of her children, said:

The social part of a job is important. It's not the same as meeting other mothers and playing with the children. Not to have just the family but to have a life of one's own as well. For me, this is very important. I enjoyed being on parental leave, but I think the length of the leave period was long enough and all the time I had in the back of my mind that I had a job to return to. You ought to be able to choose if you want to be at home or not.

Another woman, who had three children living at home, and whose husband took the main responsibility for the household since she had an important job and worked very hard, although she had carried the main responsibility when the children were younger, commented:

It's very important for you as an individual to have a job. You develop your capacities. It's very important. But then it's a terrible balance to maintain. If you don't feel well psychologically, then you are not good for your children, but, on the other hand, if you work too much then you won't have time for your children. So it's a problem you have to solve. You have to make a choice.

The high rate of female employment is a consequence of public policy introduced in the 1960s and 1970s to enable women, especially mothers with children, to enter the labour market and to remain there after having children. To make this possible, public childcare was extended over the years and, maternity leave was replaced by parental leave as a way of introducing shared parenthood. According to the government, 'the reform was seen as a way to promote gender equality in the home, on the labour market and in the whole of society' (SOU, 1998). Public investment in childcare has continued to increase and, since 2002, the charge for childcare has been cut, and a maximum fixed rate has been set in all municipalities. In 2002, 77% of all children aged 1–6 were enrolled in public childcare (SCB, 2003).

The use of public childcare was widespread among the interviewees, and the majority had a positive attitude towards state provision. Opinions about public childcare and the new reform were mixed, however. Some supported it, partly because it was advantageous for their own situation, and partly because they approved of the investment in public childcare. One married man with two children said: 'Yes, the maximum fixed rate is fantastic. We gain a lot from it. You thought it was almost too good when you first heard about it. So it's very positive and we get money to spend on fun things'. Some parents did not like the fact that it is the high-income families that are benefiting mostly from the maximum rate. Others believed that it limited different forms of childcare and the possibility for parents to care for their children themselves, especially in the

context of high female labour participation. One divorced man with three adult children argued:

Then, once again the state has decided. They claim that we're good at gender equality; everyone can go out to work. But in reality it's not like that but rather let's improve gender equality which means that absolutely everyone has to go out to work.

Parental leave is another part of social policy aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life. In 2002, parental leave insurance covered 13 months with a financial replacement of 80% of salary up to a ceiling. Since 1995, fathers have had the right to half the leave period. Nevertheless, most parental leave is still used by mothers. In 2001, fathers took up only 14% of the total 450 days (SCB, 2002b). To increase the possibilities for fathers to take responsibility for their children, the government decided to increase the existing 30 days, which are to be used exclusively by the partner not taking the main part of the leave period, to 60 days in 2002. These so called 'daddy's months' were supported by most of the respondents in the IPROSEC study. Many saw it as an opportunity for the fathers to spend more time with their children and accepted the state's intervention in family life to change the traditional pattern. One married man with two children, who had shared parental leave with his wife, said:

I think it's very good. Anyone who doesn't use his parental leave is stupid. I think that those months are among the most important in life. I can't say it's totally good for the children or for the relationship you live in. But it's great to see, to be close to your children, to see how they develop. I agree with forcing fathers to use it.

Some respondents did not approve of this policy since they would prefer greater freedom of choice for parents; others argued that some parents could not afford to be on parental leave and that these couples, therefore, could not use the daddy's months.

Women in the labour market

In spite of the high female economic activity, the Swedish labour market is highly gender segregated. The segregation is both horizontal, with men and women, to a large extent, working in different sectors and professions, and vertical, with men and women working at different levels when they are found in the same areas and/or professions. Women often work in caring professions, teaching and secretarial work, while men are more likely to work in technical, computer and construction occupations. Women also work in the public sector to a much greater extent than men, who dominate in the private sector (SOU, 1998). The segregated labour market is one important explanation of women's lower incomes. In 1998, Swedish women earned, on average, 82% of men's earnings.

The large proportion of women working part time is another factor explaining the lower wages received by women in Sweden, compared with those of men. Part-time jobs are most common among less well-educated women in the service sector. Within this sector, it is difficult to get promoted, and the number of full-time jobs is limited. Since many social benefits in Sweden are income-related, this means that part-time job holders receive

lower levels of sickness and unemployment benefit and parental leave insurance (SOU, 1998).

Another problem associated with a segregated labour market, according to the government, is the low proportion of women in decision-making positions in the private sector (SOU, 1998; SCB, 2002b). The Minister for Equal Opportunities has repeatedly expressed discontent about the lack of change concerning the low representation of female members on boards and in top management positions. In 1999, the minister suggested that the law should enforce quotas if the situation had not improved by 2004. Three years after the statement, a group of top managers presented a programme to increase the number of women in managerial positions in trade and industry (*Dagens Nyheter*, 2002; *Göteborgsposten*, 2002).

Since becoming a member of the European Union in 1995, Sweden has been promoting gender equality to strengthen women's positions in the labour market in the EU (Stratigaki, 2000). During the Swedish Presidency of the EU in 2001, gender equality issues had high priority. The relationship between taxation, social insurance and gender equality were discussed, as well as gender mainstreaming, which highlighted the importance of integrating gender equality aspects in all areas of EU work, an issue that Sweden promoted at the United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995, and which was included in the Treaty of Amsterdam (Bergqvist and Jungar, 2000; Swedish Presidency, 2003). During the Swedish presidency, an amendment to the Directive on Equal Treatment was also made to strengthen the law to combat discrimination based on sex. The rights of mothers to return to work after maternity leave are strengthened. The rights of fathers are mentioned for the first time.

Despite efforts by the Swedish government to promote gender equality in the labour market, increasing intolerance towards having children has been noted. According to the Swedish Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (JämO), the number of complaints about discrimination related to pregnancy and childbirth has increased. In 2001, 19 complaints made to JämO were related to these issues, compared to five complaints in 2000 (JämO, 2003).

JämO has also pointed out the discrepancy between Swedish and EU law concerning discrimination and has welcomed the changes made in 2001 to the Swedish Equal Opportunity Act (JämO, 2001). One important change in the Equal Opportunity Act was an amendment regarding the burden of proof. The former burden of proof was replaced by that in the EU Council directive in cases of discrimination based on sex. Before the change, the burden of proof was placed on the plaintiff (JämO, 2001). The new rules imply that member states take measures to ensure that:

...when persons who consider themselves wronged because the principle of equal treatment has not been applied to them establish, before a court or other competent authority, facts from which it may be presumed that there has been direct or indirect discrimination, it shall be for the respondent to prove that there has been no breach of the principle of equal treatment. (Council Directive 97/80/EC, Article 4)

Definitions of two types of discrimination are also included in the new law: direct and indirect discrimination. According to Council Directive 97/80/EC Article 2,

[Indirect discrimination exists] where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practices disadvantages a substantially higher proportion of the members of one

sex unless that provision, criterion or practice is appropriate and necessary and can be justified by objective factors unrelated to sex.

The definition of indirect discrimination included in the Swedish Equal Opportunity Act corresponds to the one in the directive on the burden of proof. The reason for changing the Equal Opportunity Act was an expansion of the definition of discrimination to strengthen protection against sex discrimination and make the law more effective. Another reason was to match the European Court of Justice's application of EC law according to the Dekker-Draehmpael case (Proposition 1999/2000:143). The Dekker-Draehmpael-case also brought about further change in Swedish law concerning the requirement for an actual comparison to be made between individual situations in cases of employment, promotion, education for promotion, conditions for employment and salary and dismissals to determine whether discrimination had occurred. In the new law, no such individual claim will be required with reference to the Dekker case (cited in Bergqvist and Jungar, 2000).

Another adaptation to harmonize Swedish legislation with that of the European Union was made in relation to female work during and after pregnancy. Sweden was found to be violating the restriction on the employment of women with regard to the EU Directive 92/85/EEC. As a consequence, Sweden changed the law on parental leave to include the two-week period of mandatory maternity leave. This restriction in Swedish law had to be made despite the widespread practice of women taking leave after giving birth. It has been argued that this amendment is a step backwards in the Swedish equal opportunity legislation since parental leave before the change was based on a right instead of an obligation (Carlson, 2001).

The future of family policy in Sweden

Female labour market participation in Sweden is increasing, and work has become an important part of life for many Swedish women. Nevertheless, the main responsibility for children within the family still lies with the mother, and many mothers with small children work part time in order to reconcile work with the responsibility for children. Since many young people experience difficulties trying to establish themselves in the labour market, childbirth has been postponed by, on average, seven years over the last 30 years. However, the great majority of young people nowadays still want to have children in the future.

The decreasing fertility rates during the 1990s can, therefore, be explained by delay in the birth of the first and second child, rather than by a decrease in the average number of children per women, which has remained constant at around two since the 1930s. It is too early to know whether the average number of children per women will remain at this level but, since the rate of childlessness is expected to increase, it seems unlikely, suggesting further implications for population ageing. A solution to this issue depends on how well society is able to provide support for men and women in their desire to have children and, at the same time, be able to participate in the labour market. Families themselves, as this research has found, are, in general, supportive of state intervention to remedy the situation. However, among policy actors, as well as among families, opinions about the extent to which the state should intervene in family life seem to be divided. Parties in power may,

therefore, hold the key to the future of Swedish families and the national demographic situation more generally.

Notes

1. The empirical material referred to in this article is drawn from 28 in-depth interviews with families in Sweden, and 16 interviews with policy actors from political, economic and civil society sectors.

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4. Hands-On Family Policy in the United Kingdom

Elizabeth Monaghan and Elizabeth Such, with Moira Ackers

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the United Kingdom, like most other European countries, was experiencing falling birthrates and population ageing (Eurostat, 2001a). Traditional family forms were declining, and alternative family forms had become increasingly widespread. In 1999, although marriage rates in the UK were the same as the estimated EU average, divorce rates were significantly higher. Lone parenthood was higher in the UK than anywhere else in Europe. Unmarried cohabitation in the UK was particularly high among the lowest age group: 38% of 16–29 year olds lived as unmarried couples in 1997, compared to the European average of 31% (Eurostat, 1998, p. 40). The proportion of one-person households, as a percentage of all households, in the UK rose throughout the 1980s and 90s, and, in 2000, was among the highest in Europe at 30% (Eurostat, 1998, 2001b).

These changing family structures and trends towards population decline and ageing have posed a series of challenges for UK governments. Since 1997 they have been addressed via a more 'hands-on' approach to the family by the New Labour government. This paper seeks to identify the special features of the relationship between policy and family life in the UK at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The paper begins with a brief review of how the New Labour government has approached the family in policy and the challenges presented by family change. Survey and interview data are then used to outline the experiences and perceptions of families in the UK¹. The attitudes of the families towards government intervention in family life are explored, followed by a consideration of the role of different policy actors in family policy from the perspective of families. The paper concludes with an analysis of the consistencies and inconsistencies between the government approach to families and the attitudes of families themselves.

Family policy in the UK

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s family-related policy was largely unresponsive to social and demographic change. Successive governments adopted an arms-length approach to the family because it was considered a private domain that should be free from state interference (Lister, 1996). Usually, this position was only contravened when families were unable to maintain a minimum level of subsistence or when changes in family structure were identified as a 'social problem'.

The arrival of the New Labour government of Tony Blair in 1997, however, brought a shift in emphasis for family policy in the UK. No longer at arms-length, the family became a key focus of policy (Driver and Martell, 2002). First and foremost, the family emerged as an avenue through which government could attain some of their key policy aims. Concern to tackle social exclusion, eradicate child poverty, increase the employment rate as a foundation for economic growth, contain the long-term increase in welfare spending and promote equal opportunities for women and men could all potentially be

approached via the family (Department of Social Security, 1999, 2000; Department for Work and Pensions, 2001; Gray, 2001, p. 192).

This potential was utilized in a stream of policies that aimed to influence family life. For example, policies have been introduced to encourage parents, especially lone parents, into employment. Initiatives such as the New Deal for Lone Parents and in-work family credits are consistent with the government's belief that paid work is the best route out of poverty (Rake, 2001). The perceived legitimacy of government intervention in the family and employment lives of individuals can also be observed in the increased emphasis on work-life balance issues in policy. Although often reluctant to place stringent guidelines on business, the government have promoted policies that improve workers' parental leave entitlements and working time arrangements.

In addition to a desire to meet policy aims, New Labour's interest in the family is underscored by a political philosophy that views the family as the basis for a more 'moral, dutiful and cohesive community' (Driver and Martell, 2002, p. 46). In a key consultative exercise, the government identified family life as the 'foundation on which our communities, our society and our country are built'. Measures to support relationships – and marriage in particular – were proposed to meet the aim of building a 'modern and decent country' (Home Office, 1998, p. 2).

The responsibilities of parenthood have also emerged as a key focus of policies aimed at families and community building. Parenting classes and help lines for parents are initiatives aimed at shoring up 'effective' parenting, thereby strengthening families. The financial responsibilities of non-resident parents (usually fathers) have also been reinforced in child support policies, and provisions under the 1999 Crime and Disorder Act enables courts to enforce penalties on parents who have been judged to fail in their parenting duties.

New Labour's desire to strengthen the family and parenting is, however, potentially in conflict with its emphasis on the moral obligation for families to be financially self-sufficient through employment (Levitas, 1998; Lister, 2000). This potential conflict is most apparent in policies targeted at lone parents (Lewis, 1998). Critics argue that the emphasis on lone parents' moral obligation to seek employment is not supported by suitable childcare policies (Rowlingson, 2000) and that the focus on paid work as a route to social inclusion undervalues unpaid care work in the home (Levitas, 1998; Lewis, 1998; Lister, 2000). Counter-criticism, however, points to the potential complementarity of paid work and parenting in terms of the material, emotional and psychological advantages it may bring (Driver and Martell, 2002, p. 58).

In summary, the family has become a focal point for New Labour's policy-making. This contrasts with the 'hands-off' approach to the family in previous administrations. New Labour's family policy, however, is still cautious in several areas, such as childcare provision and 'family-friendly' initiatives, in comparison to other EU member states. Family policy in the UK is primarily influenced by a dual agenda: to tackle social exclusion and child poverty and to strengthen communities through families meeting their responsibilities.

The UK case study

The diversity of family forms and the wide range of experiences of family life found within the UK were reflected in the survey and interviews with families¹.

The 'traditional family' comprising two married parents with children predominated amongst survey respondents, although almost half of all respondents did not conform to this model.

Cohabitation is relatively widespread in the UK and applied to nearly 10% of the survey respondents, with roughly equal numbers of cohabiting couples either with or without children. One-fifth of the survey respondents had children but were not married, and one-quarter had either been divorced from a previous marriage or separated from a cohabiting partner.

The interviews revealed that many people had experienced similar family trajectories: building a family followed a common pattern, as described by one male respondent aged 39 who was living in an unmarried cohabiting relationship:

I left home at 28 to move in with my ex-partner, and kids followed shortly after. I felt it was the right time now that I'd settled ... it was a natural progression: settle down, house, family.

For others, family trajectories departed from the common pattern. In some cases their life course had been influenced by religious and ethnic background, as for one female respondent, a practising Hindu, aged 46:

Our marriage was semi-arranged. We knew each other beforehand but it was really an arrangement between our fathers. We've been married now for 27 years.

Attitudes towards government intervention in family life

When asked about their attitudes, most of the families interviewed preferred government support to intervention in family life. Although significant differences of opinion were found within and between families, determined in large part by individual beliefs and experiences. Several areas of government or state action in the area of family policy command a consensus: the provision of a 'safety net'; the protection of the vulnerable in society; and setting the legal boundaries of the family.

Many respondents were in favour of the provision of a 'safety net' for families in difficult circumstances. For some, this meant guaranteeing a basic level of family income through measures such as the minimum wage. For others, it meant providing benefits based on need: half of the survey respondents supported the idea that the currently universal child benefit should be paid only to low-income families (Table 4.1). These views tended to be informed by the idea that all families were susceptible to bad luck. The 39 year old male cohabitee already cited further commented: *'The family should bear the main responsibilities, but should have help when they need it. Bad times are a part of life.'*

Respondents suggested that direct intervention in family life was only legitimate in emergencies to protect the vulnerable in society. The 1998 Green Paper suggests that the state should only intervene directly in family life where the welfare of family members is at stake, citing domestic violence as one of the serious problems of family life that it needs to tackle. Considerable support was expressed for such intervention among the survey respondents (Table 4.1). One married woman aged 41 provided reasons for such support:

Outside the family we feel that the state has a very large role helping the family, but this should be tailored to meet individuals' needs. Inside the family the state should not interfere except for a good reason, like abuse.

Support for the idea of the state taking responsibility for the vulnerable within families and society was also apparent on the issue of care for older people. Respondents were unanimous that this responsibility lies with the government rather than families. In addition, over two-thirds of survey respondents were opposed to the introduction of laws designed to make people financially responsible for their parents. One female married respondent aged 50 outlined her perception of different domains of responsibility for family members: *'Initially when the child is small the parents should bear responsibility but as you get older the state should provide more, especially for the elderly.'*

Alongside the provision of a safety net and the protection of the vulnerable, many respondents identified defining the legal status of marriage and partnerships as a legitimate area for action. This view was articulated by one male married interviewee aged 66:

The state should expand its definition of marriage and ensure all 'marriages' with or without paper should be protected legally and given status to protect the interests of everybody.

The widespread acceptance of alternative family forms was reflected by the majority of survey respondents who disagreed with the introduction of laws to encourage couples planning children to marry (Table 4.1). On this issue, government policy has been 'reactive' in nature, responding to changes and trends in society. This is particularly apparent in the case of unmarried cohabitation, which was relatively widespread among the study group and within the UK as a whole.

As these examples show, the initial aversion towards government intervention in family life among the respondents hides a wide range of opinions on the preferred role of the government regarding families. Some recurring themes in comments made by interviewees suggested that attitudes reflected media debates. Issues concerning unmarried cohabitation, same-sex couples, adoption and benefit fraud had featured largely in the news during the time when the interviews were being conducted. These examples highlight the fact that people recognize the responsibility of the government to support them, but alongside their right to such support, they are quick to invoke their right to organize their lives in private.

Table 4.1 Attitudes towards state intervention in family life

N = 381	% agreeing	% disagreeing
Child benefits should only be paid to low income families.	50.4	43.3
The police and social services should always intervene in cases of domestic violence.	71.9	18.6
Laws should be introduced to make people financially responsible for looking after their parents.	21.0	67.7
Laws should be introduced to encourage couples to marry when they plan on having children.	40.9	50.9
The law should be changed to make it harder to obtain a divorce.	29.1	63.0
Benefits should be used to encourage families to have children.	10.5	84.5

Policy actors and family policy

Respondents recognized that different actors contributed to family welfare. Employers, the education system and families themselves were singled out. The government's Green Paper 'Work and Parents: competitiveness and choice' (Department of Trade and Industry, 2000) outlines the responsibilities of employers towards families, making the business case that adopting family-friendly policies leads to greater competitiveness by making employees more motivated and leading to higher levels of retention. Table 4.2 shows that many of the survey respondents recognized that employers had a responsibility to make some provision for their employees' families and contribute towards family well-being. Particular support was expressed for equality in pension rights for employees taking time off to raise children, and for the provision of paid leave for employees needing to take time off to deal with family crises. Gender appeared to be an influencing factor with greater support for family-friendly practices coming from female respondents in each case.

Several interview respondents explained how their family life had been directly affected by work, as one male widowed respondent in his early seventies explained: *'I was a professional musician playing for orchestras but I changed my job to music teacher as this was more compatible with family life.'* Another married man aged 36 was well aware that working in the public sector enabled him and his wife to achieve a better balance between work and home life:

We both work in public authorities which are a bit more wise to families and caring for kids, so we can split our hours. In the office I work in, the majority have young families like us. Eight of us have to juggle childcare, so we tend to share and understand and cover for each other.

It was clear that respondents made demands on employers and on government, but the relationship with employers was one of co-operation. Another married man aged 39 suggested: *'You should negotiate as individuals with your employers like in the USA. My new company is American, and I know my wage rise for the next two years.'*

Respondents often made a distinction between different types of state actor. In suggesting that intervention was legitimate only in times of crisis, the role of social services was acknowledged by the widowed male respondent:

Table 4.2 Attitudes towards employer provision for families, by sex

Employment practice supporting	% agreeing Female (n=213)	% agreeing Male (n=168)
All employers should provide workplace crèches for the children of employees, if required.	63.5	36.5
All employees should be given paid leave from work if they have a family problem, such as a sick child, to deal with.	56.8	43.2
Employers should provide leisure activities or facilities for the families of their employees.	60.6	39.4
If you take time off work to bring up children you should have the same pension rights as you would if you had not taken that time off.	59.3	40.7

The most important intervention was when my wife died leaving me with five kids. Social services provided free nursery places for the two little ones so that I could continue to work rather than live on benefits.

Others saw education as an independent actor. Whereas it was the responsibility of the government to provide education, it was the responsibility of the education system to teach social issues and moral values. One married female respondent aged 44 argued: *'Education has a big role in making the issue of mixed marriages and same-sex couples a non-issue.'* Another interviewee, a single man aged 30 felt that education could help tackle social problems before they occurred:

I don't think there's enough information on contraception and the simple biological facts in schools. Working in a public environment I see a lot of very young mothers with children. It must be very difficult for them and a drain on state resources. We would be better off spending some of that money addressing the case rather than just throwing money at the problem, so education is certainly important.

Explicit in many comments was an acceptance that, in principle, family issues were best dealt with on a local (micro) rather than national (macro) level. According to New Labour, families have responsibilities as important moral and economic actors but it was not clear that the families in the research saw themselves as policy actors. Very few interview respondents could think of ways in which they could become more effective policy actors. Moreover, as some of the examples in the previous section show, contrary to New Labour's view of the family as a civil society actor with a moral and economic duty in society, respondents evoked the idea of the family as a private sphere, while retreating from political involvement and demanding greater support from the government. A 48-year old married woman commented: *'How people live is their own decision. As long as children are loved and cared for who cares who's doing the caring and how?'* And another young married woman suggested: *'There should be more advice available ... as long as there's no concern people should live how they like.'* In only one case did a respondent make any connection between families and society. According to a married man aged 36:

We all come from families of one kind or another and to say it won't have an influence is somewhat naïve because we are all shaped by our past and its going to affect us like it or not. Just broadly speaking, our cultural upbringing through families is going to influence what we do in the future and how we vote ultimately.

Setting the family policy agenda in the UK

In many respects, the findings from the UK survey and interviews reflect the family policies of the New Labour government. Respondents favoured minimum intervention but expected support from government in crises, echoing the sentiments of the 1998 Green Paper. A definite awareness was expressed of the increased diversity of family life in the UK on the part of the respondents and an expectation that support should recognize and respond to this diversity. Vulnerable families also appeared to be at the top of people's family agendas, as long as they were truly needy. New Labour's family policies also emphasize social exclusion and child poverty, and respondents generally accepted that direct intervention in family life could be legitimate in extreme cases like these. The families in the research, like government, considered employers to be

important policy actors with responsibilities for contributing to family well-being. Family-friendly employment practices were often cited as the responsibility of employers. In discussing the perceived responsibilities of employers towards the family, there appeared to be a discourse of co-operation as respondents talked of co-operating with employers to balance work and home life.

However, a sense of co-operation with the government in the implementation of family targeted policies was not apparent. Indeed, initially, people were highly suspicious of what they perceived to be government interference in their private family lives. Other possible challenges to family-related policy also emerged from the research. Although families generally accepted they had the primary responsibility for themselves, in keeping with government views, they often conferred moral responsibilities on the education system and financial responsibilities on employers rather than themselves. Furthermore, individuals were unsure of how they could be effective policy actors and offer a potential challenge to a family policy agenda that places responsibilities upon families themselves. Very few were aware of how they could influence the family policy debate in the UK, owing perhaps in part to the ill-defined nature of such policy, what it includes, and how it can affect people's lives.

Note

1. The UK fieldwork for the IPROSEC project, carried out in 2002, involved a telephone survey of 381 respondents by MORI and 33 following in-depth interviews with respondents who had experience of different family living arrangements.

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5. Policy Responses to Family Change in Germany

Jutta Träger

Improving both financial and institutional support for childcare is of vital interest in Germany, where, after reunification, East Germany had a wider range of childcare institutions and higher birthrates but reacted with a rapid downsizing under the newly introduced conditions of a market economy. At the same time, job opportunities for women worsened, and economic security declined which, in turn, contributed to falling birthrates and negative natural population growth rate. This paper draws on the IPROSEC surveys and interviews¹, and other national data sources, to examine the acceptability and legitimacy of state intervention in family affairs as governments in Germany respond to the issues raised by socio-economic change.

The challenges of falling birthrates

At the end of the twentieth century, the socio-economic situation in Germany still bore the marks of the reunification process, which had resulted in a dramatic fall in the birthrate in former East German *Länder*, lower life expectancy and a sharp rise in unemployment, particularly among women. During the reunification process, the birthrate in East Germany fell below the level of West Germany. In 1999, the total fertility rate (TFR) in the West was 1.4 and in the East 1.1 (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2002, p. 37). The declining TFR in East Germany was a consequence of the enormous changes in society associated with reunification, despite its more developed childcare system and the higher labour market participation of women in the GDR.

The average birthrate in Germany increased continuously after the Second World War and reached its highest level in the 1960s. From that point on, the total fertility rate declined from 2.50 in 1965 to 1.34 in 2000. In the mid-1990s the total fertility rate in Germany was at its lowest level (1.24 children per woman in 1994) since the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. At the beginning of 1995, the birthrate started to increase again and stabilized at around 1.35 in the early years of the twenty-first century.

The decline in fertility from the 1960s was associated with changing gender roles, the beginning of women's labour market participation, and changing family living arrangements, such as cohabitation. However, the present decline in fertility rates in Germany, as shown in Table 5.1, is related to

Table 5.1 Total fertility rates in Germany, 1990–2000

Year	Average number of children per woman	Year	Average number of children per woman
1990	1.45	1996	1.32
1991	1.33	1997	1.37
1992	1.30	1998	1.36
1993	1.28	1999	1.37
1994	1.24	2000	1.34
1995	1.25	2001	–

Source: Eurostat, 2002, p. 6; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2002d.

the inadequate childcare system, insufficient public benefits for families with children and the high level of unemployment. The declining birthrate in Germany represents a trend that is found in all EU member states and corresponds to Germany's negative natural population increase, which will lead to a decrease in population if not compensated by immigration.

In addition to the TFR, the number of children born during each woman's total fertility period (completed fertility rate, CFR) also declined in both East and West Germany. The CFR of the female generation in 1930 was 2.17 in comparison to 1.54 in 1964 (Table 5.2). Thus, the CFR in Germany is one of the lowest in the European Union. Although the CFR in East Germany decreased, it remained higher than in West Germany. For the 1930 generation, the rate was 2.19 in the East and 2.14 in the West, and the 1960 generation had a CFR of 1.77 in the East and 1.52 in the West.

The mean age of women at childbearing also increased consistently between 1960 and 2000. In Germany, the mean age of women at birth of first child in 2000 was 29.6 years, compared to 23.6 years in 1970. The average age for first time mothers in East Germany has been relatively stable at around 22 years, at least until reunification in 1990, while, in West Germany, the mean age was constantly increasing, matching the trend in other EU member states. The decline in fertility is associated with low fertility and delayed childbirth in the younger age groups (20–29 year-old women).

The percentage of childless women has also increased since the 1970s in Germany. In the 35–39 age group, 26% of women are childless, but the proportion falls to 13% among married women in the same age group. Furthermore, one third of women in urban areas who were born in 1965 have no children, compared to only 15% of women born in 1950. In East Germany, the percentage of childless women was only 10% before reunification, but since 1990 it has increased rapidly and reached nearly the same level as in West Germany (Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung, 2000, p. 14).

Higher fertility rates cannot easily be promoted because of several limiting factors, highlighted by the interviewees in the IPROSEC study. As well as private reasons and medical obstacles preventing women from having the desired number of children, political and societal barriers also deter people from having more children. Poor living conditions, lack of policies to achieve work–life balance. The threat of poverty and the general lack of family-friendliness in Germany deter many couples. Furthermore, the poor provision at work to accommodate the needs of women with children, such as lack of childcare facilities in the age group from 0–3 years, restricted opening hours of childcare institutions, the unavailability of all-day schools and the lack of state benefits for families, also act as a deterrent.

Table 5.2 Completed fertility rates in Germany by generation, 1930–60

Generation	Average number of children per woman	Generation	No. of children per woman
1930	2.17	1955	1.67
1935	2.16	1960	1.65
1945	1.79	1961	1.62
1950	1.72	1964	1.54

Source: Eurostat, 2002, p. 6.

Under market rules, East German companies stopped providing places in crèches and kindergartens. The supply of childcare institutions was, in most cases, handed over to local authorities. Confronted with a widening gap between expenditure incurred by meeting the social challenges created by mass unemployment and decreasing income from tax revenues, the municipalities closed down many childcare facilities, even though the number remained higher in East than in West Germany. Another major problem revealed in the government's first poverty and wealth report (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, 2001) is the risk of poverty associated with raising children. Above all, lone parents (in most cases mothers) are at risk of falling into poverty. Because this is not a new situation, many women are demanding sufficient resources to help them avoid social exclusion.

At the same time, and in part because of the closure of childcare institutions as a result of economic restructuring, the demand for places in crèches and kindergartens has declined since reunification. As job opportunities worsened, especially for women, mothers increasingly stayed at home, since they were unable and unwilling to pay for their children to attend care institutions. Following mass media campaigns, some women took the decision to be sterilized to improve their competitiveness in the labour market. Under these circumstances, the East moved close to the West's lower standard of public childcare provision.

The challenges of low female economic activity rates

In 2001, the economic activity rate for women across Germany was 64.9% and the employment rate was 58%, an increase since the 1970s. The higher full-time participation rate of women in East Germany is undoubtedly a result of the more extensive childcare system than in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), in line with the rhetoric in the socialist programme of women's liberation through equal involvement in the labour force. As a consequence of the economic decline and the closure of childcare services, the economic activity rate of East German women has fallen, after having been at the same level as that for men in the period before unification.

The labour market participation of women in Germany has relied on expansion of the part-time segment of the labour market. In 2001, 38.3% of employed women were working part time, which means they are considerably over-represented in the female employment figures (Pfarr, 2002, pp. 32–4). Considerable differences exist between East and West Germany, with a part-time rate of only 22.8% in East Germany, compared to 41.9% in the West (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2002b, 2002c).

Closer analysis of the data reveals that the increase in the economic activity rate in West Germany is mainly found among married women, mostly working 20 hours a week or less on a low income. In time, this leads to a lower level of social insurance contributions, resulting in increased poverty among women not only as current workers but especially in old age. Female labour market participation is mainly influenced by the decision about whether or not to have children. In Germany, the proportion of mothers engaged in the labour market decreases in relation to the number of children. For women with one child, the percentage is 70%, decreasing to 63% with two children and to 45% with three or more children, all under 18 years old. The great majority of the 8.8

million gainfully employed mothers have part-time jobs: 74% in West Germany and 35% in East Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2002a, p. 35).

General attitudes towards policy intervention in family life

The impact of the dramatic fall in birthrates on both the future of the welfare system and the supply of labour has provoked widespread demand for a demographically-aware family policy that will improve the situation for women to enable them to combine paid work and family life. Among political elites, two main approaches to the issue can be found. The more conservative perspective seeks to encourage a higher birthrate by offering maternity benefits. This argument suggests that young women should not be forced to go against their maternal instinct and should receive a financial reward for not following their career interests. More liberal groups, however, argue for the inclusion of mothers, who are more highly qualified than in previous decades, in the labour force. Furthermore, they favour not only financial but also institutional support for the continued emancipation of women by supplying better institutional childcare that will give mothers the opportunity to combine home and paid work.

This section considers the responses of families themselves to the question of helping to achieve a work–life balance. It focuses, in particular, on their views about state intervention in family life.

INADEQUATE FAMILY POLICY

Interviews with German families reveal that most people share the opinion that, in general, family matters have a low priority on the political agenda in Germany, and families are expected to look after their own members. Many families have very little knowledge of current family policy and/or family policy measures introduced by the government, except where they have featured in the press, such as all-day schools. At federal level, family policy was believed to be a low priority. Some respondents felt that the family is not prestigious enough as a political topic and, therefore, receives little attention. For example, a divorced mother living with three children commented, that

Although the Federal Republic of Germany has a ministry for family affairs with an appropriate female minister, interests of families are, nevertheless, barely acknowledged and not sufficiently represented.

Furthermore, respondents criticized the fact that *'family work is not acknowledged at all, or is still regarded as being of less value than paid work outside the home'*.

Even where family policy is acknowledged and seen to exist, German families are critical of its inadequacy, inappropriateness and inability to meet the needs of people. The great majority of respondents complained that state intervention aimed at providing financial support for families, as well as offering special social services to poor families, is not sufficient to meet their needs. In particular, problems experienced by lone parents and by large families are hardly given any attention. Lone parents frequently report that they are barely able to cover daily expenditure such as heating, housing and electricity. Holidays or extra costs could not be paid for from their incomes. In the face of these daily problems, it is easy to understand why respondents stated that a further child would carry severe financial penalties. Child benefit, set at 154

euros per month per child in 2003, is inadequate to meet the costs of raising children, especially for low-income families. Similarly, families criticized parental leave benefits, which are means-tested and limited to a maximum of two years after birth, because they are too low. The amount of benefit plays a significant role in the decision to limit the number of children, especially among low-income groups. In addition, good housing conditions, a supportive social environment, affordable public transport and provision of childcare institutions were said to have a positive effect on family planning. In all these fields, stronger public commitment and support for families are thought to be necessary. Adequate public provision is, however, absent, and even leisure facilities provided by the local municipalities have been closed due to lack of funds.

Furthermore, the reconciliation of paid and family work is seen as an issue where the state could do more to help. Many respondents felt that family policy is developing at a snail's pace, and that change is too slow. As one respondent indicated, the extension of the opening times of the local kindergartens was the outcome of a year's *'hard fight'*. Many respondents pointed out that they *'must organize childcare privately with the help of a parents' association, grandparents, other relatives and friends'*. Politicians do not identify these demands as major challenges. The low priority of family policy means the needs of families are not met when they are facing problems and crises associated with family structures and situations. The role of family policy should, according to the interviewees, be to consider problems faced by individuals in different family situations and respond to them adequately. It was the German Supreme Court that obliged parliament and government to meet the financial needs of families with children in 1990 by passing a new law introducing tax-free subsistence-level benefits and meeting the costs of childrearing.

EXPECTATIONS AND LIMITS OF STATE INTERVENTION

The majority of the respondents in the German survey felt that the state does exert an influence on family life. More than one third of all respondents (39%) estimated that the influence of the state on family life is important and/or very important, while 38% judged it to be moderate. The majority of respondents (60.9%) asserted that public provision should be greater than at present. Only 6% of the respondents insisted that the state should not have any influence on family life.

Regarding the scope of intervention, the respondents made a distinction between overwhelming support for greater state intervention in helping families, especially those in need, but were opposed to forcing conservative and restrictive ideologies on individuals (Table 5.3). A majority (75%) demanded that the state should, in principle, support families in their desire to have children by improving living conditions and infrastructures to assist with the care, education and financial costs of raising children. Indeed, more than half of the respondents strongly criticized the state for promoting marriage rather than other forms of cohabitation, without taking into account whether or not these families have children. Similarly, 70% of the respondents argued that the state should support deprived and poor families, large families and lone parents: in short, the groups of families whose needs are usually greatest. This may be recognized as proof of the existence of a social conscience, despite the

widespread reduction in support for social solidarity. Many respondents did, however, favour state intervention to encourage equal opportunities for all children, giving them the chance to participate in education and social life independent of their familial, cultural and social background. Children of lone parents and families with several children were seen as underprivileged and in need of help to enable them to participate fully in all aspects of life. Only a small number of the respondents rejected this far-reaching public responsibility and considered the family a private matter. They accepted the need for the state to create frameworks for families, but they favoured less state intervention because they feared the threat of state control and the danger of autocracy.

Nevertheless, the belief is widespread that state intervention has limits. The vast majority of the respondents rejected state intervention in the internal affairs of families, in principle, since this is considered as interference in the private sphere. They claimed the state should not intervene in the choice of partners and forms of cohabitation, parenthood or childlessness, family size, adoption of children and the division of housework (Table 5.3). Furthermore, the interviews indicated that the state was not seen in all cases as the main actor in family affairs. High priority was given to welfare organizations in issues such as family conflicts. In this context, non-profit organizations (like Caritas, the social service of the Catholic Church and the Diakonie of the Protestant Church) were considered to be helpful institutions, not only because they supply childcare but also because they provide support for families in crisis and benefits for families in need through non-complicated and non-bureaucratic channels. Nevertheless, the state's obligation should, according to the respondents, continue to help establish adequate support services.

Table 5.3 Attitudes towards the acceptability of state intervention in Germany

	Yes		No		Don't know		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Should the state support families in their desire to have children?	211	74.8	60	21.3	11	3.9	282	100
Should the state encourage couples to marry if they want children?	104	36.8	155	55.0	23	8.2	282	100
Should the state provide more support for poor/needly families?	223	79.9	41	14.7	15	5.4	279	100
Should the state support all family forms in the same way?	78	28.1	179	64.4	21	7.5	278	100
Should the state provide more support for lone parents?	186	66.6	78	28.0	15	5.4	279	100
Should the state provide more support for large families?	193	69.2	72	25.8	14	5.0	279	100
Should the state change the law to make it easier for couples to divorce?	108	38.4	107	38.1	66	23.5	281	100

Source: IPROSEC survey, 2002.

A few respondents stated that all actors in the private or economic sector should be responsible for safeguarding the quality of life of families. All policy actors across the three sectors (political, economic and civil society) should, in their view, carry out this responsibility equally through a comprehensive network, in which each actor has different tasks. The criticism was made that, in Germany, the responsibility for children and families has, to a large extent, shifted from state to charitable organizations. Similarly, respondents complained that family problems are frequently labelled as private affairs and delegated to the family, in many cases overloading its capacity to deal with them.

Finally, the majority of respondents would like the state to act more responsibly when facing the work histories of women and their impacts on the pension system. They complained that, hitherto, mothers had not received adequate financial compensation for their unpaid time spent caring for and educating their children, mainly during the first years after birth. The majority of the respondents shared the opinion that the state should take the main responsibility for the well-being and quality of life of families by creating the basic conditions under which family life can adequately develop.

SPECIFIC FIELDS OF INTERVENTION

In response to the challenges facing families in Germany, respondents argued that the state should intervene in two key areas: first, by preventing poverty in households with children and, second, by helping parents combine work and family life.

Total expenditure for raising a child to the age of 18, including monetary benefits and the cost of education, was estimated in 1996 to amount to an average of about 324 475 euros for lone parents and 365 983 euros for a married couple. The state covered 44.7% and 34.3% respectively (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2002, p. 155). Data concerning the available income of households per unit of consumption with and without children suggest that lone mothers with young children suffer hardship (Grabka and Kirner 2002, p. 531). Respondents argued that the state must do more to meet the needs of families with children. Poverty resulting from childraising was considered unacceptable; families should, they argued, receive enough child benefit not to be forced to claim social assistance, especially as it continues to carry a social stigma in Germany.

In addition to providing financial assistance for poor families, the research indicated that the state must also prioritize measures to help combine work and family life. This demand is addressed firstly to the state, but also to companies who are expected to draw on the state's example and understand that employment includes more than labour contracts with individuals based on economic goals and profit motives. They need also to realize that many of their individual employees have family obligations that cannot easily be combined with paid work. In particular, the state should support equal opportunities for women wishing to enter the labour market and foster the idea that the economic sector can promote flexible working conditions, such as job sharing, to make it easier to combine home and paid work for women, who still do the lion's share of domestic tasks.

The provision of childcare in kindergartens and the introduction of all-day schools are seen as basic measures to support mothers. Official data on

childcare in public institutions and in the private sector illustrate that this demand for care is particularly urgent for 0–2 year olds, especially in the afternoons (Table 5.4). Care provision to support women who want to work is more extensive in the East than in the West, which might also explain the greater incidence of female employment, both of which are a legacy of the GDR era.

According to most of the respondents, the state has primary responsibility for ensuring the supply of public services, such as the provision of an adequate number of places in kindergartens. The justification is that the state has the social responsibility for guaranteeing access to education and training, employment, income and pensions after retirement for everybody and, above all, for safeguarding equal opportunities for both men and women at work. However, the majority of the respondents believed employers should bear some responsibility for care arrangements. In particular, larger enterprises and companies should supply workplace crèches and kindergartens. A combination of both public and private childcare was considered acceptable and achievable, involving the sharing of responsibility between public administration and the private sector. Respondents also emphasized the quality of care arrangements. They were dissatisfied with the prospects of finding enough places for their children. Given the inadequate provision and conditions of childcare, they stressed the importance of the state paying serious attention to quality assurance in the provision of services for families.

Satisfying the demands of families?

The research highlighted two major and related challenges facing German governments: how to stem population decline and how to promote female labour market activity. As suggested in this paper, the two issues may have the same solution: more supportive policies for dual-earner families.

Table 5.4 Childcare provision by age group, 2000

	West Germany			East Germany		
	0-2 years	3-6 years	Pupils-12	0-2 years	3-6 years	Pupils-12
<i>Institutional care:</i>						
in crèches, kindergartens and schools	3.6	77.2	2.9	14.4	85.4	15.8
Childminder	1.6	2.7	1.0	5.0	2.1	0.0
<i>Timetable:</i>						
Morning	44.8	79.3	94.7	36.2	29.4	75.3
Afternoon	15.3	4.2	–	na	na	na
All-day	40.0	16.5	5.3	63.8	70.6	24.7
<i>Regular care outside the household:</i>						
Relatives	31.6	36.0	23.0	31.3	35.7	29.3
Friends	7.5	6.7	3.8	5.6	6.6	2.9
Paid personnel	2.2	2.8	3.3	1.1	2.3	1.6

Note: East German data for afternoon care are contained in all-day figures.

Source: Büchel and Spiess, 2002, p. 80, from SOEP socio-economic panel, 2000.

The interviews demonstrated an ongoing demand for public intervention channelled mainly towards large families, lone parents and women with children living at risk of poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, the state is expected to take full responsibility for establishing conditions under which children will adequately develop and grow up. This obligation encompasses a wide range of demands, such as sufficient childcare provision, good housing conditions and, above all, sufficient financial compensation for the cost of raising children. However, acceptance of state intervention is not unequivocal. The state is expected to avoid any attempt to influence decisions about family planning, the choice of partners and forms of cohabitation, which are seen as private affairs. Some respondents argued for shared responsibilities between private companies, the public sector and the highly appreciated third sector to work for families in meeting their specific needs.

Creating a family-friendly environment is not, therefore, a straightforward process. An added complication in the German context is that the same policy instruments cannot be used to achieve the same effect, since the old and new *Länder* are coming from quite different directions and are still marked by their very disparate experiences in the twentieth century.

Note

1. The data were collected in a small-scale survey for the IPROSEC project. A nationwide telephone survey was carried in September 2001. The sample size was 1764 and, in total, 282 households responded to the questionnaire, which covered different areas of family life, family living arrangements, knowledge and perceptions of the impact of public policy on decisions taken about family and working life. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were carried out with 25 families, covering different age groups, socio-economic groups, genders and educational qualifications from across the former FRG.

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6. Reluctant Family Change in Ireland

Julia Griggs

The 1990s were a decade of unprecedented economic growth and great change for Ireland. High levels of international and local investment resulted in declining levels of unemployment and even labour shortages. The pattern of outward male migration that has dominated Ireland's past was replaced by high levels of immigration. Important legislative developments also took place, although several decades after the UK and later than the southern European countries: homosexuality was legalized in 1993, divorce in 1996, and some recognition was given to the rights of unmarried parents in the 1997 Children Bill. Eurostat data confirm the delay in socio-demographic change in Ireland. Population ageing, declining fertility and family formation occurred later and more slowly than in other EU states. However women are now indisputably drawing further away from their traditional roles towards a dual model of worker and carer, requiring new policy responses in terms of childcare and family-friendly working arrangements.

Membership of the European Community (EC) in 1973 marked a turning point in Irish history, bringing an end to economic dependence on the UK, and a new interdependence within the European Union (FitzGerald, 2000). The EU provided Ireland with a new set of principles and ideals in terms of policy implementation, conflicting with the 1937 constitution with regard to family life. Fundamental to Irish law and the political system, the constitution legally recognizes the importance of the legitimate family (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p. 27) and explicitly states that it is the duty of the government to protect families, defined as the married family. EU membership presented Ireland with an opportunity to learn from the experience of other European countries and to develop a more pre-emptive attitude to family policy. This paper examines these issues, covering the nature of socio-demographic change in Ireland and policy responses. The findings from IPROSEC interviews with families and with policy actors are used to explore attitudes towards state intervention in family life¹.

Population decline and ageing and policy responses

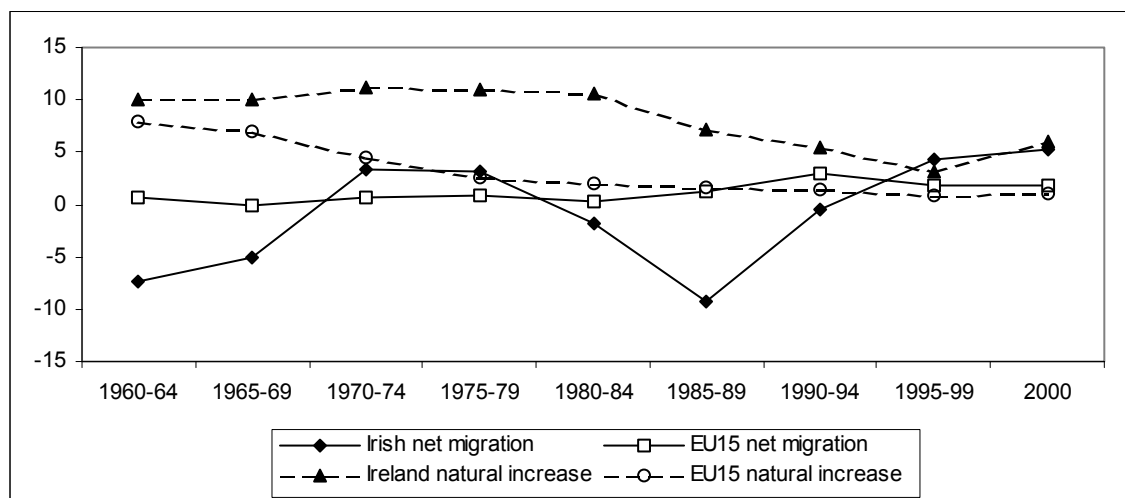
By the close of the twentieth century, the combination of low fertility rates and rising life expectancy had resulted in population decline and ageing across the Union, with one apparent exception: Ireland stands out as a demographic oddity among its European counterparts, since it retains a strong birth rate in conjunction with a relatively young population. The average age of the Irish population is just 31.9, compared to the EU average of 38.1 (United Nations, 2002). Women in Ireland are having more children than in any other member state. In 2000, 30.8% of the Irish population fell into the 0–19 age category, compared to 23% in the EU as a whole (European Commission, 2002, p. 114). The rate of natural population increase has remained relatively strong, and Ireland has been subject to high levels of inward migration, particularly in the 1970s and 1990s, further contributing to population growth (Figure 6.1).

The immigration rate has fluctuated in line with the availability of secure employment. The state does not appear to be discouraging this trend; in fact measures are in place to attract skilled workers to high-tech industries. Today, the largest group of immigrants are returning Irish nationals: 55% in 1999 and 38% in 2002 (Central Statistics Office, 2002). From their age profile, many would appear to be families with young children (Kiely, 2000). However an increasing number of immigrants now originate from non-EU countries. Concerns have been voiced about the integration of migrants into the community, as 'this has been one area where Irish society has been very slow to react in a positive fashion' (FitzGerald, 2000, p. 64). According to a survey released in 2002 by Amnesty International (Houston, 2002), the Irish government has failed to take adequate action to combat racism. The survey discovered that almost four out of five people from ethnic minorities have been victims of racism while living in Ireland, and over 80% of respondents say the government is not doing enough to confront this issue. However, 2001 saw the launch of a three-year National Anti-Racism Awareness Programme, suggesting that the issue is being addressed, even if measures appear to have had little impact thus far.

High immigration and natural population increase may have prevented population decline, but this does not mean that the changes seen in other EU member states are not also found in Ireland; rather, the changes have been delayed. The fertility rate has declined by almost a third in the space of less than 20 years: an average of 3.27 children were born to women from the 1945 cohort, compared to 2.23 for the 1963 cohort (Sardon, 2002, pp. 136–7). The drop was brought about, in part, by the legalization of contraception. Before 1979, women did not have access to reliable means of birth control as they do now, often resulting in long periods spent in childbearing and raising, as illustrated by a comment from a 61 year-old mother of five:

I don't think that we would have had as many children as we did if contraception had been available as widely as it is now. There was no real way of controlling.

Figure 6.1 Crude rate of net migration and natural increase in Ireland and EU15, 1960–2000



Source: Eurostat, 2001a, tables B-2 and B-3.

the number of children we had or when we had them, so I was pregnant for the best part of six years

Abortion has not been subject to the same legislative developments as contraception, and remains illegal despite three referenda. However, in 1992 the constitution was amended so that Irish women could travel abroad legally to seek abortions, a practice that occurred prior to formal legalization. The number of women choosing to do so appears to be relatively low, perhaps because only women providing Irish addresses at clinics are recorded, but it is increasing very rapidly. The number reportedly doubled between 1980 and 2001, to reach 6600, accounting for approximately 12% of all live births (Pro Life Campaign, 2002).

Ireland's population is continuing to grow, and population growth does not, therefore, appear to be presenting the same challenges to government as in other EU member states. Even if policy actors were to come under pressure to promote fertility, Irish respondents are adamant that family size is one area in which the state should not interfere. Increased levels of child benefit for third and higher order births and prohibitive legislation regarding abortion are interpreted in some circumstances as an attempt to promote fertility. In Ireland, however, support for large families is viewed more as an attempt to combat child poverty as a result of large family size (Kiely, 2000), while the prohibition on abortion is a by-product of the Roman Catholic environment rather than an attempt to encourage fertility.

Despite the fact that Ireland spends more per capita on social benefits for families and children than any other EU member state (Eurostat, 2001b), Irish respondents considered the financial situation of families as a factor restricting family size. As elsewhere in the EU, the state offers financial help and services to mothers during this life event: 18 weeks maternity benefit and free medical care for mother and child until six weeks after the birth. Following this period, free medical provision is available only to those falling below an income threshold, and private medical expenses add to the difficulties associated with large families, as a 33 year-old mother with a husband in full-time employment pointed out:

I would love to have more children but we can't afford it financially as we pay so much in tax, and the cost of healthcare means that we just about make ends meet with the three children that we have.

Health care is an area where dissatisfaction is evident among a comparatively high proportion of interviewees. Several of the respondents commented on the fact that the quality of health care received by medical card patients was lower than that of people with voluntary health insurance. Despite the overall impression that the family should take on care of its members, greater state provision in health care was demanded, particularly for children, as one interviewee, a 42 year-old mother of three, argued:

VHI [Voluntary Health Insurance] does not cover everything, and you can only put in so many claims anyway. I do think that, at least for children, the state should provide free health care.

Moves were made during the 1950s by Noel Browne, the Minister for Health, to implement the 'Mother and Child Scheme', a proposal for free gynaecological care for pregnant women and a comprehensive health programme for children up to the age of 16. However the Catholic Church strongly contested the measure, fearing that the provision would be abused, and the proposal was

rejected (McCarron, 1991). Although the National Woman's Council of Ireland is still campaigning for the introduction of free health care for dependent children, no measures have yet been taken by the state to implement such a policy. Free health care has, however, been expanded for older people: all those over the age of 70 now qualify for this service.

In other EU member states suffering from severe population ageing, the introduction of such a measure might have been prohibitively expensive. In Ireland, however, a combination of the lowest life expectancy in the EU, coupled with the highest fertility rate has resulted in a relatively low, and currently declining, proportion of people aged 60 or over: from 15.3% in 1995 to 15.1% in 2000 (Eurostat, 2001a). However, population projections suggest that, as elsewhere in the EU, the proportion of older people in the population will increase dramatically in the future to 22% by 2020 and 32% in 2050.

The predicted increase in the older population is expected to be heavily regionalized, placing the counties of Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare under particular strain. Responsibility for the provision of elder care services, in the first instance, rests with the regional health boards. These counties fall under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Regional Health Authority, which has set up a 314 million euro action plan aimed at providing care and services for the anticipated increase in the elderly population in the area (*Irish Times*, 09.07.1999).

As this analysis has shown, Ireland is in a unique position within the Union combining a young population with high fertility and immigration, and without the problem of population ageing. The Irish government have, nonetheless, introduced pre-emptive policy measures in an attempt to improve the financial position of today's pensioners and to offset the effects of the growing proportion of older people expected in the future.

Changing family structure and policy responses

Ireland's unique demographic pattern of low marriage rates and high marital fertility has long presented an anomaly in Western Europe (Clancy, 1991, p. 9). Although marriage rates declined in the 1980s and 90s, by 2000, the rate of 5.0 per 1000 population was not markedly lower than that of the 1960s, at 5.5. The same can be said for the average age at marriage (30.8 in 1960, 30 in 1998 for men; and 27.6 and 28.2 for women respectively) and at the birth of the first child (27.2 in 1960 and 27.6 in 1998) (Eurostat, 2001a).

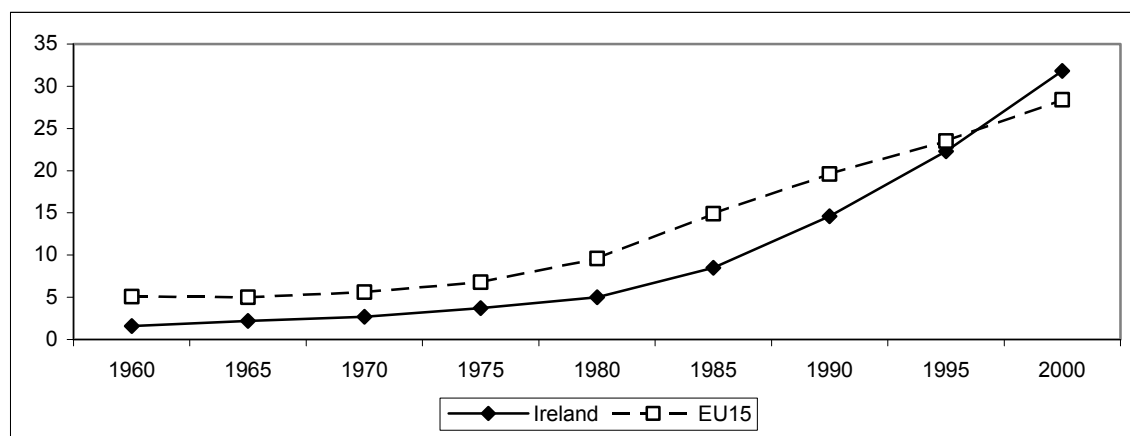
De-institutionalized family forms are occurring in Ireland, but the trend is much less pronounced than in other EU member states. For example, Irish couples are now more likely to choose to live together as an alternative or prelude to marriage. Despite increasing numbers, the proportion of unmarried cohabiting households remains relatively low at just 4% of total population. Cohabiting respondents stated that they had chosen this living arrangement because they were not religious, which suggests that the influence of the Catholic Church may have played an important role in slowing down the emergence of this alternative family form. The state now recognizes unmarried cohabitants in social security law – they are treated the same as married couples – but this can be seen more as a forced measure to prevent misuse of the social security system rather than as acceptance of alternative family forms (MISSOC, 2002a, p. 37).

The state remains bound by the constitution to support marriage: 'the State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack' (Constitution of Ireland, 1937), which may explain the apparent reluctance to recognize alternative family forms. Although legislation associated with life events has been softened in Ireland, perhaps most notably in the legalization of divorce in 1996, the delay is unusual within the EU context. Although it is still comparatively difficult to obtain, divorce seems to have affected a smaller number of couples than pre-legalization estimates predicted (*Irish Times*, 28.02.2000). Despite the success of the 1996 referendum, the high financial cost of divorce and a comparatively low level of social acceptance are discouraging couples from seeking divorce. Instead, where possible, they are opting for formal or informal separations and annulments (*Irish Examiner*, 05.11.2002).

Growing social tolerance towards lone-parent families coupled with the problem of access to abortion could help explain why extramarital births have been increasing very rapidly since the 1980s (see Figure 6.2). In 1980, just 5% of children were born out of wedlock; by 2000 the figure had jumped to 31.8%, the largest increase in the European Union. The most rapid period of growth began in the late 1980s and early 90s, following the 1987 Status of Children Act, which abolished the status of illegitimacy, amended the law on succession for non-marital children, and recognized natural fathers as guardians. The act was further extended in 1997 to allow parents joint custody.

As the number of lone-parent families has grown, the Irish state has responded with new policy measures, and now provides support in the form of the One-Parent Family Payment, introduced in 1997. As in the UK, the Irish state is trying to encourage the long-term unemployed, including lone parents, into the labour market. Training schemes have been introduced to allow lone parents to return to education without losing their benefit. They can also return to work and still retain part of their lone-parent allowance, if they satisfy certain conditions. Those qualifying for the Back-to-Work Allowance can undertake paid work and receive 75% of benefits previously claimed for the first year, 50% during the second, and 25% during the third.

Figure 6.2 Proportion of live births outside marriage in Ireland and EU15, 1960–2000



Sources: Eurostat, 2001a, table E-9.

Despite these measures, the majority of lone parents taking part in the IPROSEC interviews argued that the main reason for their dependence on the state was the nature of the tax and benefit system, as one 39 year-old unmarried mother explained:

If I go back to work full time, I lose almost all the benefits that I receive and the kinds of jobs that I am qualified for means that, in some way, I am better off on benefits. It's not like we get more rent allowance or child benefit because we are single mothers.

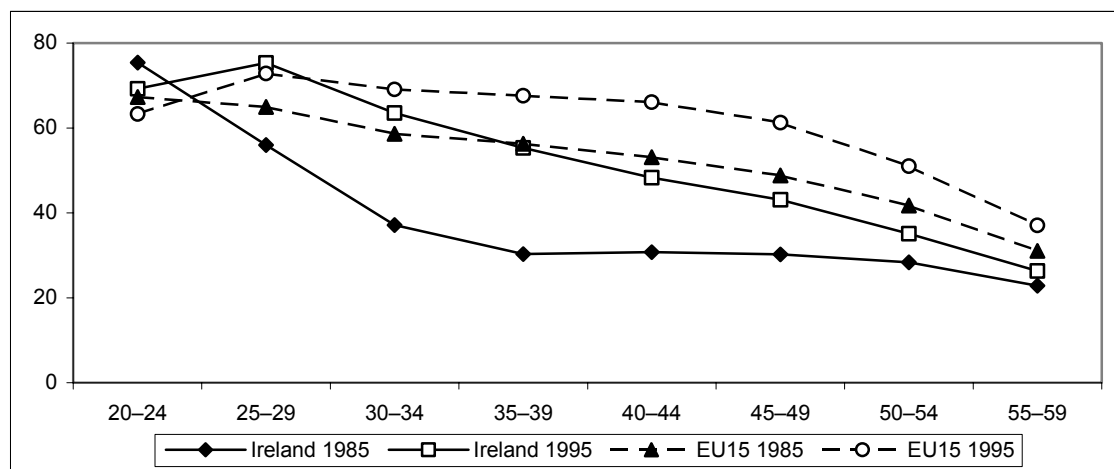
Marriage remains a preferred path for relationships to follow, not just in the eyes of the Catholic Church, but in societal attitudes and practice. Family structures have increasingly been influenced by liberal attitudes since the 1980s: the wider availability of contraception, the legalization of divorce, and the decriminalization of homosexuality all mark this shift. The power the Catholic Church once held in reinforcing more traditional family forms is still present but declining as fewer members of the population now connect with this religious identity (Fitzgerald, 2000, p. 61).

Changing gender relations and the work–life balance

When Ireland became a member of the EU, greater attention was focused on the issue of gender equality. The growing economy put pressure on the state to promote labour market participation, particularly among female members of the population. Greater emphasis has also been placed on the work–life balance. Women have traditionally borne the burden of both child and elder care, and they continue to do so, despite measures to improve childcare provision and family-friendliness at the workplace.

The growth of the Irish economy has led to a major expansion in the number of women in the workforce: Ireland has been subject to the largest increase in female employment rates since 1995, compared to any other EU member state, even though the level is still below the EU average. Eurostat statistics show that, in 1985, female economic activity peaked at an extremely young age for Irish women (Figure 6.3). The peak remained for the 25–29 age

Figure 6.3 Female economic activity rates by age group in Ireland and EU15, 1985/95



Source: Eurostat, 1987, table 19 and 1997, table 003.

group in the mid-1990s. Economic activity continues to decline rapidly with age, since women leave the labour market when they start a family, and as family size grows, as reflected in a comment from a 33 year-old mother of three:

I felt so relieved when I gave up work after my second child. When I was working, the only childcare place available was in a different area. I would have to get my daughter up at 6.00 in the morning in order to drop her off at the crèche and get to work on time. Then I would not be able to collect her until 6.00 or 7.00 in the evening. I was exhausted all the time.

Ireland, consequently, has a relatively small proportion of dual-earner couples with children (45%), compared to other EU member states (70% in the UK) (Eurostat, 2002). With this development has come an increasing awareness of the need to balance employment and family life, highlighted by this comment from an economic policy actor:

Women have in many ways been actively discouraged from participating in the labour market for quite a period of time. Now we've had a very dramatic flip in the situation where we have labour shortages and now it's like 'come on, work, you need to work'. That is causing an awful lot of strain on parenting. People find a huge tension combining the two.

The IPROSEC interviewees suggested that the most appropriate initial response to this problem would be more community-based childcare. Steps are being taken by the Irish government to develop childcare provision and family-friendly workplaces. Some state subsidized nursery provision is available for children over the age of two, but places are scarce, and preference is given to the children of unmarried parents, limiting access to inexpensive childcare for the majority of parents.

The implementation of family-friendly workplace policies might also help to improve the work–life balance for parents. A family-friendly website, newsletter and a 'Family Friendly Workplace Day' were established in March 2001 (Aoife Joyce, personal communication), but the consequences of such developments have yet to be seen. A number of large companies and government departments offer various schemes, such as job sharing, flexi-time, emergency leave and term-time working, but it was recognized by one economic policy actor that small and medium-sized enterprises find it more difficult to replace or cover an employee, even temporarily. Opportunities in employment, such as part-time work, allow flexibility to bring up a family, but little indication was found that the responsibility for taking on these more flexible work practices is shared equally between men and women, as one economic policy actor commented:

The civil service, for example, have huge family-friendly programmes: job sharing, term-time work, work sharing. All the figures show that 96% who take these are female and just 4% are male.

Ultimately, household and caring responsibilities almost always fall to the woman, and a man's working life is rarely disturbed by responsibility of childcare and homemaking, a point highlighted by the following comment from a 44-year-old father of three:

I didn't find balancing paid work and family life difficult. I've always worked fairly regular hours and only worked overtime if it was necessary. But my wife did take off eight years from work to look after the children after our second child was born, so she took care of the children full time and we did not have to bother with childcare.

Although many of the challenges raised by changing gender relations have long been addressed at EU level, Ireland has been more cautious in terms of policy implementation aimed at combating gender inequality. Changes have been made with regard to childcare and family-friendly workplace provision, but some policy makers remain committed to the message enshrined in the Irish constitution: 'The State shall endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home' (Constitution of Ireland, 1937), an attitude that may have slowed down the emancipation of women.

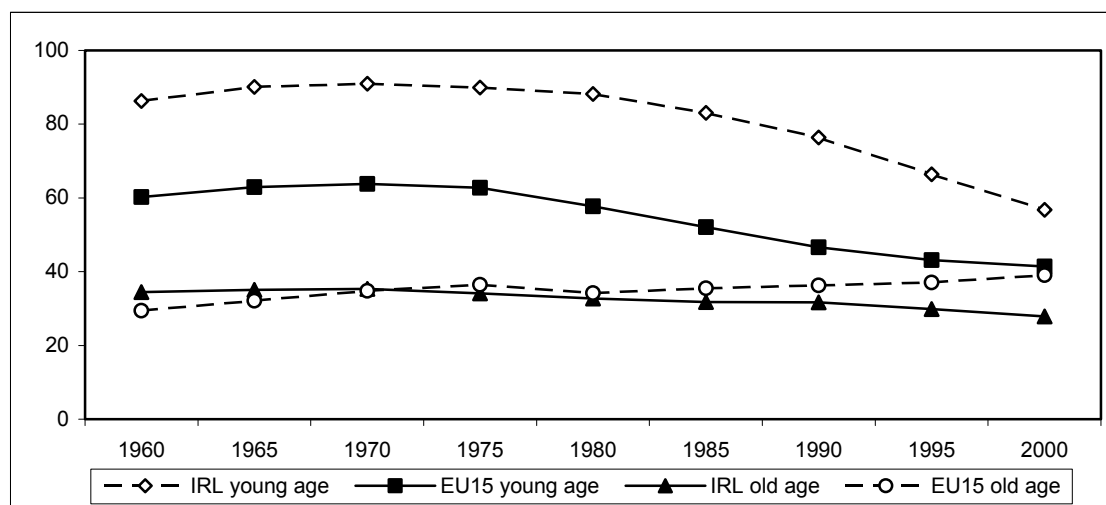
Changing intergenerational relations and policy responses

Ireland also stands out among its European counterparts in terms of dependency ratios (Figure 6.4). A relatively low life expectancy and high net population growth have resulted in a young age dependency ratio far above the EU average, contrasting to a relatively low old age dependency ratio.

Statistically, the old age dependency ratio does not present a particular problem for the Irish state, although steps are being taken by the Government to prevent problems in the future over the provision of elder care. In a country where the family traditionally undertakes care of older people, the state plays a supportive role, providing for those in need and relieving the financial burden of full-time care on families through Carers Benefit and Carers Allowance. Pronounced regional and socio-economic differences are found in demographic trends that require the state to play a more active role to ensure that care is available for all older people. Low marriage rates prior to the 1950s have resulted in a relatively high proportion of older people without family members to care for them, particularly in rural areas where public provision is more expensive and difficult to deliver due to the dispersion of the population (Fahey and Fitzgerald, 1997).

The country as a whole has a relatively large proportion of three-generational households: 24% of the population live in households with three or

Figure 6.4 Young and old age dependency ratios in Ireland and EU15, 1960–2000



Source: Eurostat, 2001a, tables C-9 and C-10.

more adults and dependent children (Eurostat, 2001a). However, attitudes towards this form of co-residential care appear to be changing. Younger respondents in the IPROSEC interviews expressed the view that they could not conceive of their elderly parents wanting to live with them. A comment from a 36 year-old mother is representative of the responses:

To be honest I have not thought about what we will do when our parents are older, right now they are healthy. I cannot imagine that they would want to move away from their home. They would probably prefer to be looked after from home.

A study of health and social services for older people (Garavan *et al.*, 2001) reinforces the opinion that older people do, indeed, wish to remain in their own homes for so long as possible. It also shows that they want their family and friends to be their principal caregivers, with appropriate help from health and social services. The policy of the Department of Services for Older People is designed along these lines and sets out 'to maintain the elderly in dignity and independence at home in accordance with their wishes, and to provide a high quality of hospital and residential care for older people when they can no longer be cared for at home' (Department of Health and Children, 2002, p. 1).

The government study *The Years Ahead* (Department of Health and Children, 1988) made recommendations for care of the elderly on this basis. Yet a review carried out 10 years later by the National Council on Ageing and Older People (Donohue *et al.*, 1998) highlighted the fact that many excellent recommendations on the extent and nature of community care had not been implemented. A number of benefits in kind have, however, been introduced for those over 70, making independent living within their own homes a more viable option. The 'household benefits package' offers older people electricity or gas and telephone allowances, a free television license, and free travel (MISSOC, 2002b). A 75 year-old female respondent recognized the changes these new entitlements had made to her income: '*I pay very little for bills and I have far more money than my parents did when they were my age*'.

Despite these measures, pensioners continue to remain at high risk of falling into poverty. Women are most exposed due to the five-year difference between male and female life expectancy (Eurostat, 2001a), and to difficulties in qualifying for pensions as a result of inadequate contributions. The Irish government attempted to correct this inequality by amending the contributory pension scheme. Since 1995, women taking time out of the labour market to care for their families can have up to 20 of their homemaking years disregarded when their pension entitlement is being assessed.

Ireland's favourable economic situation has been exploited to ensure that increased pension provision is available in the future in the form of the National Pensions Reserve Fund, established in 2000.

The purpose of the new Fund is to set aside some of the revenues generated by the strength of the economy and favourable demographics, invest them and draw them down in future when growth rates are likely to be slower and the age dependency burden very much increased (MISSOC, 2002b, p. 25).

Despite these pre-emptive measures, the Irish government has been less responsive to research findings by its National Council on Ageing and Older People with regard to flexible retirement schemes. In fact, all EU member states except Ireland and Greece are introducing flexible retirement arrangements in response to the preferences expressed by their voters (European Industrial Relations Observatory, 2001).

From reluctance to ambivalence

Economic growth in Ireland has prompted changes in policy direction, drawing attention away from unemployment issues and placing greater emphasis on female labour market participation. Despite the fact that demographic change has been occurring more slowly in Ireland than in other EU member states, its pace has been accelerating since the mid-1980s. Traditionally, a nation of high birthrates and low old age dependency, Ireland now has to look towards a future with different perspectives. Irish governments have an opportunity to learn from the experience of other EU member states, particularly with regard to population decline and ageing and changing family structures. Although civil society actors and organizations such as the National Women's Council of Ireland were critical of the Irish government for its apparent lack of efficacy in policy implementation and co-ordination, Ireland has undoubtedly made progress since becoming a member of the EU. Development has been slowed down, however, by the contradictions between its own constitution and the thrust of EU policy.

This contradiction is particularly apparent as far as gender equality and the work–life balance are concerned, where tension continues to be felt between equal opportunities policies and support for the family, as one political actor commented:

Because this is a society in transition and because of the labour shortage, there are different ways of thinking about the family and we haven't quite moved on from the traditional way of thinking. Therefore, there are contradictions in the employment policies and there's a battle going on between different people and how they perceive the family and, therefore, how they perceive what employment policy should be put in place.

Alongside conflicting opinions about appropriate economic and family policy measures is the general public attitude towards state intervention. Families remain reluctant to accept inference in this very private realm. Intervention is only really considered valid in areas in which families cannot find their own solutions. A combination of society's attitudes regarding state intervention and difficulties associated with the government's commitment to the constitution, in part, explains the state's ambivalent attitude towards family policy, although the traditional influence of the Catholic Church should not be underestimated.

Acknowledgements

This paper draws heavily on the data provided, and the conclusions reached by Maurice FitzGerald, Tarjinder Gill, and Anne-Marie McGauran in their contributions to the IPROSEC project. The interpretations of the material in the paper are those of the author.

Notes

1. The paper is based on a series of in-depth interviews, conducted in 2001 and co-ordinated by Tarjinder Gill, with a sample of 40 families selected according to criteria of age, socio-economic group and family types, using the IPROSEC interview guidelines. The aim was to examine the decision-making process within families and perceptions of public policy in relation to socio-demographic characteristics. Questions were asked about awareness and knowledge of policy measures, take-up, opinions about the acceptability and legitimacy of

government intervention, and the impact of policies on family and working life. Interviews were also conducted by Maurice FitzGerald with nine political, economic and civil society actors. Questions were asked about family policy formulation and delivery, the influence of the EU and other EU member states, and the legitimacy of state intervention in family life.

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7. Estonian Self-reliance

Kati Karelson and Katre Pall

In Estonia, the collapse of Soviet socialism and the building of democratic society have been accompanied by several new social phenomena, including unemployment and poverty, that have had a negative impact on the overall welfare of families. The legacy of distrust of the state from the Soviet era and economic hardship in the period of transformation have encouraged people to look for their own solutions to avoid social exclusion.

The focus in this article is the traditional provider of support – the family self-help network – as a guarantee against social deprivation. A description of the characteristics and main activities of these informal networks is followed by a review of the expectations that families have of state social policy and constraints on policy intervention. Consideration is given to the strategies needed to enable passive members of informal networks to become active participants in social dialogue, drawing on interviews conducted for the IPROSEC project¹.

Social change and its impact on individual well-being

Rapid social change in the 1990s resulted in a marked deterioration in the level of welfare in Estonia. Unrealistic social expectations created social myths, feelings of personal failure and distrust of the authorities (Kutsar, 1996a). The return to the Western world brought about the replacement of paternalism characteristic of the Soviet era by a transitional welfare model in which the responsibility for coping with everyday family life was shared between different actors: the state, employers, non-governmental organizations, and primarily families themselves. The ideological framework of state social policy has had an impact on the division of responsibility between these different actors.

Under the paternalistic welfare system, recipients were objects not active subjects and were, therefore, ill equipped to cope with the challenges arising from the new social situation following the collapse of the Soviet regime. Arne Grøningsaetter (2002) has pointed out that the lack of resources in the new welfare system, combined with the high level of individualization in society, led to a situation where many people were marginalized. When benefits are set at a relatively low level, people are dependent on individual self-help measures to avoid social exclusion. Increasing poverty and inequality, as well as decreasing social and political participation, have stifled solidarity and social integration. Nevertheless, the bonds within informal networks were not weakened in the 1990s. Family and kinship relationships have always been highly valued in Estonia, as revealed by various surveys about prevailing attitudes in society.

Leeni Hansson (2001) has described Estonia during the Soviet era as a society of networks, where reliance on informal relations and personal contacts, in solving not only personal problems but also work-related problems, was one of the characteristic features of the economy.

As shown by Table 7.1, the form and structure of families have changed markedly during the period of transition: marriage and birthrates declined steeply, age at first marriage and first child increased, the fertility rate fell sharply and the number of extramarital births soared.

After the collapse of Soviet-style socialism, informal networks were restructured to meet the challenges arising from the new social situation. The Russian-speaking population faced particular difficulties in adapting to the new demands inherent in capitalist society, since they lost many of their established network ties as a result of extensive out-migration at the beginning of 1990s.

Kinship networks as a coping strategy

Surveys about attitudes in Estonian society (Kutsar, 1996b; Lauristin and Vihalemm, 1997; Hansson, 2001) reveal that, during the transition, cultural norms moved towards more individualistic value orientations. However, strong traditional kinship ties were maintained throughout the period of rapid social change. In Estonia, helping relatives is a deeply rooted tradition that is not connected to political power. Self-help networks proved to be important in guaranteeing living standards. During Soviet times, these networks were irreplaceable due to the overall lack of goods and services. Today, they continue to perform three important and interlinked functions: communication between relatives, upholding traditions and maintaining living standards.

Family self-help networks cover non-material and material support. Moral support takes the form of contact between relatives. Material support involves help with seasonal country jobs, repair jobs, transport, childcare, eldercare, help with housing, the sharing of goods and financial assistance.

The new social phenomenon of de-institutionalization of the family has had an impact on traditional kinship networks, resulting in a variety of meanings being attributed to the term 'kinship'. Growing numbers of former kin, half-kin and step-kin are the result of high divorce rates and remarriages in 1990s. However, the form of support has varied depending on the degree of relationship with the recipient of the provision.

Most help is offered, and received, by close relatives, including parents, children and siblings, uncles, aunts and their offspring form the next circle of family members, but often support is exchanged between more distant relatives. In-depth interviews suggest a rule of thumb: the more distant kin are, the less likely they are to provide material help. The closer the bond, mainly between parents and children, the more likely it is they will offer financial support. Nevertheless, examples were found of financial help between distant relatives, primarily in emergencies. Support is not one way: networks include

Table 7.1 Family formation in Estonia, 1990/2000

	1990	2000
Crude marriage rate	7.5	4.0
Mean age at first marriage, women	22.5	24.9
Total fertility rate	2.05	1.39
Mean age at birth of first child	22.9	24.0
Extramarital births (% of live births)	27.1	54.5
Total divorce rate (per 100 marriages)	46.0	46.7

Sources: Eurostat, 2002, tables E9, J-8, J-12, 13, 15; Council of Europe, 2001; Sardon, 2002, table 10.

both receiving and giving. In the countryside, it is common for neighbours to provide mutual help.

Caring for elderly parents by grown-up children is a prescribed ethical kinship norm. Leaving parents without care is viewed as highly shameful (Kutsar, 1996b). Families' self-help networks are standard practice, and often people do not consider that helping relatives is a form of assistance. Rather, it is part of the association between family members. *'When I go to my parents and help them I consider it as a vacation and not as help*, said one 31 year-old single man. Another male respondent commented: *'I don't regard pruning apple trees and doing electrical jobs as helping when I visit my relatives'*. Many respondents spoke in general terms about helping their kin. Terms such 'usual', 'always' were used to indicate that they were talking about standard practices and referring to traditional behaviour. The most frequent support includes typical seasonal jobs in the country: making hay, potato harvesting, and woodcutting. Distant relatives are involved, with the result that seasonal jobs bring relatives together.

Kinship networks are also serving to connect urban and rural lifestyles. However, the role of networks in everyday coping in rural areas is more significant than in towns, and two different models can be distinguished. The first model applies in the country and small towns: families are formed at an early age; kinship network help is of great importance in everyday coping. If needed, money is borrowed from kin. The expectation that mutual assistance will be provided by relatives is not merely a cultural norm but is also determined by poor provision of elder and childcare, mainly in rural areas. The second model is more widespread in cities: family building and the birth of children are postponed. Bank loans are common. Financial help from kin is insignificant; support is more often moral or symbolic. This model is facilitated by the availability of services in cities. Young childless urban people do not use networks for concrete goods or services.

Women are more involved in kinship networks than men. Socially, women are expected to take responsibility for exchanges within families. Childcare, eldercare, and the exchange of produce are typically women's areas. In the interviews, female respondents talked much more about mutual help than did male respondents. Most probably, women participate more intensively in networks. Thus, it can be concluded that, in addition to formal income, women maintain the family's living standard using informal institutions, namely kinship networks.

Hansson (2001) has pointed out that relying on relatives was one of the strategies to fight against the risk of poverty in the 1990s, in addition to using self-produced food, reducing consumption, diversifying work activities and sources of income. It is not just help or assistance that is provided by informal networks but rather exchange of support and services, the latter being more widespread outside the kinship networks. Concrete services and goods, as well as financial help, are of great importance in safeguarding the living standard of families. Services provided by relatives include repair works, transport, housing and childcare.

Expectations regarding mutual help depend on the stage in the life cycle and where people live. Most assistance is given to families with small children, those embarking on independent living and older people. The presence of children is a factor that determines the receipt and provision of assistance.

Often in families with children, in addition to more vertical support between generations, which is widespread, horizontal exchanges are also found: childcare and children's goods are distributed among a single generation. A mother of three children described help between siblings in the following terms: *'If one of us has enough, she gives to others. It doesn't have to be money. None of us has too much of that'*.

When embarking on independent living, it was typical for relatives to help with finding accommodation, as the state does not support young people leaving the parental home. This is also one of the reasons why marriage and having children are being postponed: younger people expect to have a material base by the time when they begin family formation.

Older people receive several kinds of services, more often than money from their offspring. Even very distant relatives who could not manage by themselves are being helped. Some more extreme examples were found in the research of help being given to distant relatives, for example by supporting financially a father-in-law's brother's cohabiting partner, or caring for a great aunt's husband, and regularly receiving help from a niece's daughter.

The emotional aspects of the support provided by informal networks should not be underestimated. As the economic situation of families improves, the importance of additional income from home-grown produce, and the material aid provided by relatives or seasonal help on the land diminish considerably, and the emotional value of kinship networks comes to the fore.

Attitudes towards social policy

The reasons why kinship networks are so heavily relied upon are the lack of support from the state, low pensions and bureaucracy. Some people believe that asking for help from the state is humiliating and prefer to turn to kin. Services offered by the private sector are not affordable for many families, which in turn increases the role of relatives. The interviews revealed that relatives in need are not turned down, even if the helper thinks it should be the task of the state to make provision. The third sector has considerable potential for making provision, since the cost of services needs to be kept down. However, people are not ready for voluntary participation themselves and do not have confidence in such organizations.

Most respondents think families have primary responsibility for managing their own affairs. Second in line of responsibility is the state, followed by employers and kin. The third sector – non-governmental organizations – was relegated to the last place, because NGOs are assumed to be able to choose whether or not to become involved. Because they are not under a formal obligation, they cannot take responsibility.

The tasks of the state are broadly to determine living standards, guarantee jobs and overall stability. The more concrete expectations respondents have of the state include well-organized childcare, housing policy and eldercare.

As employers are not yet ready to take on social responsibility and third sector organizations do not command public confidence, the burden remains heavily on the family itself as well as the state. The role of the state is also important, as a person in need may not have a family on which to rely.

Families that were able to manage their affairs attributed responsibility primarily to the family itself. Many older people who had seen hard times in their lives were disappointed in state provision and did not expect help from the state. These people had brought up their children during times when no social benefits were available for families. They still believe that people have to manage their own lives. Frail people who had coped more easily during Soviet times attributed responsibility primarily to the state, and only then to families themselves. The role of local government was considered to be of great importance, as it is closer to families and is expected to have a better overview of their economic needs. However, few people make a distinction between the tasks of local government and the state.

Many respondents were of the opinion that the role of relatives in the management of everyday life was greater than it should be due to the lack of state intervention. Kin provide whatever support they can, but do not want to feel under an obligation to do so. The help of distant relatives and provision of housing were seen as matters for the state rather than families. The role of the state was primarily to ensure adequate living standards for families through benefits and job creation. Areas where direct state intervention was not accepted were the control of family size and structure, for example by encouraging couples to have a certain number of children through social benefits, and the distribution of household tasks.

Ability to influence the policy-making process

The shock of transition and the economic hardship experienced in the 1990s resulted in a decline in the attention governments attributed to social policy. By 1994, the economic recession had brought about a reduction in the level of public support for government. During the first phase of transformation, democracy took on a wide range of meanings from civic participation and responsibility to total anarchy. In the course of transition, democracy began to take shape (Kutsar *et al.*, 1998). However, the highest level of social participation was apparent in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. According to the results of the 'Living Conditions Survey', 69% of respondents were not involved in any pressure groups and voluntary organizations (Kutsar, 1996b). By the year 1999, this rate had increased to 73.2% of the adult population (Marksoo *et al.*, 2000).

The reasons given to explain why people are not participating in civil society were lack of information about their activities, other interests, lack of time and, more importantly, lack of knowledge about political processes and opportunities to influence policy making, which was not possible during the Soviet era. Respondents could be divided into three groups according to their opinions about what impact families have had on the policy-making process and how they could participate more effectively in decision-making: rejection of the state, passive participation in the policy-making process and active participation in policy making.

Respondents who belong to the group referring to the withdrawal of the state distance themselves from the state and its social policy on the grounds that it is inadequate to meet the needs of families. In their view, the state is an institution that does not markedly influence the everyday activities of citizens. In addition, the political elite do not seem to be interested in collecting information

about the economic situation and coping strategies of households as a prerequisite for developing existing public measures and reconciling them with practical needs. People in this group describe their relations with public authorities as mutual rejection and are skeptical about the readiness of the political elite to take account of their suggestions and demands. Therefore, families as recipients of welfare and public institutions as providers of state benefits and services are not open to public discussion about ways of improving state measures targeting families. Satisfaction with family policy measures is low, but people in this group are not taking concrete steps to make their opinions known. Active intervention and the formation of pressure groups are not pursued, as they are seen as inefficient and meaningless. Respondents could not identify possible channels for expressing their opinions or participating in the policy-making process. This group can be characterized by a high level of frustration, since their economic situation has deteriorated considerably since the beginning of the 1990s.

Passive participation, or non-participation, was mainly caused by lack of knowledge about political processes, which are believed to be complicated and difficult to understand, resulting in a lack of interest in societal processes overall. A single woman aged 32, mother of a pre-school age child stated:

I myself can't imagine at all how to do so [influence policy making], where [to exercise influence], who [has an impact] and what [is being influenced]. ... I don't have any particular interest in policy.

An unmarried male respondent, aged 30 acknowledged his very scant knowledge of political processes: *'I haven't understood how I could possibly influence policy.'* Similar opinions were widely expressed among the people from the group of passive participants. A precondition of active participation was thought to be an increase in political awareness among families. It was necessary to explain how state institutions, for example ministries, parliament, government, function and to set out the rights and opportunities citizens have for influencing the decision-making process. Increasing discontent with the activity of representatives in parliament is largely connected with voting strategies: the most decisive factor is the personal sympathy felt for a particular candidate rather than the political platform of the party s/he represents. The match between the party platform and expectations of voters is often poor. One man in his late fifties stated that:

It [knowledge about policy] should already be given in the education system to make people more active [in society], to fight for themselves. People need to be more aware of politics.

Although the respondents belonging to this group were not ready to participate actively in public life, they would be prepared to delegate responsibility to civil society organizations for active lobbying work among politicians to protect families' interests in decisions making. These ideas were summed up by one 32 year-old divorced woman, who was the mother of two children:

I don't agree with some things but I'm not really a man of enterprise [ready to organize a pressure group] and I wouldn't have the time for that in any case. There's a need for somebody who could do that sort of work and collect our opinions.

Some of the respondents confirmed that it is necessary to increase the effectiveness of existing family associations rather than create new NGOs to

deal with special family issues. Mostly people lack information about the activities of different civil society organizations and described them as relatively invisible in society. A 45 year-old married man, father of four children, confirmed this view: *'There are all different types of families' and pensioners' associations but I don't know what they are doing'*.

On the one hand, passive participation was explained by regional factors. People from rural areas encounter difficulties in gaining access to the channels necessary to convey their opinions to decision makers. Urban inhabitants are in a better position to make their views known and should, therefore, be more active in transmitting the opinions of both urban and rural families about social policy to government. On the other hand, political awareness is relatively low, and it is not a widespread practice for voters to be in contact with their constituency representatives.

Respondents who belong to the group of active participants in the policy-making process are convinced that they have opportunities to influence policy making and introduce changes in the law in line with their specific interests. To do so, they advocate more active participation in the public sphere, using different channels, including the media and press, and meetings with members of parliament. Supporters of active participation found that the first step towards influencing public discussions about the well-being of families should be undertaken at the local level in the election of local councils. In the small communities, such as parishes and towns, bonds between representatives and their electorate are closer, and the inhabitants are ready to take part in the decision-making process that has an impact on local life. Municipalities were considered as the mediators between members of parliament and citizens.

The traditional attitude that *'people are not eager to make their opinions heard'* was expressed by a 32 year-old single woman, with one child. She considered such attitudes to be ingrained for Estonians. This strategy has resulted in a relatively high level of dissatisfaction with existing public policy measures, in particular fiscal support aimed at different types of households. However, respondents who were in favour of active participation in policy making were critical of the general passiveness and suggested a variety of strategies to encourage people to become more involved at different levels of public life. As explained by a single female respondent aged 30:

Organizations and interest groups should communicate more with members of parliament. Somehow this doesn't happen in Estonia. A representative goes somewhere, arranges some office hours but people don't take it seriously.

After elections, pressure decreases from voters on their representatives. Voters, therefore, need to make their expectations known. Constant contact with members of parliament creates fertile ground for developing mutual collaboration. In this context, the important role played by NGOs was discussed. In analysing the current situation in society, the passiveness of third sector organizations was criticized. It was suggested that they should initiate public debate to draw attention to the shortcomings in family policy and the social security system. The activities recommended were participation in developing legislation, lobbying in parliament, intervention in decision-making processes through political advocacy. Growing awareness of political processes and active participation in society were preconditions for involvement in decision making.

Towards alternatives to self-reliance

Social change that brings about the restructuring of society and replaces the overall ideological base can have a significant impact on individual welfare resources. In such circumstances, different alternatives are sought. In Estonia, family support networks have been, and remain, quite strong. Families are widely held to be responsible for their members and for helping those in need. Kinship networks have been one source of support in coping with everyday life alongside the state social security system. This view was stressed by most of the respondents, who consider the family as the primary provider of welfare, followed by the state. In this context, the role of employers and NGOs was ambivalent.

Analysis of the characteristic features of kinship networks in Estonia revealed that women are the main links both within and between networks, which is explained by the traditional role of women as carers. The need for network provision is related to the living arrangements of the recipient. Generally, the main recipients of informal care are families with young children and older people. Assistance is mutual and is, therefore, the source of intergenerational solidarity.

Different models were found in urban and rural environments. In the model for rural areas, kinship networks are of great importance, since family formation takes place at an earlier age than among people living in towns, and the maintenance of minimum living standards requires greater efforts. In the informal urban networks, help from kin is insignificant and tends to be moral and symbolic rather than material.

The role of the state is to ensure a sufficient living standard for families, rather than directly intervening in the private sphere over issues such as family building. The position of families as a power group in the political decision-making process is largely invisible, even though about half the respondents agreed with the opinion that social participation needs to be increased to help meet the challenges kinship networks are faced with in maintaining an adequate level of social welfare for individuals.

Note

1. The Estonian project team carried out 34 in-depth interviews for the IPROSEC project with individuals representing different family living arrangements, from different age groups and socio-economic categories.

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8. Gendered Modernization in Hungary

Judit Takács

In common with other post-socialist states, Hungarian society has undergone major societal changes since the end of the Soviet-dominated era with far-reaching effects on family life. However, modernization of lifestyles, and especially family lifestyles, was already a feature of society during state socialism. Drawing on evidence from interviews with families¹, this paper shows how during the post-transition phase, modernization occurred in Hungary alongside the rediscovery of traditional family values on the one hand, and the widening of opportunities for women to achieve personal fulfilment through professional career development, on the other.

Women's social situation changed considerably during the socialist era. In 1953, Hungarian women gained the right to vote and, from 1958, women could stand for election (United Nations Development Programme, 2000, p. 264). During state socialism, female participation in higher education increased from about 20% in the pre-war period to 50%, and female employment rose to between 80 and 90%. However, women earned 10–30% less than their male colleagues, and it is still not possible to determine whether 'socialist women' really wanted to work, or whether they were simply forced into the labour market. Female employment was supported by services provided by the state. In 1967, Hungary was the first country in the world to introduce the *gyes* (paid maternity leave up to the child's third year) and, from the 1980s, 80–90% of children aged 3–6 attended kindergartens (Ferge, 1999, pp. 13–15). In short, in the public spheres of work, education, culture and even in politics, women became formally and fully emancipated, while in the private spheres, especially at the interpersonal level and in the family, gender roles remained fairly traditional (Ferge, 1999, p. 17).

Pre and post-transition periods are characterized by two different regimes: the former is described as 'Eastern' and the latter 'Western'. Susan Gal (1996) describes these two regimes in the following terms:

The paternalist state of state-socialism provided benefits such as generous maternity leave for women, but also infantilized the entire population, taking over the 'paternal role' of men directly through support of children and the socialization of some household functions, [while the Western parliamentary welfare states supported] the relative power of men by indirect involvement in families through tax law, property and family law, and in allowing or encouraging the different bargaining power of men and women in labour markets among other means. (Gal, 1996, p.77)

From the working woman to the (re-)domesticated woman model?

In state-socialist Hungary, forced modernization of women (and men) resulted in transformations in family life. A new model of the nuclear family became widespread, characterized by

two wage earners; living in housing estates, mostly in urban areas; having children soon after marriage, if possible; and placing their children under the care of the part-time child welfare institutions of the state. (Neményi, 1996, p. 86)

At the same time, there was a longing for a traditional form of the family involving a

wage-earner husband and a dependent wife, where the father as the head of the family had an instrumental function, while the dominant role of the mother was to sustain the private sphere, and to raise and nurse the children. (Neményi, 1996, p. 87).

After the system change, the first conservative government in Hungary started to idealize this traditional family model, though the radical restructuring of the economy played a more important part in its revival as unemployment rates increased.

As a result of the collapse of large socialist firms and the consequent dramatic increase in unemployment, by 1995 the employment rate of the female population in Hungary had fallen to the same level as EU member states at 32.2%. However, in Hungary, it was the result of a significant decrease while, in the EU, a modest increase took place in the total female employment rate (Frey, 1997, p. 17). Interestingly, the unemployment rate for women is still lower in Hungary than that for men, which can be explained by the change in the sectoral structure of employment. In the sectors experiencing the greatest decline, such as agriculture and industry, traditionally fewer women than men were and are employed, while, in the service sector, the majority of employees were and are women (Frey, 1997; Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2001). In addition, women tend to become 'dependent family members' in the sense that they are dependent on the income of other family members instead of being registered as unemployed (Neményi, 1996).

As well as the official economy and formal work, a characteristic feature of the state socialist economy, especially from the 1980s, was the involvement of people in 'money-making' activities in the 'second economy'. These were usually industrial and agricultural activities, carried out mainly by men after official hours, using their specialized knowledge and equipment owned by the state. One respondent, a 50 year-old former skilled worker, provides an excellent example of the peculiar employment histories of members of the older generation:

In 1968, I graduated from vocational school as a turner. ... I then started working at the mines in P. I was there for 6 months, until I got a position at V [a large socialist industrial complex, an electronics factory] in A. In 1972, I was drafted for military service. I was released in 1974. I did the full 24 months of service. ... My wife had a low income; I didn't make much money either. We had to make some extra money somehow. I did a lot of odd jobs, side jobs then, mostly painting, I was good at that. I went to work in the morning and came home at 9 at night. I also worked at the weekends. That was the only way to make 2000–2500 Forint [8–10 Euros] at the end of the 1970s, beginning of the 1980s. ... Then there was the democratic transition, which also affected V. The company was split two ways. One half went to an Austrian company, the other half to a Hungarian company. I got into a pretty good position at the Austrian company.

However, women also played an important role in the second economy. Julia Szalai (1999) suggests that women's primary role was to provide the services for 'money-making' activities, such as administrative tasks, babysitting, mending clothes and so on, following the centuries old rules of exchange of mutual goods and services.

The flourishing of the second economy contributed, to a great extent, to the modernization of lifestyles in Hungary in the 1980s, and women were able to start developing new attitudes and self-confidence associated with autonomous market employment during this period by accumulating specialized knowledge and social capital. Therefore, after the system change, intergenerational employment mobility was typical among women, who were previously employed in the worst paid, low status jobs, because they were able to utilize their acquired knowledge and personal connections in the context of the emerging market economy. According to Szalai (1999, p. 48), the typical attitude of these women (and of people in general) towards work continues to be that they would like a legal workplace that provides state benefits such as national health insurance and pensions, but the salary is not considered important because many will earn 'real money' (not necessarily by legal means) in service jobs or other small-scale enterprises in the second economy. A 59 year-old woman claiming old age pension typified this attitude:

I have a high school [secondary school] degree in economics. First I was a cashier in a shop, then I had an administrative job in a department store, and started working in accountancy. From 1970 until May 1996, I worked in the garment industry. I quit when the company closed down, or, rather, when it was restructured. When I left, it was already a share-holding company with the Austrians, K. B. I worked as a group manager there. In fact, I took early retirement. I would have had to work two years more until retirement. At the moment, I have been working illegally in a family-owned company, since January 2000, where I do everything; accounting, money transfers, bookkeeping, taxation.

This personal system for earning a living from multiple sources has become a general pattern in Hungary. However, it can lead to self-exploitation and it can also affect family life.

According to the results of a sociological survey conducted in the early 1990s, Hungarian mothers considered family and private life more important factors in defining their identities than work and professional opportunities, and 89% of respondents said that women with children have a better life than women with no children. Women wanted to maintain their level of employment, though they also expressed strong preferences for part-time employment, which was, and still is, not a widespread phenomenon in post-socialist countries (UNICEF, 1999, p. 44). In comparison to the late 1980s, by the mid-1990s, the number of Hungarian women expressing the view that mothers, especially those with small children, should stay at home had increased (Tóth, 1995). It is difficult to determine what exactly caused this change in women's attitudes, but several factors can be considered, including the role of new ideologies alongside traditional approaches, or the weakening state support for female employment (Ferge, 1999). However, it would be an oversimplification to interpret the post-socialist situation as a simple transformation from the working woman to the (re-)domesticated woman model.

The implications of female employment for family policy

Since female employment is one of the key factors influencing family life, a focal point of present-day Western European family policy is to help parents with children, especially women, harmonize work and family life. Hungary is

also motivated to follow this path, not only because of official EU requirements and expectations but also because of the widening career prospects of Hungarian women. Between 1980 and 1995, the proportion of women who completed secondary schooling rose from 33.8% to 57.2%. The proportion of women with a college or university degree exceeded that of men in 1990, and this difference between men and women further increased to the extent that, by 1995, 14.7% of employed persons were men with a college or university degree, and 16.3% were women (Nagy, 1999, p. 41). Taking into consideration these developments in women's education level, it can be assumed that their career ambitions will become more and more influential determinants in family life.

Previously, the work-life balance issue was formulated more narrowly, and the dual-earner family model was seen mainly as a financial necessity to produce the required income for the family's needs. One self-employed female interviewee described the difficulty of combining a job with raising children in the following way:

Well, this wasn't an easy problem to solve, because I really wanted to be there for my children to fall back on, I wanted to be a source of stability in their lives. ... But it was also really important that I performed well in my job, because we needed the money... so I had to organize things very well. It wasn't easy to be in the right place at the right time. ... When they went to bed, my second or third shift started. ... It was exhausting.

Thus in the pre-transition period, the primary focus is on questions such as how the household duties of working women can be made easier, and how men (and fathers) can become more involved in household and childraising tasks (Pongrácz and Molnár, 2000).

As a result of the dramatic changes in the structure of Hungarian employment, female rates decreased but, nowadays, employed women are younger and better educated. The number of women in leading positions is increasing, and the income gap in relation to men has been reduced. Therefore, women are more likely to interpret their work not only as a functional necessity to earn money but also as an opportunity for personal development through professional career building. The need to consider women's careers as well as men's in family decisions is, therefore, a relatively new phenomenon. For example, one of the interviewees, a 26 year-old man who did not have any children and lived with his partner, emphasized the role of his girlfriend's career in their family planning:

We've been together for a fairly long time now. The way I see it, this is a family. We've lived together for three years now... the dream I have is the following: a house, a white fence, a dog, children, a garden. We want to have a lot of children, two or three. We will have children soon, in one or two year's time. The plan is that we get married first, and not just because of legal reasons, then, after we're married, we spend our savings on buying a flat. The family will help out too, and when the circumstances stabilize, and the flat is suitable for having children, then. ... Of course, it also depends on how my girlfriend's career develops, because she's in a good position now, she got into an executive position fast... Her career is important for her self-confidence.

Decreasing fertility rates can also support this multidimensional interpretation of female employment. After the collapse of state socialism, women were not forced to participate in the world of work in the same way as previously. The

ideological messages of conservative governments also strengthened the view that, after so many years of repression, women can (and should) resume their 'normal' (traditional) roles as mothers and housewives. Still, as in many other post-socialist states, fertility rates continue to decline while the mean age of mothers at childbirth increases.

The implications of changing family forms

The demographic data from the last decade in Hungary show that people get married later than before transition when both women and men married before the age of 25. For example, a 50 year-old interviewee saw her early marriage as the solution for replacing her unstable family of origin, but the following quotation also reveals her commitment to the traditional view of the high value she attaches to her family:

I became an adult at a very young age, because my mother died when I was 17.... Perhaps I rushed the marriage a bit, but I didn't have a place to go home to because my father had remarried. We met on the train, and it wasn't like I found him, we found each other. One year later we were married.... It wasn't strange for me that at the age of 23, I had two children.... My family, my children have always been the most important thing for me.

Nowadays, most women marry for the first time between the ages of 25 and 29, and most men between the ages of 30 and 34. The phenomenon of postponed pregnancies has also become a characteristic feature, especially among women with higher education. From 1995, the highest birth rate can be observed in the group of 25–29 year old women (Vukovich, 2002).

One of the determining factors responsible for the continuous decline in fertility is the absolute and relative deterioration of the financial situation of families with children. One of the respondents who was married with two adult children pointed out the importance of these financial aspects in the present context, where Hungarian women are now pursuing professional careers:

There should be more ample support for mothers, because there are so many well-educated women now who don't have children, because the difference between the salary and the childcare allowance is too big for the family to handle.

The decrease in the real value of benefits as well as the selective nature of family benefits is also impacting upon the poverty rates in Hungary (Vukovich and Harcsa, 2002). Between 1991 and 2001, the proportion of people living in poverty increased at a faster pace among households with children, especially

Table 8.1 Changing family forms in Hungary 1980/2001, as % of population aged over 15

% of total population aged over 15	1980			2001		
	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both
Married	70.8	64.3	67.4	56.1	50.2	57.6
Divorced	3.7	5.6	4.7	7.6	9.8	9.0
Single	22.0	13.8	17.7	32.6	21.8	27.8

Sources: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2001, p. 13, Vukovich, 2000, p. 40.

with three or more children, than in the general population, while single households and childless couples had the highest income level (Gábos and Szivós, 2002).

A further feature of post-transition Hungary is change in family forms. The most general family pattern continues to consist of married couples with two children. However, as shown in Table 8.1, between 1980 and 2001, the proportion of married people over 15 decreased. At the same time, the proportion of divorced people increased, as did that for singles (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2001, p. 13). The extramarital birth rate rose from 7.1% in 1980 to 30% in 2001, and the rate of cohabitation went up from 5.9% in 1990 to 11% in 2001 (Eurostat, 2002, table J-12; Vukovich, 2002, p. 140).

People also tend to plan to have a smaller family than previously. In 1993, most women (53.9%) aged 18–41 planned to have two children, and only 1.5% wanted to have no children at all (Vukovich, 2002, p. 113). Ten years later, the preferred number of children was still two, but about 10% of women and 15–20% of men under 25 stated that they did not want to have children (Kamarás, 2002, p. 58). Intentional childlessness is a relatively new social phenomenon in Hungary that may indicate the strengthening of individualization as well as the awareness of difficulties in achieving a satisfying work–life balance. All these changes have implications for family policy.

Broadening family policy

Comparison of the state-socialist modernization of family life to the present-day situation suggests that the forced, and somewhat homogeneous, modernization patterns have been replaced by differential, more heterogeneous patterns. In many respects, for example late marriages, postponed pregnancies, decreasing fertility rates and women's widening career prospects, Hungarian society seems to be following the Western path. However, these features cannot be said to characterize all segments of society. They do not apply to older people, those with lower education and the Roma ethnic group. The social situation of Romas, for example, is determined by several interlinked problems, such as lack of education, unemployment and regional disadvantages, that make Roma ethnic origin one of the main poverty risks in Hungary (Gábos and Szivós, 2002).

Women's emancipation began in the state-socialist era and, as a result, many public services and benefits are nowadays taken for granted. However, the legacy of state-controlled modernization is coupled with renewed nostalgia for traditional gender roles. Nonetheless, the content of these gender role expectations is not so unambiguous as some commentators would like to think. For example, according to the findings of a research project on the interpretation of the roles of heads of families in 851 households, 63% of respondents asserted that, in their family, such a figure did exist (Sik and Nagy, 2002). Most of them stated that, in their family, men (typically the husbands) were the head of family for several reasons: mainly because this is how it should be traditionally, because men are the breadwinners, and because of men's decision-making roles in family matters. In other cases, respondents claimed that they do not have a single head of family as they decide about family matters together. When practical aspects of family life were examined, such as the allocation of money and distribution of household work, no

significant differences were found between the seemingly more traditionally organized families having a head of family and those seemingly more democratic families deciding about family matters together. A difference was found between the ideological and the real situation in Hungarian families.

This review of the main trends in Hungarian family life in the post-socialist era (and their state-socialist background) has shown that the relationship between policy and family life has changed to a great extent. Previously, this relationship could be characterized by greater generosity on the part of the state in providing benefits, as well as more rigidity, given that the state exercised more direct control. Nowadays, the increasing flexibility of family life does not seem to be matched by flexibility in family policies. This is, however, a well known phenomenon in other parts of the world, too:

There is a lack of congruence between policies based on how families *should* and how they actually operate. ... We see the need for many forms of family experiences to be supported by policy frameworks in order to enhance autonomous choices in living arrangements. But for this to happen it is necessary to take seriously fluidity and change in family arrangements, rather than seeing change itself as something dangerous and undesirable. (Silva and Smart, 1999, p. 2, emphasis in original)

For example, during the last decade in many Hungarian political and public debates, family policy and the decreasing fertility rate seemed to be inseparable concepts, at least at the level of rhetoric, with the underlying assumption that the main goal of family policy should be to encourage higher fertility rates. Some commentators criticized this initiative, as suggested by one of the female interviewees with two grown-up children:

What I don't like is when they try to influence your decisions, when they manipulate people, for example, the way they interfere with abortions. I find it positively repulsive and intolerable when the state tries to force people to give birth to children by prohibiting abortions. To me, this is really disgusting. I think everybody has the right to make their own decisions. The state simply shouldn't have the right to interfere in these matters. How can all those men in parliament make an informed decision about individual people's lives. In short, there shouldn't be coercion of any kind. If you decide that you do not want to have children, then you should be able to have an abortion without moral judgement being passed on you, even if you're a healthy young woman who would otherwise be capable of giving birth, and you have a partner. There shouldn't be a moral obligation towards society to give birth. Subsidies shouldn't be distributed with the implicit goal of making more people have babies. So they influence you in your decisions, they want to manipulate you. ... And of course they don't intervene where it's most necessary, for example if there's violence in the family.

As the IPROSEC research has shown, personal decisions about having children or not having children are influenced by several factors. Thus the scope of the fertility issue cannot be narrowed down to family benefit provision and handouts from the state. Family policies need to encompass a much broader field, including the combined causes and effects of declining fertility rates.

Note

1. The Hungarian fieldwork reported was carried out for the European Commission funded IPROSEC project. Fifty interviewees were selected from an original survey sample (N = 251). On the basis of the initial questionnaires, respondents were chosen to represent families who had experienced different living arrangements.

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9. Polish Paradoxes

Małgorzata Potoczna and Lucyna Prorok-Mamińska

The far-reaching changes that took place in every field of the national economy during the period of transition in the 1990s had a major impact on Polish society and on the family as the basic social unit. In preparing for membership of the European Union, the task facing the Polish government was to co-ordinate public policy objectives, regulations and structures to avoid conflicts and problems in the future. For social and family policy, the most important limitation was the budget and, especially, the financial resources available for regional authorities to implement policies. Unemployment has rapidly become a major social problem, reaching 18.2% at the beginning of 2003 (Polska Statystyka Publiczna, 2003), which is both dangerous for society and cannot be reduced by short-term, local solutions. EU funds are very much needed, but alone they can neither solve the financial problems at regional level, nor create new employment opportunities. The macro-economic situation has created a negative environment, which influences family life. A correlation exists between economic factors (employment, wages, investment) and personal plans for the family building. The economic decline that started in 1996, in conjunction with growing unemployment, forced the birthrate down. The challenge for Polish society today is how to establish confidence in the ability of governments to stimulate economic growth and employment so as to create an environment conducive to family life. This paper looks at the underlying causes of current socio-demographic trends and the reactions of Polish families to the attempts by political and economic actors to deal with them.

Population decline and ageing

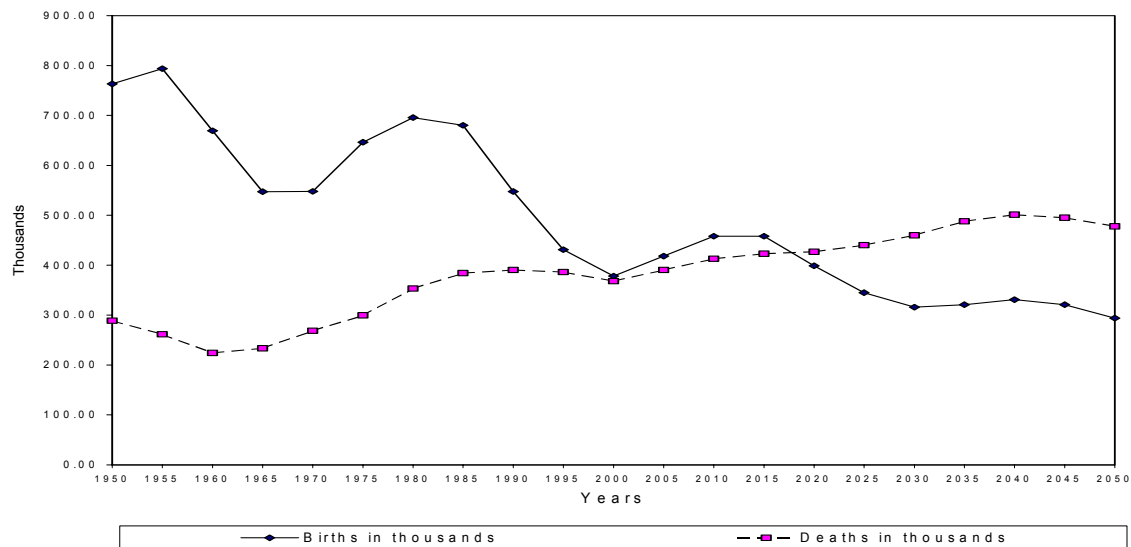
As in most European countries, Poland is faced with problems associated with population decline and ageing. Between 1990 and 2000, natural population growth fell from 4.6 in 1990 to 2.8 in 2000, due largely to the steep decline in the birthrate not being compensated by a marked increase in the mortality rate (Figure 9.1). The rate of decline in Poland was particularly marked: from 3.8 in 1990 to -0.2 in 2000. The last population boom was at the end of 1970s and in the early 1980s, peaking in 1984 before falling to zero population growth in 2001. Migration, which may stave off population decline in some countries, is not significant in Poland and has been unable to abate the trend. Between 2003 and 2007, the growth rate is expected to oscillate around zero, and then to increase by 2007 (GUS, 2002a, p. 115). Smaller family size, postponement of childbirth to an average age of 24 years for first-time mothers, changes in the social situation of women and their career paths, as well the unstable economic climate have contributed to this trend.

Data on women's fertility patterns provide an indication of trends in family structure (Table 9.1). In the past 40 years, a radical decrease occurred in the total fertility rate, from 2.98 in 1960 to 1.29 in 2001. Social changes in women's position (economic activity and higher education) have also influenced the median age of women at the birth of their first child, which is now over 24 years of age.

In addition to the negative natural population growth rate, Poland has experienced a rapid increase in life expectancy since transition, especially among women. At age 60 men can expect to live another 17 years on average, compared to 22 years for women. Male mortality rates are higher in all age groups. Medical advances, changes in lifestyle, overall economic and social development are among the factors creating favourable conditions for prolonging life.

With the slowing of population growth rates and the extension of life expectancy, the proportion of the population in the 65+ age group is increasing, as illustrated by Figure 9.2. In 1997, the population age 60 and over made up for than 16.2% of total population. By 2001, the proportion reached 16.8%. This age group accounts for 17.6% of rural residents, compared to 15.4% of urban

Figure 9.1 Live births and death rates in Poland, 1950–2050



Source: GUS, 2002a, table XXXIV.

Table 9.1 Fertility patterns in Poland, 1960–2001

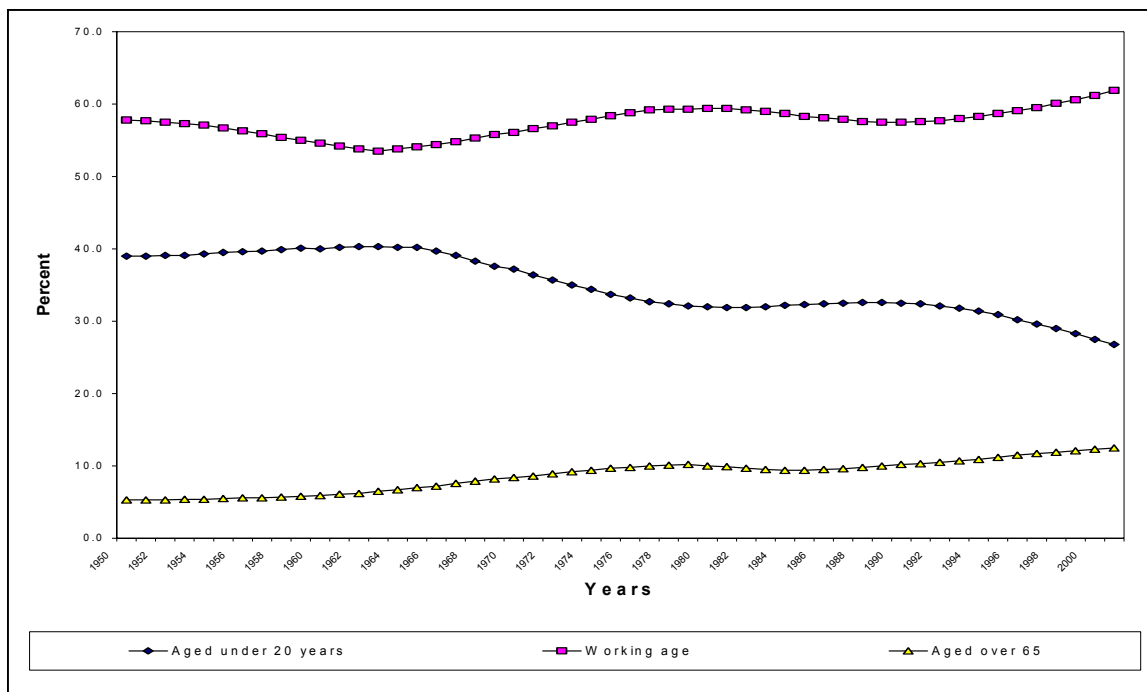
Year	Live births per 1000 women in age groups							Total fertility rate	Median age of women at first child
	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49		
1960	45.0	199.0	165.0	103.0	60.0	22.0	2.0	2.980	...
1965	32.0	184.0	144.0	84.0	43.0	15.0	2.0	2.520	...
1970	30.0	165.0	126.0	71.0	36.0	11.0	1.0	2.200	22.5
1975	31.4	170.1	136.5	71.4	33.9	10.0	0.7	2.270	22.7
1980	32.9	179.6	136.4	69.1	29.0	7.5	0.6	2.276	23.0
1985	35.1	182.6	140.7	69.9	30.2	6.9	0.5	2.329	23.3
1990	31.5	165.2	121.4	58.6	24.5	6.2	0.3	2.039	23.0
1995	22.0	113.0	104.5	53.7	23.2	5.5	0.3	1.611	22.8
2000	16.9	81.3	92.2	51.3	21.0	4.7	0.2	1.337	23.7
2001	15.8	74.3	89.8	51.8	21.2	4.7	0.2	1.288	24.0

Source: Polska Statystyka Publiczna, 2003.

residents. Moreover, the gender constitution of this age group is noteworthy. Women aged 65+ accounted for 19.6 % of all women, whereas men aged 65+ accounted for only 13.8% of all men in 2001, due to higher mortality rates for men in all age groups (GUS, 1999).

Demographic forecasts for the Polish population compiled in 1996 project that, by the year 2020, older people will account for 22.4 % of total population, but the differences between the urban and rural areas will be reversed. Forecasts made in 2001 (Table 9.2) assumed that life expectancy would grow over the coming decades, while the number of births would continue to decline, and migration would remain constant, heralding macro-economic problems

Figure 9.2 Age distribution of Polish population, 1950–2000



Source: GUS, 2002b, table LVIII.

Table 9.2 Long-term population projections in Poland, 2010–50

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Births in 000s	458	458	399	345	316	321	331	321	294
Deaths in 000s	413	423	427	440	460	488	501	495	478
Net migration in 000s	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total fertility rate	1.50	1.59	1.59	1.59	1.59	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58
Gross reproduction rate	0.73	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77
Male life expectancy at birth in years	71.1	72.2	73.4	74.0	74.7	75.4	76.1	76.9	77.7
Female life expectancy at birth in years	78.6	79.3	80.0	80.7	81.4	82.1	82.9	83.8	84.8
Dependency ratio (per 100)	54.7	60.7	69.0	73.6	72.7	72.3	76.6	85.6	95.1

Source: GUS, 2002a, table 28.

associated with the imbalance between the number of people in the labour force compared to the older/retired population. Socially, the dependency ratio is one of most worrying coefficients, since it represents the number of persons entitled to receiving social benefits, retirement or incapacity pensions and other state provided support, funded from labour-related contributions. The overall impact in terms of social charges will increase, demanding new policy responses (Golinowska, 2000).

The changing labour market

The restructuring of the labour market since transition has resulted in a decline in the employment rate for both men and women (Table 9.3). Today in Poland, unemployment is considered to be one of the most pressing social problems. At the beginning of the transformation period in 1990, the unemployment rate was 0.3%, but at the end of the same year it had increased to 6.5%. This rapid growth stabilized in 1994 at 16.8%. The rate then decreased over the following years, reaching 9.5 % in 1998, but this decline was short-lived, and the numbers of jobless continued to rise after 1998. By 2003, 3 344 200 Polish people were unemployed, constituting 18.8 % of the economically active population (Polska Statystyka Publiczna, 2003).

Gender issues cut across the unemployment situation in Poland. Women constitute over 51% of unemployed people, but the problem is that they usually remain much longer without work than men. They also have fewer opportunities to take temporary work (in construction or agriculture). According to Polish interviewees¹, men are more flexible in their working arrangements, they more readily change jobs and move to a different place of work. As a rule, men are motivated by material reasons: they are searching for better-paid work. Women, by contrast, try to find the optimal solution for balancing work and family responsibilities. For example, they are ready to give up a better-paid job because it is situated a long way from their place of residence.

Polish society was not prepared for this kind of problem. Having a job was taken for granted before transition, and people were not accustomed to looking for work or changing their occupation in response to labour market needs. The far-reaching changes in the national economic system forced the redefinition of economic activities, and brought about the prioritization of economic viability and profit margins

Furthermore, the regulations in the Labour Code were inadequate to cope with the new economic environment and the number of unemployed people. For example, among the total number of unemployed in 2003, 83.6% were not eligible for unemployment benefit.

Table 9.3 Employment and unemployment rates for population aged over 15, as % of population of working age, 1990–2000

	Employment rate			Unemployment rate		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
January 1990	54.3	45.7	43.0	57.3	42.7	0.3
November 1995	58.5	43.7	50.7	12.1	14.4	15.2
December 2000	55.2	40.3	47.4	14.2	18.1	15.1

Source: GUS, 1992, table 173; GUS, 2002a, table 148.

Policy issues

Findings from the IPROSEC project suggest that the slowing down of population growth rate and rising unemployment are closely related. The majority of the families interviewed believed that the most important condition enabling and encouraging couples to achieve their ideal family size and composition is economic security. Couples take into account the material conditions that would allow them to satisfy their children's needs. One unemployed widow in her early forties with two children claimed that:

... it's one thing to give birth to five or six children and quite another to feed them and send them to school.

A divorced woman in her mid-twenties, employed part time in a low-status job in the private sector, commented that:

Wages are low and social assistance is low. How can you even think of giving birth to another human being and be responsible for him or her? This is ridiculous.

For most respondents, material conditions can only be secured by the prospect of stable employment that guarantees a decent income. The same unemployed widow argued that:

...this is not about benefits, this is about work. Everyone should have a job. If everyone had a job, child benefits wouldn't be required, and everyone would be able to earn enough for a living...

According to an older male respondent in a high status job without children:

People should have a job in the first place; this is most important. ... Without work you're nothing ... no work, no earnings.

However, the fear of losing their job and unemployment was a very real concern expressed by many respondents. Although they felt temporary, short-term unemployment could be overcome, they were especially concerned about the chances of finding a new job, as argued by a never-married self-employed male respondents in his mid-thirties:

There's no work, no prospects of finding a job in the future. Men are afraid to set up home; they cannot afford it. They would really like to have a wife, a family, children, but they're scared, they can't even earn a living being single, not to mention providing for a family. The situation in Poland doesn't encourage people to form a family.

As well as the problem of unemployment, the lack of implementation of regulations to protect workers militates against parents trying to raise children. In Poland, the main legal document regulating policy is the Labour Code, which was amended in 1996, together with other labour law regulations that fell outside the Code. The Labour Code takes account of the family responsibilities of employees, including employment protection for pregnant women and women on maternity leave, the right to parental leave and other rights, such as the two days paid leave per year to take care of a child under 14, and the right to care assistance allowance for a sick child.

During transition, the regulations on maternity and parental leave, as well as other privileges associated with caring, were changed. In Poland, the length of maternity leave has been altered depending on the ruling party. When the rightwing party (AWS) was in power, the length of maternity leave was

extended to 26 weeks, but when the leftwing coalition (SLD–PPP) took over in 2001, the period of 16 weeks was re-established. Since 1996, both parents have the same entitlement to parental leave and to the income-related childcare allowance. The amended Labour Code, for the first time, includes regulations that forbid discrimination in the labour market, among other things for reasons of gender or age, and requires equal treatment for men and women at work.

Despite regulations aimed at protecting workers, and especially women, the law is very far from what happens in practice, and does not, therefore, provide an environment conducive to family life for workers. Working mothers do have some privileges but, as explained by one interviewee, *'the truth is that every employer is scared to death of them'*. According to the respondents, it is very difficult for young, married women to find a job, and almost impossible for a young mother, because of prejudices against female workers, as one married woman with two children in a low-grade private sector job recounted:

... when my older daughter was two and I wanted to get a job as a shop assistant, the employer, having learned about my two-year-old daughter, said bluntly: 'when the child becomes ill, you'll be more concerned about her than a shop or an enterprise you're working in. You'll go on sick leave, and there'll be no way out for me'. If there was a grandmother to help me out, then it's alright, but with kindergarten or crèche, they won't make sure the medicine is taken at the right time or anything like that.

The female divorcee in her twenties claimed that:

It often happens that you give birth to a baby and then you lose your job, you can't afford to provide for a baby then. It's a vicious circle.

A male respondent in his forties, employed and with two children, commented:

Because of the difficulties in the labour market having a child requires sacrifices. ... It's much easier not to have children. We're living in days of drastic choices...

This kind of prejudice had prevented the same divorced woman cited above from remarrying, thereby contributing to the postponement of childbirth:

I knew if I was married, ready to have children, this would be seen as a disadvantage. I feared that my potential employer might say 'you're at such an age, you have a husband, it's high time for you to have children, so we won't give you a job'. It's easier for me to find a job now. No one fears I will have a baby. It's awful, but the first question you're asked by an employer is: 'Are you going to have children and when?' We're discriminated against as women, as far as employment goes. When I say I'm single the danger might not be less serious but still it sounds better.

This kind of response from employers was highlighted as a side effect of transition and the new market economy. Women claim that, in the 1980s, giving birth to a child did not curtail their employment opportunities. The social policy of the state provided a more favourable climate for parenting. After delivery, women made use of their parental rights and took maternity and parental leave. As a rule, they went on parental leave for a few months up to a year, using only part of their entitlement, and then returned to the same workplace. They returned to work mainly for financial reasons. If possible, their parents (the children's grandparents) helped them to raise their children. In some cases, the spouses shared childcare responsibilities. Later, children went to a kindergarten, rarely to a crèche. In the current climate, however, the respondents noted a big difference. Women are disadvantaged as far as

employment opportunities are concerned, as underlined by one female respondent in her mid-forties, employed and with three children:

A woman takes sick leave and people at work frown at her. In the 1980s it wasn't that bad. It wasn't taken into account when you were taken on. There was plenty of work. If a woman went on sick leave for a month, this was no offence. Nowadays, when a child is ill and a woman takes leave she can be sacked. Again, when a woman takes up work after having been on parental leave, she works for a month or two and there's a job cut, and she's the first to be sacked. And the worst situation is when she is married and her husband is unemployed, so she returns to work and he's at home with a child. And she, being the only provider for the family, is sacked. How can this come about?

Responses from the union leaders interviewed in the IPROSEC project also emphasized the profit motive rather than family-friendly work policies that accompanied the Polish transition to a market economy:

A young woman about to get married is warned that pregnancy means the end of her career, that her child's illness is no excuse for taking leave of absence by one of the parents, that family commitments cannot constrain the parent's availability for work. ... Our Polish entrepreneurs haven't yet realised that they have a specific social role to fulfil, that apart from an economic role they play a social one and that family issues should be important for them. Unfortunately the capitalism that has emerged in our country over the past few years shows that only profit matters for these employers. ... They are looking for the shortest, easiest route to profit making.

Managers and other economic actors who argue that the Labour Code is helping workers to reconcile work and family life to the advantage of families did not share this view. They claimed that the current Labour Code regulations on reconciliation of family and professional duties are perfectly adequate and they applauded the right to maternity or parental leave, as well as childcare allowances.

The interest of employers in profits, with its impact on careers and incomes, has also contributed to the problem of delayed childbirth, noted in the previous section. A male respondent in his mid-forties, in employment and without children, made the point that:

In the past, there was no rat race and you could fully enjoy all kinds of benefit, unlike today. ... If you work for a private company, or make a career in a given institution, or a good company, you have a problem. ... I know such people. Work has control over their lives, and all other spheres of life – including family life – are secondary. ... They put marriage aside, and I observe this among my students who are over 30 now, do not have a partner, want to earn some money first or make a career, put off the decision to have children, and people often decide to have a child when they're over 35.

Many of the policy measures put in place in Poland are failing to meet the needs of families. The interviewees agreed that benefits and services were much more supportive in the 1980s before transition. The legislation on family and parenting, the system of child benefits and the availability of free public services then gave a feeling of security. Now, public policy measures have a rather negative impact on family life. The state system of social benefits and public support services has become inaccessible for many families due to targeting.

Benefits, for example, are considered inadequate to support children's needs, and incapable of encouraging women to have children. In the first place, access to social benefits is limited, especially in rural areas, where poverty is most widespread, but where resources for the poorest people are not accessible and not widely known about. Secondly, the birth grant, maternity benefit, childcare allowance and one-parent benefit are insufficient to cover a child's basic needs. As described by the female divorcee in her twenties, cited above:

Your baby's born and the child benefits you get will suffice to buy nappies. In the best case, ... you receive these few pennies from the state and you don't even know what to do with this money. You don't know what to spend this benefit on – food, school, clothes or books. ... If you don't earn a lot, nothing will make it possible for you to achieve optimum family size.

Furthermore, individuals are not enthusiastic about claiming assistance because they would rather not be dependent on welfare. One male respondent in his forties, employed and with one child, claimed that:

Poverty is something people are ashamed of. Someone who's better-off wants to get something from the state, not someone poor. Poor people are simply too honest, besides, they don't want to beg for help or care, they're ashamed of it. Welfare services never inform them about the benefits available.

Another female respondent in her late thirties, self-employed in farming, with seven children, described the situation in the following terms:

You have to go there, fill in millions of forms. I simply don't want to go there and ask for a few pennies, I don't like to be a beneficiary. ... I'd rather not be a beneficiary.

For one female respondent, in her early thirties, employed, with two children, benefits are simply an inadequate response to the needs of families, especially women. They only address the issue of income loss in the short term and do not provide solutions to the long-term issue of unemployment affecting women:

Benefit is a passing thing; you can claim it for two or three years. When a woman takes care of a baby, she should receive benefit, but it is the prospect of taking up work later on that gives her hope, some chances to get by.

Nonetheless, for the most impoverished families, for whom this is the only source of income, benefits are extremely important, as reported by one unmarried male interviewee:

Even this small amount of money is important, for this is money anyway, and then you don't worry so much. It's better to have this little than nothing.

Policy challenges

In the face of population decline and ageing, growing unemployment, inadequate benefits and the cultural stigma associated with state welfare, policy actors are faced with a variety of challenges in trying to cope with recent socio-demographic change. The challenges they face can be summarized in the form of the question of how to stabilize the population growth rate by establishing a climate of economic and job security that also enables parents to raise children, while remaining in the employment of a competitive and solvent company (Golinowska, 1994).

The challenge, according to the respondents, has to be met not just by families but also other stakeholders. Families themselves have sole responsibility for the organization of family life, distribution of domestic and caring tasks, family formation, family size and composition. They are also primarily responsible for taking care of family members, including children, disabled and elderly relatives, if such help is required, as summarized by one male respondent in his forties, employed with one child: *'The family is responsible for all its members. For children, you can't count on public assistance alone.'*

Politicians and other policy actors agreed that the government's role is to create socio-economic circumstances that enable families to fulfil these functions. According to the rightwing AWS, the government should take real action within family policy, aimed, among other things, at improving the financial circumstances of families, their housing standards, quality of health and childcare, to create the most favourable socio-economic conditions for the development and independent functioning of all families, regardless of income, and fulfilment of family tasks and functions: *'Proper family policy should be based on equal treatment of all families. No matter what their income is'*. The leftwing PPP, however, maintains that, for the poor and/or rural families (often the same people in Poland), financial benefits should be targeted at reducing income disparities across the country. The AWS also argues that the governments should not restrict their activity to financial help, since this form of assistance leads to the creation of welfare dependency:

The government is only responsible for the conditions it creates for family development; it has no right to intervene in family life. ... On the whole, this is all about making these people take responsibility for themselves, their lives, their children, their families and assistance is about making them feel this responsibility.

For this reason, respondents favour the implementation of projects activating family members, creating local environments to satisfy certain needs and solving specific problems facing families, such as alcohol addiction and unemployment.

To a much greater extent than in other countries in the IPROSEC project, the Catholic Church plays a decisive role in the political sphere of policy making. With 95% of the population of Poland declaring themselves religious believers, and 65% practising their faith, this aspect of the political system is greatly favoured. While families are reluctant for the state to intervene directly in family life, provisions made by Catholic-affiliated NGOs are acceptable.

As well as the state, respondents believe that employers are responsible for the general well-being of families. The interviewees were aware that, under the present economic conditions, it would be unreasonable to expect employers to provide workplace crèches or kindergartens. However, employers should ensure stable employment and decent wages, and they are expected to abide by the Labour Code. The unmarried male respondent cited above argued that:

What we witness nowadays is sheer exploitation. People keep receiving lower and lower wages. An employee is not respected, can be sacked any time, can be down and out. Earnings are ridiculously low, too. An employer should be obliged to pay decent money. And this is where the state comes in. There should be some reasonable minimum wage guaranteed, but there's nothing like that. An employer pays at his whim. I hear people get 300 PLN [83 Euros] net a month. This is sheer exploitation! It was only too easy to throw out the provision on work

from the Constitution! There are ten candidates for a single place of work, for virtually no money at all. Everything went astray because people are earning less and less.

To ensure employers take on this responsibility, respondents argue for policy intervention to include an increase in the minimum wage and stricter control over the way employers follow the regulations on employees' wages. The same respondent stressed that:

The state should force employers to pay a minimum wage to their employees. This should be written down in some kind of legal act. Also, facing such unemployment now, I'd be very much in favour of the Human Rights Charter and, if there is one income provider in a family, he or she should earn enough to provide for the entire family.

The key to the success of new policy intervention, however, as outlined by one married male respondent without children, working in the public sector, is to ensure that policies complement each other and that policy actors work in conjunction with each other to ensure they meet the needs of families:

*The state makes promises it cannot keep [because] it cannot guarantee the stability of family policy. ... Different political forces fighting for power in this country have not reached a *raison d'état*. I can't hear them speak in unison, I can't see any clear family policy being worked out, a policy that would continue regardless of who is in power.*

Despite these calls for renewed forms of intervention, some respondents maintained a traditional view that women should continue to be the principle carers, a view that was not shared among respondents in other project countries. For example, one man in his fifties with three children argued that it is not the state's responsibility to encourage men to take leave for family reasons:

This is a misunderstanding. A woman is biologically preconditioned to take care of children, and no one has been able to replace her.

Another man in the same age group with one child agreed:

I don't think a man is the right person to take care of an infant; this doesn't make sense to me. Biologically and mentally, a man is not prepared for that. Later on he can do that, he is capable of childcare when a child is older.

Furthermore, Polish families are keen to make provision for their own family's needs and prefer to keep the state at arms length, largely because of the humiliation of requesting state help.

Confronting Polish paradoxes

In sum, Poland has experienced rapid changes throughout the transition period. On the one hand, these changes, such as population decline and ageing and increased unemployment, call for greater policy support. On the other, economic decline and the roll back of the state have reduced the state and employer intervention in family life that would help ease the problems of transition. At the same time, the legacy of conservative family values, rooted in Catholicism, coupled with a reluctance to accept state handouts, endorses the male breadwinner model that is fraught with problems in a country experiencing severe unemployment, low wages and inadequate benefits. Polish policy actors are, therefore, faced with a paradoxical situation. They are required to meet the

needs of a changing society that have necessitated the transformation of gender roles, but are doing so at arms length and affirming traditional values.

This study has identified several possibilities for responding to the problems and paradoxes associated with socio-demographic change. A holistic approach to the issue has been called for by respondents who maintain that the state should assist families by creating employment opportunities. It should, they maintain, firstly make work available to all by creating a favourable climate for new job opportunities. The state also has an educational and tutelary function to ensure access to efficient public childcare, educational, medical and other services, creating favourable conditions for balancing paid work and family life. It must also ensure that implementation of such regulations is closely monitored. By fulfilling these responsibilities, the state can provide optimum conditions, which can serve as a basis on which family members can make decisions, thereby satisfying the needs of different families across the various regions of the country.

Note

1. The information reported here is based on a postal survey with 250 respondents followed by 50 in-depth interviews with individuals representing different family living arrangements, from different age groups and socio-economic categories. Elite interviews were conducted with 19 political, economic and civil society actors.

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10. Difficulties Ahead for Spanish Families

Mònica Badia i Ibáñez

In Spain, the democratic transition in the late 1970s produced a special type of social democracy that has left the welfare system largely unchanged. The full implementation of reform programmes and the expansion of provision was interrupted by the onset of economic recession, the emergence of public sector deficits, a shift to austerity policies in a context of new obligations linked to EU membership, and a change in the dominant international policy paradigm to one based on market principles (Rodríguez-Cabrero, 1999). Partly as a result of this interrupted and incomplete welfare state development, families in Spain have had a greater potential for subsidiary action to deal with the problems of their members than have families in most other European countries.

The traditional family ideology has influenced many social policies, based on a Catholic and patriarchal conception of the family and on the model of the male breadwinner (Parella, 2000). This conception is illustrated by the fact that the income of the whole family unit (not individual members) is taken as the basis for calculating entitlements to benefits such as pensions or unemployment benefits, thereby imposing an 'obligatory solidarity' on the family. To understand the reality of family policy in Spain, it is necessary continually to take account of its antecedents. The transition to democracy in Spain was marked and conditioned by a number of exogenous and endogenous elements. First of all, it unfolded within a framework of worldwide crisis that had a major impact on Spain, particularly on inflation and unemployment, curtailing the expansion of social protection. Secondly, a series of agreements with new social partners, who had been excluded from political participation during Franco's regime (1939–75), was established, beginning in 1977 with the Moncloa Pacts. The objective was to secure the continuity of capitalist productive relations in exchange for the development of welfare policy (Leal, 1992). This translated into wage moderation agreements and the expansion of social security coverage. However, the social pacts proved to be more successful in containing wages and the reform of the labour market than in developing the welfare state. During the transition, social policy was subordinated to economic policy, and, ultimately, the bureaucratic inefficiency bequeathed by the dictatorship curbed the implementation of new policies.

The Constitution of 1978 and the drive to decentralize the political system brought about changes in the family protection system. The first and most visible effect was an increase in the number of organizations providing social services. Unlike the previous monopoly of centralized decision-making bodies with legislative or executive power, the advent of self-governing communities (CCAAs) increased the number of these bodies and, above all, the resources available to existing public entities, such as town and city councils (Gallego *et al.*, 2003).

From the beginning of the transition to democracy, town and city councils and, to a lesser extent CCAAs, became the basic units for providing services and administering systems for family protection. Their role in the sector grew very quickly. On the one hand, their proximity to the citizens led them to become the immediate objects of emerging or, hitherto, unmet social demands. On the other, they were, at the same time, obliged to respond to demands from

families by providing innovative administrative solutions. City councils were an ideal instrument for symbolizing change and the new awareness of democratic institutions, a far cry from the orthodoxies of Franco's regime. These initiatives resulted, for example, in a proliferation of measures to deal with minors and women and children who were victims of abuse.

The absence of a pluralist family policy during Franco's regime, and the resonance or awareness of the innovative measures used as symbols of how the new era was breaking away from the past, led to the adoption of multiple innovations. But as these municipal responses emerged, their very heterogeneity and the absence of any harmonizing conception bolstered the system's traditional defects, preventing the creation of a modern family policy. Despite organizational innovations in the social area, the transition brought no radical restructuring of social policies. Instead, it tended to uphold the basic principles of the previous system and, generally, afforded continuity to the processes that had prevailed towards the end of the authoritarian regime.

This paper pays particular attention to the role of the family as the main provider of social services in Spain. It draws on interviews with Spanish families¹ to explore the extent to which the development of the welfare system has been affected by certain assumptions about the family and its gender and generational responsibilities. It then examines a wide range of structural and cultural factors and their impact in shaping men's and women's employment patterns and family relations. It thus questions the viability of Spanish family policy in terms of its capacity to adapt to new forms of family organization and changes in the social structure.

Changes in intrafamilial relations

Historically, the family has operated as the basic nucleus of solidarity, providing the first level of support for people in need, including children, the sick, invalids, and older people. This support was made possible by unpaid work done by women in the traditional family. Many Spaniards are aware of their dependence on the family in the absence of state provision, but feel that this value is out of touch with the needs of families and their realities in the twenty-first century, as explained by one lone mother, living in an urban environment and working full time:

The secret support is the family. The government offers no economic aid because the solution is that parents and family are supposed to help you, although I believe that this idea of the family helping out no longer exists. ... Moreover, I believe that society, in general, and the government should be more aware of the different types of family. The family of old no longer exists, because the family of old was the mother at home, the father out working and two children. Nowadays there are not two children, as having just one child is almost a luxury, the mother works, so does the father and they're separated anyway. So the family structure of old no longer exists.

The household–family sphere has borne a major part of the burden of services and care, which the state or the market either failed to cover, placing pressures on women to care for their family members, as illustrated by the following quotation from a female respondent in her sixties, working in farming and living in a multigenerational household, with her separated daughter and her son aged six:

The family has held out here more than in other countries, and still does. Although private family safety nets play a very important role, there is still a major burden on women

Another female respondent in her early forties, who was an urban housewife living in a reconstituted family with her daughter aged 24 from her previous marriage and a son aged 14 from her present marriage, described the complex living arrangements that she had experienced and the importance of the support she had received from her own family:

I got pregnant at 17, I went through with it, and I got married in October. Our relationship didn't work. When (my daughter) was 2, I decided to separate. I was 20. I ended up with a young daughter, and no job. Help from the city council took a long time to arrive, and I had to cover a lot of expenses. My parents and my sister supported me. At the beginning, he didn't pay me anything until there had been a court decision. I worked and got paid under the table for three years. I've never paid into Social Security. First I worked in a restaurant, and then in a shop. At 37, if I started to contribute to Social Security it would figure as my first job. When I met my second husband, I was in the process of a legal separation. We were both working. We decided to buy a flat. It was hard at the beginning. Good thing I had my family, because I got no help from the city Council.

The issue of family networks in Spain is perhaps especially important since the individualization process has not advanced so far as in other countries, and the family constitutes a refuge in the face of adversity (Badia, 2003). Most important, according to the respondents, are the care given to older and sick people by their families, family ties and solidarity in times of crises, the role played by the family in securing employment for children and in access by young people to the educational system. Although it remains true that the nuclear family is firmly rooted, it is common for members of different generations to live together, as in the case of young people who live with their parents until quite advanced adulthood, or parents taken into the home of one of their children after becoming widowed. However, a female respondent taking care of her 83-year old mother on dialysis argued that the differences between the generations has now grown to such an extent that multigenerational households are tense environments for all concerned, making for intergenerational conflict:

I think that in present times it is very difficult for three generations to live together, because we're all so different, due to the stress of life, different meal times, small flats. ... My mother goes to our village in June and July because the house is bigger and she feels more independent because she spends a lot of time on the ground floor. But in summer we do not have as much independence to go on holiday as we used to. We take it in turns to look after my grandmother.

Over-dependence on family solidarity was found in the field of housing. Most interviewees complained at the lack of state intervention that places extra burdens on parents with older children and grown-up children with elderly relatives. A middle-aged married male respondent with a six-year-old son explained the difficulties of accessing housing:

Any family wishing to have access to housing has to mortgage itself for life. Housing is around 20–22 million pesetas [120 000–132 000 euros] in Castellón, which means that you take about 30 to 40 years to pay it off on a 150 000 pesetas [900 euros] monthly wage. The question of family housing is neglected here. We were lucky because my in-laws had this empty flat.

The availability of affordable housing is an important factor determining where people live and how their living arrangements develop. The daughter of a family interviewed in Bilbao talked about the difficulties she had in finding accommodation in the city:

I was born in Bilbao 23 years ago and lived in this city all my life until two years ago, when I went to live with my partner. Although we both live in Bilbao we could not afford a house there so we decided to live in a little village about 40 minutes by car from Bilbao. When I see ads for 'cheap' flats in Bilbao, namely 40 and 50 million pesetas [240 000 and 300 000 euros], I see red. And to add insult to injury, we have to listen to comments about young people being so well off at home with their parents that they don't want to move out. The truth is that it comes down to either living with your parents or in the street! ... Most young people are already exposed to problems of unstable employment, on low wages, and it is virtually impossible to buy a house.

Respondents explained how, mainly as a result of economic pressures, young people are remaining in the parental home until quite advanced into their adult years. They referred to the increasing precariousness and scarcity of work, the rising cost of living, the lengthening of university studies, and the rising cost of housing, which made them reluctant to form a couple or a family.

At the same time as a lack of state support places pressures on housing, living near to family members remains attractive, perhaps because of the wish to be near to family, or, as some respondents suggested, to take advantage of family care networks. In terms of intrafamilial solidarity, both where relatives live together and where they do not, family cohesion is still very strong. Family members prefer to live close to one another in the same neighbourhood or in nearby towns to allow frequent contact and mutual assistance. Several respondents explained that they had moved house to be near to their relative and that recourse to the grandparents was essential to make work and family needs compatible. A male suburban flat owner explained:

When my son turned 4, we came to live in this small town. My in-laws let us use this house, and they live next door. Since we both work, we needed this support from the grandparents in order to take care of our son. It's a cosy sort of place, and we like it better than a big city, since it's much easier to get about, and there are a lot of places to play. We're here more than anything else to bring up our little one. His grandparents go and collect him at school, they make his lunch, and take him back again.

Similarly, an unmarried cohabiting respondent with a young daughter reported that they had moved to be close to grandparents for childcare but, in the future, the favour would be returned, when they could offer elder care for their parents close by:

We bought the flat in this area because it's the neighbourhood we were both brought up in. That's important because all our friends are here and it's where we grew up. There's good public transport, hospitals, and my parents live very close by. They can take care of our daughter, and when they're older, they'll have me close by.

A middle-aged female respondent explained her strategy to share household tasks and look after the children and how her husband's job, her job and the support from the grandparents determined how family tasks were shared among family members.

My husband is a fishmonger. He is a draughtsman by trade but gave it up when the shipbuilding companies closed down and had to start again. He ended up as a fishmonger and still is. Basically I do all the household work, although he helps quite a lot. When I have duty stints in the hospital my husband does everything. The grandparents (my parents) help us a lot. When I need a baby-sitter I call them. When I am on night duty, and as my husband gets up at 4.30, my mother spends the night here so the children aren't left alone, and my father drives them to school as it is a bit far away.

Inadequate policy responses to social and economic changes mean that, in Spain, children are born to mothers who have increasingly fewer children. This trend does not necessarily reflect ideal family size, but would seem to be due to the increased difficulty that couples have nowadays in raising children. Women are also tending to have children at a later age and, as a result, grandparents are also older at the birth of their first grandchild, a trend that is set to increase over time. Families, meanwhile, are getting smaller, with the proportion of childless women increasing by birth cohort. The phenomenon of one-child families is on the rise, encouraged by the experience of childhood without siblings, by the earlier access for women to work outside the home, although without any adjustments to school or work timetables, and by the absence of services and facilities for children and adolescents in outlying districts.

Policy needs and responses

Respondents saw measures for financial support, as announced in the Integrated Plan for Family Support for 2001–04, as mere palliatives. Families consider that assistance does not mean financial compensation alone, but also adaptations to working hours, school hours and leisure time. Schools need to resolve the matter of rationalizing their timetables, while continuing to observe appropriate pedagogical requirements. The administration, parent-and-teacher associations and extracurricular organizations, for their part, need to solve the problem of occupying children during their parents' working hours.

Some respondents apportioned blame for the lack of compatibility of working hours and school hours between the state and employers. According to one woman in her early forties, who was living in a flat in an urban environment, working as a secretary in a private company, and was married with triplets:

In reality, the state doesn't help us in any way. Either you're really poor, or you don't get any help at all. What helps me out is to have a reduction in working hours to be able to breastfeed. Or working hours that are adapted to crèche hours. In the public sector, the problem isn't that bad, but if you work in a private business, you're out on the street in no time.

Lack of services to support caring for children prevents mothers from taking jobs in Spain, and the inflexibility of working hours, combined with family obligations, limit women's choices between employment and family life. Family policy itself promotes a secondary presence of women in the labour market, which translates into low rates of women's participation. Also reconciling work in the private sector with childcare was found to be highly problematic. The following quotation from a young mother illustrates these points:

When my husband sat the civil service exams for his current job, I thought about doing it as well, but his work shifts are very complicated. If you work the same shift, there's no problem, but if you have a different shift, you hardly ever see

your partner. We decided to live on less, but with more family togetherness. So I can spend more time with my kids, for example, to help them with schoolwork or studying for an exam ... you need a more flexible workday. What makes me really sad is to pack a kid off onto the bus at 8 in the morning knowing he won't get to school until 8.45. I prefer to take him myself; it's only 10 minutes in the car. But if you have to be at work at 8, and the kids start school at 9, you stick them on the bus and then you can go off to work.... Measures need to be taken to make working hours and school hours compatible. My husband is a civil servant, and his colleagues are always requesting time off for parental leave because their wives work in the private sector, and they never get this type of leave.

At the same time, it is felt that the law on parental leave in Spain could go further in encouraging fathers to take leave. The Law on the Conciliation of Employment and Family Life (5 November 1999), aimed at helping male and female workers to reconcile work and family responsibilities, did not go far enough, especially because it does not make provision for extrafamilial care services that might assist workers with family responsibilities. Furthermore, while the law provides equal rights for both parents, it ignores *de facto* differences in the labour market and in the domestic sphere between men and women, which usually means that mothers and not fathers apply for leave to look after a child. Labour legislation could play a more active role in creating new ways of balancing employment and family life by reinforcing men's sharing of responsibilities with women in looking after children and family members in need of care. For example, initiatives could be addressed exclusively to fathers and some type of incentives could be given to employers to implement family-friendly work practices. Moreover, some rights should not be transferable, such as the right to parental leave. An employer would behave in a different way in terms of contracting a man or a woman if he/she thought the man would also ask for the leave.

The views of Spanish families on measures more conducive to making work compatible with family needs are summarized in the following quotes. An unmarried mother in her late thirties, living in a flat with her partner and young daughter, suggested that:

Besides paid leave for looking after children, the elderly and the disabled, they should offer more flexible working hours.

A male respondent, in his mid-forties, employed as a commercial director in a private company and living in a same-sex couple, also spoke in favour of more flexible working arrangements:

Regarding measures to help parents combine work and the home, it would help for companies to have fixed working hours, but also a certain amount of flexi hours you could do in a week or month whenever it suited you.

One respondent expressed her concerns as a mother of a large family and advocated a change of legislation as an effective way of coping with the demands of family life and making professional and family needs compatible:

When, five years ago, the youngest of my four children was born (the eldest is 12), I took advantage of the legislation allowing me a reduction by one-third in my working day, with the corresponding reduction in pay. I have less than one year to be able to enjoy this reduction, and I constantly wonder, if my kids are still small and they need me, why is it not possible to lengthen this possibility of a reduced working day for a few more years, at least until they can be a bit more self-sufficient? Going back to my full-time schedule will mean having to leave the

children to have their midday meal at school, and have a babysitter until my husband or I can get home from work. In other words, expenses much greater than the amount I have forfeited in earnings, apart from not being able to take care of my kids myself.

In response to the pressures placed on working parents, respondents felt that the state could do more to assist them. However, as the following quote from a retired man living with his wife and an elderly relative, suggests, the role of the family is implicit within this demand:

Tax deductions and family benefits need to be expanded so that people will feel better about having another child; right now they're ridiculous.

Despite the many calls for state support, especially to relieve the pressures on carers also working outside the home, it is important to recognize that some areas of family life are still considered as private. Most respondents were opposed to the state interfering directly in family life to promote family building, for example, one woman in her early forties, employed as a social worker, and living in an unmarried cohabiting relationship with two children aged 17 and 21, expressed the view that:

Regarding whether or not the state should give incentives so that people have more children, that's a private decision. What I think is sad is that there are external conditions (employment, the size of dwellings) that end up making you decide one way or the other. That's what needs to be resolved. The state must make facilities available for families, such as crèches, more affordable housing; it's not just about economic benefits, but also social services. A more favourable climate needs to be created.

Care for older people is also seen as an area in which public resources are inadequate. Personal social services, designed to enable older people to live independently in their homes, are a new phenomenon in Spain (since the late 1980s). These include home helps, day centres, holiday programmes and the provision of subsidies to non-profit organizations that care for older people. In the 1990s, steps were taken towards decentralization of social services, with the general state administration delegating authority to the self-governing communities, which in turn delegated it to the local administrations. In spite of the significant advances in the past 20 years, the level of coverage of public social services in Spain is, however, neither sufficient or homogeneous.

Normally the local administration is responsible for home-care services and the procedures for granting them, including the requirements that must be met by the users and, if appropriate, their financial contribution. In some cases, limits are established regarding access, which may seem arbitrary: having a medium to low income or having some form of family support could be reasons for refusing to grant access to services. Although local municipalities administer home-care services, these are contracted out to private or voluntary organizations that are deemed better able to provide quality services to a targeted market at a better price for the state. The coverage of this service is very limited: according to the Instituto de Migraciones y Servicios Sociales (IMERSO): there were only 138 101 users of this service in 2000, 2.05% of the total population aged 65 or over, which is far from the 8% target established in 1993 by the Gerontology Plan, and a long way from providing the quality or intensity of the service that was recommended.

Telecare services are also available for older people in Spain, especially recipients of home-care services living alone². The Gerontology Plan

established a target of 12.5% of the elderly persons living alone (around one million). According to IMSERSO, in 2000 there were 73 500 telecare users, around 1.2% of the total population aged 65 or over, which is again far from meeting the target set.

Day-care centres were intended for older people who are unable to look after themselves (dressing and preparing meals), and to provide respite for carers. Again, according to IMSERSO, in 2000, there were 9 000 individual places to look after people during the day, either in public or private facilities, providing for approximately 0.13% of the total population of 65 or over. In addition to providing day care, some centres also run temporary, short-stay programmes for elderly persons. In January 2003, IMSERSO reported 155 centres, offering 1683 beds in public or private facilities, covering less than 0.05% of the overall older population.

The various administrations can thus take initiatives, but they are not always well coordinated. Where older people do not have any relatives, the need for additional services is most strongly felt, as one social worker commented:

I work in a rural area with a large elderly population. There are few young people in the area. Luckily, adult children are taking care of their elderly parents, but there are many cases of childless and unmarried elderly people. A girl has been employed as a home help to attend to people living alone, but it wasn't possible to take her on full-time. We need more resources, and above all, to consolidate the team of social workers because we are dealing with ridiculous contractual arrangements, and if there's any sort of confrontation with the employing authority, your job is at risk. Plus, your job depends on which party wins the next city election.

The state has attempted to respond to the needs of family carers but interviewees feel that the practical value of state legislation is worthless, as the following quote from a married man in his sixties, living in an urban flat with two elderly relatives, suggests:

The much-heralded law on the Conciliation of Employment with Family Life is not worthy of such a deceptive title. Such conciliation is impossible if you have invalid parents and you have to live on what you make and it's not enough to be able to pay a person to care of them.

The overall view of respondents, based on individual and family experiences, was that action taken by public authorities regarding social and family policies is not meeting citizens' needs. Some respondents felt that accessing services was a major problem. For one woman in her mid-thirties, living alone in a rented flat and working as a teacher in a private school:

The thing is that, in order to receive benefits, you have to fill out so much paperwork and sometimes you don't even ask for help because you don't have the time to fill out the forms or you don't understand how to do it. Every year schoolbooks have to be bought, and families are stressed out because they have this huge expense. The more kids you have, the bigger the expense. So it destabilizes family life. Also, I see the problems in employment contracts. It's a big problem, because you hear all the time 'my husband's contract expired'. And although you can get some help, it's so ridiculous that you have to live on a shoestring.

Respondents also mentioned the problem of finding out about what services are available. For example, a teenage mother, knew that assistance is available

for cases like hers, but no one had explained to her how she might gain access to it: *'The reality is that there is help available for the baby, but you have to know where to go.'* Social services dedicated to teenage mothers are precarious, and their budgets are small. Furthermore, for teenage mothers with parents who have a medium income level, financial help is not available, and the economic and social burden usually falls on the girl's family. Services for cases like these are provided at local level. Help is not, however, always forthcoming, as one young mother commented:

My daughter needs a special medicine for premature babies, and I asked for help from the social worker, and she told me that they wouldn't help. It's very hard, because we just can't make ends meet with the 110 000 pesetas [660 euros] my boyfriend makes. The apartment costs 60 000 [360 euros] and my daughter's medicine ... that she takes twice a day, costs 2500 [15 euros].

Women in the lower and middle classes complained that they had requested public assistance without much success, and they said that the only ones among them to receive help are those who are completely and utterly destitute. In other words, interviewees think that public support should reach beyond the most severe cases.

The impasse between families and policy actors

In a late-developing and under-developed welfare state such as Spain, families have never ceased to be direct providers of a large part of the social services, and the welfare state has been deeply affected by certain assumptions about the family and its gender and generational responsibilities. The institutional emphasis in the regulation and organization of welfare coverage falls more on the family than on the market. Most families, therefore, continue to rely entirely on their members for support rather than the state, employers or the non-profit sector. The family is the explicit protagonist of social policies and is the main source of provision to meet social needs.

Increasing female participation in the labour market, population ageing, changing family forms and intergenerational relations are calling into question the ability of women to carry the main responsibility for younger and older dependants, creating demand for external support. Spain has a poor record in public policies design to help women and men to combine their family and professional responsibilities. In general, the problems of combining labour market and domestic work and organizing household chores and leisure are not being addressed directly by policy makers, especially in mid-life when caring obligations towards both younger and older generations may compete and affect employment and leisure opportunities. Another major trend noted in Spain is the extension of 'youth', due to longer periods spent in education, problems in finding a first job, lack of income and consequently of housing, which are creating and increasing the dependency of young people on their parents, leading to additional demands on women's time.

Under the current conditions, there are difficulties ahead for families in Spain since poor public coverage of social services to assist families with child and eldercare is placing an unbearable strain on most families making it difficult to cope with the situation. This calls in question the viability of Spanish family policy and its capacity to adapt to new forms of family organization and changes in the social structure.

Note

1. The interviews reported here were conducted by the author for the IPROSEC project in 2001, with fifty-two men and women in different areas of Spain. Respondents with experience of the living arrangements covered by research were identified from a small-scale survey and using snowballing to ensure they met the socio-economic criteria set for the project.
2. Telecare puts older people in contact with the Red Cross or the municipal social services through a bracelet with an alarm that is worn by the individual. In the case of an emergency, the wearer can press the alarm and will be connected with a care service, which has the records of the person, the key of the house and all the details needed. If the service is provided through a municipality, it is free, but the Red Cross requires the recipient to pay according to their means.

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11. Traditional and Modern Policy Responses to Italian Family Diversity

Valentina Longo and Devi Sacchetto

As in other European countries, family models in Italy have changed and diversified considerably since the end of the 1970s. However, state intervention continues to be based on a 'traditional' family type, due in part to the influence of the Catholic Church and conservative political parties that have prevented the modernization of family policies. Italy's policy environment relies very strongly on the concept of family as a social network, as in other southern European countries (Greece, Portugal and Spain). Obligations are assigned to the extended family, and state intervention is residual, or rather subsidiary, in comparison to the responsibilities and obligations of the family members.

During the 1990s, a growing disjunction emerged between the ideologies advocated by the Catholic Church and the policy needs of new types of families. A strong contradiction became apparent between the family as a unit and individual rights, raising questions about the extent to which policies meet the needs of contemporary families. This paper draws on 250 surveys and 45 in-depth interviews, representing as far as possible the different family models in Italy, to analyse the extent to which family policies meet the needs of citizens in contemporary Italy, and the kind of policy responses families are looking for to help them deal with the development of new, or more flexible, family structures. Reference is also made in the paper to the two related phenomena of internal and external migration.

The paper begins with a presentation of social indicators to provide an understanding of the nature and extent of the socio-demographic changes that have been occurring in Italy, and the policy environment in which they are taking place. It then goes on to use the interview material to examine perceptions of the de structuring of the family unit in the absence of adequate social policies.

Socio-demographic change in Italy

Italy is undergoing socio-demographic changes that are altering the structure of families. Marriage is no longer a phenomenon that concerns most of the Italian population as it did in 1970 (Fernández Cordón and Sgritta, 2000). The marriage rate is decreasing: it fell from 5.5 per 1000 inhabitants in 1990 to 4.8 in 2000. A major difference with the past is the growing incidence of non-religious marriages, which rose during the 1990s to reach a rate of 1 in 4 marriages in 2001 (Istat, 2001). At the same time, single-person households increased from 20.3% to 24.3% of all households between 1990 and 2000, and the percentage of couples without children increased from 18.8% to 20.5% (Eurostat, 2001b, table 9). Over the same period, the proportion of couples with children fell from 50.9% to 45.5%. Consequently, the size of families has become smaller in Italy (Eurostat, 2001b, table 9).

As elsewhere in Western Europe, the average age at first marriage is also increasing: in 1990 the average age for men was 28.4, compared to 25.6 for women, and by 1998 these figures had reached 30 and 27.1 respectively

(Censis, 2001, p. 277). However, later age at first marriage does not prevent family instability, even though divorce is not so widespread in Italy as in other European countries: the total divorce rate per 100 marriages stood at 10 in the late 1990s and was lower in Italy than in any other EU member state (Sardon, 2002, table 10).

Unmarried cohabitation is becoming more common, especially among the young, well-educated generations, but it is still a residual living arrangement in Italy: in 1997, cohabiting couples in the 16–29 age cohort accounted for 19.27% of all couples in this age group, while the EU average was 31.16%, according to ECHP data. Also children born outside marriage constituted a minority, but this figure had risen from 6.5% in 1990 to 9.2% in 1999 (Censis, 2001, p. 277).

An important factor affecting family life in contemporary Italy is increasing female labour market participation rate. The female employment rate has increased throughout Italy, from 28.1% in 1995, to 31.7% in 2001. However, large differences persist between the north and the south of the country (Table 11.1), together with variations between cities and villages and different educational levels. In the labour market, women are more often than men employed on non-standard contracts. This kind of job generally offers limited social protection, for example in terms of maternity leave or family allowance entitlements.

The number of women working outside the home has been rising constantly among younger people in Italy: the ‘worker–wife–mother’ model is increasingly replacing the traditional ‘homemaker–wife–mother’ model, especially in the north-east of the country, where 71% of young couples (where the woman is aged under 35) in 2000 were dual-earner couples, compared to 68% in the north-west and 50% in central Italy (Istat, 2001). As a consequence, women are taking on an increasing proportion of the total volume of work. The spread of dual-earner families has made the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women a necessity. Despite the tendency for women to be in employment and no longer full-time homemakers, the care services provided by the state for infirm older people and children are sparse, and often have opening hours that are incompatible with the needs of working women. The persistence of the traditional asymmetrical model of the division of familial labour and the lack of social and political measures to support the family (Saraceno, 1998) are more and more often causes for externalizing childrearing.

In sum, the situation in Italy is characterized on the one hand, by family structures marked by tradition and, on the other, by the development of new

Table 11.1 Male and Female employment rates in Italy for population aged over 15 years, 1995–2001, in %

	1995		1997		1999		2001	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
North	60.5	34.2	60.2	35.2	60.6	36.8	61.2	38.9
Centre	56.8	29.8	56.3	30.3	56.5	31.9	57.1	34.1
South	50.5	18.9	49.8	18.9	50.0	19.4	51.2	20.9
Italy	56.3	28.1	55.8	28.6	56.1	29.8	56.9	31.7

Source: Authors’ own compilation from Istat, 2002, data.

family forms. This differentiation also has a spatial dimension, with new family types found in areas characterized by rapid social and economic change, as in the north and in urban areas. In such cases, family life is strictly governed by working times and, more generally, by the needs of the productive sphere. By contrast, family living arrangements in the south are characterized by the persistent lack of opportunities for finding a formal job, resulting in the reproduction of traditional family models based on intrafamilial solidarity. However, the model is being called into question in the south by the younger generations, by new forms of migration within Italy and by the growing need for women to be present in the public sphere.

Policy provision for families

In Italy, the family as a unit is obliged to maintain and care for dependants, up to the fourth degree of relationship. The state plays only a residual role, and family solidarity replaces the fragmentary welfare system. The well-being of family members is seen as a private matter centred on the maternal role, while the responsibility of the state is to deal with poverty. Family policies are, as a result, mainly based on legislative regulations, social and educational services and economic support, including tax relief for dependent children, spouses and other cohabiting relatives, family and parental leave allowances that vary in value according to the type of employment and family income (Livraghi, 1999).

Policy makers do not appear to be legitimating the emerging forms of family life discussed above and, in some cases, the state places obstacles in the way of such families. Policy continues to be founded on a mythical social structure based on extended family networks with traditional gender divisions of labour and large family size. For example, current family policies frequently discriminate between married and unmarried couples in terms of access to services and benefits, and marriage has become an essential criterion for gaining access to benefits and services provided by law. The current concept of the family is still linked to marriage and children, and family life histories continue to be founded primarily on marriage. The birth of a child often formalizes the family relationship. In Veneto, in north-east Italy, for example, to gain access to public housing a couple must be married.

Maternity continues to be seen as a risk for many women at the workplace, despite legislation protecting working mothers. Women still tend to change their working arrangements more often to suit the needs of their families, thereby sacrificing their professional careers, while men, particularly older men, are not involved in raising their children or in care for older people, and more generally in family events. Women are, therefore, exposed to the problems of the incompatibility of conservative policies in a society where women are increasingly more likely to be employed outside the home. As one married female respondent in her fifties with two children argued:

I used to subordinate my work to the needs of my family; therefore my career was also fragmented. I looked for a job that could be organized around the needs of my family.

The interviews highlighted several cases where employers were not implementing laws protecting women in these circumstances. A woman of reproductive age is often asked at a recruitment interview whether she wants to have children. A man would be preferred for a job vacancy if her reply were in

the affirmative. Moreover, cases are still found where women must sign a legal document provided by her employer, stipulating that she can be dismissed if she becomes pregnant. Two of the young mothers interviewed reported that their employers refused their request for part-time work because of the 'productivity needs' of the company, rather than considering their family needs. In response to such actions, employees and some politicians are advocating drastic sanctions, such as prison sentences, for employers who do not respect legislation on parental leave. At the moment penalties are not very strong and, above all, not effective.

For younger women wanting to have children, both in the north and the south of the country, the main obstacle continues to be their financial situation, especially the lack of any guarantee for those with non-standard work contracts to enable them to benefit from maternity leave and to gain access to services. According to a male respondent in his forties, living in a reconstituted family: '*The criteria for entitlement should be revised ... access to services is too difficult; it must be made simpler.*' As indicated in the previous section, women are more likely than men to be employed in non-standard jobs, which means that, if they become pregnant, they have no rights to paid maternity leave or leave to care for sick children. In these cases, women's educational level is not relevant because non-standard jobs apply to all women.

Italy also provides some examples of laws that purposefully exclude some people as recipients of state assistance. For example, the increased incidence of inward migration, particularly of asylum seekers, has provoked alarm in the more affluent north-east of the country, where residents fear the loss of their social protection due to the influx of migrants. This has resulted in demands to exclude international and national migrants from entitlements to benefits and services. In Veneto, for example, entitlement rules for a public loan require the recipient to have Italian citizenship. Similarly, a Lombardia regional law has been proposed that would give maternity allowance only to women who have been living in the region for at least 10 years, thereby excluding *de facto* most migrants.

While the policies themselves place obstacles in the way of providing support to families in whatever guise, the structure of the welfare state in Italy also prevents the state from taking proactive and decisive action to cater for the needs of families. The solidarity principle, on which Italian social welfare is founded, maintains that the state should not have to do what citizens can do for themselves, thus providing the basis for a minimal welfare system. Where the state does provide services to help families, these are delivered at the local level through the region and municipality. A further example of the residual state is the priority given to the voluntary sector in Italy. A mutual understanding has developed between state and third sector, whereby the former is expected to take responsibility for the welfare needs of families, with guarantees and support from the state (Ranci, 1999, p. 245). In terms of policy responses, therefore, Italian family policy can be said to be fragmentary and residual, placing the onus on families to take care of their own welfare needs, and turning to the voluntary sector when these needs are not being met. State provision is a safety net for those who fall through the welfare protection services of both the family and the voluntary sector, and continues to be characterized by an emphasis on the traditional family unit.

Family change and policy stagnation

This part of the paper assesses whether and how this policy environment is responding to the emerging needs of families by drawing on the interview materials with Italian families. It considers the way in which the decisions taken about family life, including marriage and childbearing, childcare and elder care are shaped by external conditions, including areas where the state could make improvements to help families cope with their responsibilities in light of social change.

Changing family living arrangements have not ushered in a new approach by policy actors in terms of their policy responses. However, respondents felt that the state could do more to help them in their family lives. This can be illustrated by the example of support for childcare. The Italian birth rate is the lowest in Europe (1.24 children per woman in 2000), but the choice about whether or not to have children is most often determined by the specific family and work situation, more specifically by the amount of job security. The level of income also impacts on family decisions and family well-being. The economic climate is generally perceived as playing an important part in shaping future plans, especially among young people. Indeed, economic stability is considered necessary before couples embark on having the number of children they want.

Economic security can be assured at the family level through women's greater access to work but, with increasing numbers of dual-earner families, respondents argue that they require assistance with childcare to help balance work and family life. The core of the problem of existing services is the incompatibility between inflexible and expensive services and the demand for a more flexible workforce regarding working hours. As one young mother with two children pointed out:

I should like to be able to look after my child and the whole of his upbringing myself. I have managed to distribute my holidays and to work for 6 or 7 hours a day without a break, but now I've used up my holiday entitlement and I don't know what will happen. I hope to be able to have a reduction in working hours accepted, but I'm worried that it won't work out.

Despite the problems, interviewees are concerned about the possibility of an intrusive state and call, instead, for local and national institutions to create conditions conducive to childcare that will provide help for families. Respondents were also opposed to pressure being exerted to persuade people to have children, since this was seen as part of the legacy of fascism and, above all, it was not thought to be conducive to safeguarding the future welfare of children. However, procreation remains a fundamental constraint on the work and career opportunities of women, and is only alleviated for wealthier families, namely those who are able to pay for help with family and childrearing. A key measure that would respond to the needs of working mothers and the concern of the state over declining birthrates is the provision of childcare facilities. The availability of places in nurseries varies across the country: the situation is better in large towns, particularly in the centre-north (Saraceno, 1999). All respondents accept that the state should intervene extensively in early childhood, above all to oversee local provision and to ensure availability and access to childcare places for a larger number of citizens.

Nurseries are seen not only as instruments enabling working mothers to keep their jobs, but they are also recognized for their educational and

socializing value. However, they meet the needs of only a very small proportion of children aged 0–3: in 2000, just 6% of all children in this age group were in public, private or voluntary sector nurseries, compared to 34% in the UK (OECD, 2001), which is not renowned for the generosity of its provision. Generally, childcare in Italy is expensive for families, and this contributes to disparities between the rich and poor, not only because poorer families cannot afford the cost of childcare but also because the cost serves as a disincentive for mothers to look for work. Wealthier families can, however, choose between private and public childcare, or private nurseries, while securing work that increases their incomes. Despite the demand for services for young children, some working mothers prefer to entrust a child aged 0–6 to a relative or childminder, because nurseries are not able to look after children when they are ill. Other solutions then have to be found and paid for. Also, many mothers want their children to grow up in the home environment among people they trust.

Housing was a second area in which it was felt the state should intervene more actively, since problems in finding adequate housing are often the reason for delaying marriage. Until the late 1980s, the Italian state built social housing, but the programmes stopped, and the existing social housing stock was privatized. Foreign migrants were most affected. They are often forced to live with a number of other people in small houses because the cost of rent is so high. The strengthening of the power of landlords, and the lack of property for rental sustains the medium to high levels of rent. Respondents considered housing policy to be derisory and far from answering the needs of individuals and families. Only in one case in Venice had a couple received an interest-free loan from the municipality for the purchase of a house, and this was considered fundamental in their decision to have a child. This kind of local institutional support is very limited. It is found in the Venice region because housing is so expensive in the city.

Thirdly, policies to support the needs of older people were considered to be a key area for future policy development. All respondents complained about the lack of attention being paid in Italian society to older people. Some advocated a return to the myth of older people as the repository of wisdom and to the centrality of their role in society, but this is difficult to reconcile with the need for autonomy and with the demands of work. Older people spoke of the problem of being depersonalized, medicalized and sanitized. One woman, who was married without children talked about her mother in the following terms:

You shouldn't to put an old lady in hospital or in a rest home; she could die because of it. The hospital is good just for emergencies, but there should be domiciliary care, so that old people can live serenely in their later years with familiar people.

Domiciliary care is being put in place at local level, but in view of the lack of services for the third age, some respondents had entrusted the care of an older relative to migrant women who lived and worked in the home of the person they were caring for, often without formalizing the arrangement. Respondents believed that the state should also support such measures by providing a regulatory framework for living-in foreign carers to ensure they are adequately paid and do not work unreasonably long hours at the discretion of their employers. Employing a migrant woman also meant that the older person can stay in their family surroundings and remain independent from their children. One 35-year-old female respondent had combined this solution with the

purchase of a flat so that she could live near to her ageing parents but still retain her own independence with her family:

We want to be independent to live our own lives; we found this solution with this Moldavian woman because there was nothing else to do, but they only live one km from here, so if something should happen... in one minute we can reach them.

However, it is apparent that different demographic profiles and cultural values require a multifaceted response by the state, and also by the regions and municipalities, which now have greater responsibility for providing family services, rather than the state. This explains the differences that exist in service provision at the subnational level. As noted above, the traditional family model is still the reference point in family policies: the needs of some households are met, but new kinds of household are seldom taken into consideration. In fact, devolution did not bring a completely new approach to family policies: instead, it has tended to reproduce traditional models, and individuals who do not conform to such a model have to make their own arrangements.

Welfare services are usually more widespread in larger than in smaller municipalities; nevertheless access to services is often easier in the latter case. The disparity of provision and the wastage of resources are widely criticized. The opinion is generally held that allowances for dependent adults and older people (attendance allowances, invalid pensions) do not enable them to have a decent standard of independent living. The amount paid is considered inadequate; it is always secondary to the work and care of families themselves. Family allowances are so low that few people make use of them. The income threshold for entitlement was considered by respondents to be too low and to penalize self-employed people. Some benefits are paid only to very poor families, with the result that families with lower incomes are not entitled to receive certain public services. According to one woman living in the north west:

My husband and I both work. I work as a secretary and my husband is a teacher in secondary school. We have two children and I have to pay the maximum for the pre-school because they consider we're rich. It's very difficult for us to cope with our needs.

Other differences can be found between the rich and poor municipalities, or generally between the richer part of the centre-north and the poorer areas of the south. In the islands, in addition to the lack of co-ordination of health services, respondents complained about the disparity between municipalities in the availability and quality of services for domiciliary care of older people. Only the wealthier municipalities were able to provide such services.

Given the diversity of policy provision and the different cultural groups that can be distinguished at the regional level in Italy, it is not difficult to understand why the policy needs respondents identified were so varied. A clear geographical divide emerges from these different accounts as to what families want: the centre-north is clearly distinguished from the south (with Sicily) and Sardinia.

In the centre-north respondents felt local institutions were the main family policy actors. In this area, take-up of public services was greater than elsewhere in Italy, with no marked differences according to educational levels. Nevertheless, the well-educated and richer families more often used private services, while poorer people used public services. The high demand for mental

health services, nurseries, domiciliary care for older people and services for young children is also associated with the expansion in the working population, who have little opportunity to provide informal services. Family networks exist, but they are not so extensive as in the past.

Some differences were found between the centre and the north of Italy in the opinions of respondents about approaches to family policy. In the centre, more support was expressed for state intervention in response to the needs of single people, rather than as members of families, as in the north-east, for example. Most respondents felt state intervention should be directed towards protecting individual freedom: divorce, abortion, contraception, or fertility treatment, are seen as services for individuals and not for families, and are considered to be a question of freedom of choice for the person concerned.

In the south of Italy, the interviewees see the state as the main policy actor, even if its role is considered to be financial or simply that of a guardian. Often respondents said they had no faith in local institutions because they usually do not have the means to satisfy the needs of citizens. In the south, socio-economic and cultural differences are considerable, and people in medium and low socio-economic groups and with low educational levels have little contact with institutions. Instead, families themselves provide primary care. By contrast, those with a higher status make greater use of private and public services and have recourse to family networks only in emergencies. People with high socio-economic status tend either to remain at home to care for their own children or to entrust them to private childminders. In the south, the provision of services for families is very poor in rural areas, while, in the towns, services are available but are expensive and not of very good quality. Families are, therefore, asking for greater intervention or, at the very least, for more extensive services that cost less.

In Sardinia, respondents consider that national legislative solutions are a useful starting point, but they are not sufficient to satisfy the multiplicity of needs people have, which are too complex to be catered for in legislation. In addition, a cultural problem exists in responding to such issues with legislative reform, because often families do not want to see state interference in family life. Instead, they prefer to solve their problems within the family itself, without the support of public services. One female respondent aged 60 in Sardinia, married without children, commented on the decisions her family had taken to deal with a family problem:

My mother is very old and she needs assistance. We are five sisters and we live in different parts of Italy; each of us spends four months with our mother. My mother lives alone in Nuoro, before she used to live with my daughter-in-law, from 1985 to 1980, but in 1980 my brother died. My daughter-in-law had to travel a lot and we decided on this solution.

Consensus in diversity

The interviews with Italian families revealed an important consensus that the well-being of the family should be guaranteed by the family itself, especially as a place of affection, and by the state from a material point of view, particularly through local authorities close to citizens themselves and with knowledge of local problems. From north to south, the importance of services for children and older people was stressed. Wealthier families are able to maintain an internal

balance, while less privileged groups are dependent on access to services and rely on external support. Here a disparity was found between expressed needs and the available services. Respondents advocated state intervention but without intruding into private life. They wanted flexible and low priced policies that are able to expand the choices of individual members of families. They were asking for a fiscal policy closer to the needs of the citizens, as well as policies targeted at poorer people or those most in need of support.

The research showed that family policies are not meeting the needs of the citizen, but instead offer standard types of services based on a static and conservative model of family life that is no longer relevant for many Italians. Strong contradictions are emerging but, as in the past, families have to make their own arrangements using their own networks to satisfy their needs. Given the rapid changes taking place in Italy, and especially the impacts they are having on women, without the necessary policy protection, the question is not whether families can continue to make those arrangements, but when they will buckle under the pressure created by the residual welfare state.

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12. Family Self-Sufficiency and Distrust of the State in Greece

Dimitra Taki and Spyridon Tryfonas

Drawing on interviews with policy actors and policy users carried out for the IPROSEC project¹, this paper explores the relationship between policy needs and provision in Greece. It argues that socio-demographic change has brought about a situation in which families are less able to carry the burden of family responsibilities than they were in the past. While the need for state intervention is identified, respondents were reluctant to allow the state to intervene to an extent that would weaken the highly appreciated autonomy of family networks in service provision. The paper examines this ambivalence and the search for a compromise between family solidarity and extrafamilial support.

Socio-demographic change in Greece

Greece is currently undergoing demographic changes that are also being experienced elsewhere in Europe to varying degrees. The population is ageing, the birthrate is declining and is now one of the lowest in Europe, the average size of the family has declined rapidly, and more women are working in paid employment than in previous generations (United Nations, 2003). A further characteristic, unique to postwar Greek history, is the increased inflow of immigrants over the 1990s, especially women from the former communist countries and the Balkans who are employed as carers in Greek families². In the early 1990s, these women were working primarily in the black market economy, with no green card, no insurance, no minimum wage and no control of working conditions, but recent changes in legislation have slightly improved their situation.

Structural changes in the labour market have also taken place. Different sectors of the economy have developed, especially the service sector, which has increased women's employment rates (Del Boca, 2002, table 1), though they have not yet reached the European average. The number of people occupied in the agricultural sector has declined rapidly, while the public sector has expanded due to postwar state policies to secure stability in Greece, as discussed by Tsoukalas (1987). Nonetheless, unemployment rates among women, young people and people entering the labour market for the first time are high. Furthermore, while more women are in paid work, the private sector is failing to reconcile the family and work environment because of poor implementation of existing labour legislation³. Greek families are, therefore, experiencing important changes in their daily lives (Kontogiorgis *et al.*, 1995).

Weak policy provision for families

Policy may be employed as a means of easing the burdens on families resulting from socio-demographic change. In other European countries, where similar socio-demographic changes are also occurring, the state has responded by intervening to varying degrees. In Greece, however, the research shows not only that family policy provision is minimal, but also that the low level of

intervention and type of intervention may compound the problems associated with socio-demographic change.

Family policy in Greece is not a neatly defined policy field of which policy actors are aware. Furthermore, in the interviews with elites, no uniform understanding of the term was found to exist, and no clear appreciation of the role of family policies emerged. Instead, policy actors defined family policy according to their personal, and/or professional interests and backgrounds. Two of the political actors argued that

[Family policy is] a framework of measures and policies that will help family members towards the direction of a democratic family and promote the role of women within it.

Family policy is the combination of professional and family life. ..., to enhance women's involvement in the labour market.

For one of the economic actors:

Family policy is policy that ensures family members are helped to remain productive so that the family does not suffer and, at the same time, employment is easier to manage.

Given the variety of definitions, the function of this policy field can be considered to serve different purposes. For example, family policies, according to the above respondents, can be used to help negotiate internal family relations, to balance work and family life and to encourage specific family members to enter the workforce. Policy actors agreed that family policy, however defined, is implemented largely through financial benefits, such as allowances and tax reductions, instead of promoting a more holistic and service-targeted family policy. Secondly, they argued that policies are targeted and, in most cases, priority is given in the design of particular measures (benefits or services) to meet the needs of specific population groups, such as unemployed women, very low-income families and families at risk of social exclusion. However, while the limited resources of the state are used to target these groups, it was widely acknowledged by the respondents that these categories include mainly older people and large families that play an active role in pressure groups.

Policy actors involved in family policy also lack co-ordination among themselves in understanding each other's roles in policy formulation and implementation both within and across different groups of actors. Indeed, only one respondent suggested that co-ordination exists between parties in the exchange of relevant information within a specifically designed and targeted process. However, this was in the past rather than the present. She commented that:

The first and last time co-operation took place in demographic policy (which is related to family policy) was in 1992 when a cross-party parliamentary committee for demographic issues was established, aimed at the creation of a national Council.

In general, however, co-operation between sectors does not exist in Greece.

The lack of a common understanding about the definition, scope and role of actors in family policy in Greece has several consequences. Family policy is extremely fragmented, lacking a common language or everyday vernacular through which policies can be discussed, and common agendas might be set. It

also prevents the designation of a leader who would help to co-ordinate policies to complement each other and prevent overlap.

A further problem arises in family policy in Greece because it is also crisis-driven. Because the family policy agenda is set in response to major social problems that need to be urgently contained rather than trying to prevent them from arising, the impact of policies is immediate and short term, rather than long term and pro-active, rendering it difficult to deliver anything meaningful through impact assessments. Coupled with this short-termism, the fragmentation of the policy field also prevents a thorough evaluation process from taking place. Even where research is undertaken over the longer term, in the absence of a concerted effort to feed research findings into the policy process, the findings are not exploited. One respondent argued that the state could be more effective in helping families 'if the conclusions from research were taken into consideration by the state'. NGOs and economic actors argue that policies do not necessarily respond to the needs of individuals but to the demands of those with the loudest voices, who use the limited communication channels between political and civil society.

Policy users' experiences of family policy

As the findings above suggest, policy measures concerning families do exist in Greece, but among the families interviewed they were seldom known about or identified. Among policy users, no clear understanding of family policy was provided, and many found it very difficult to see the relationship between the health and education systems, allowances, benefits and tax deductions and their own family lives.

However, when asked about their experience of these benefits and specific services, they suggested that the impact of policies varied according to the different stages of the family cycle that families were experiencing. From the family interviews, three kinds of family types and their expressed needs and desires for family policy can be established: young couples, couples with children, and people responsible for the care of older relatives.

In many cases – usually younger couples at the beginning of family formation and with children under school age – both mother and father were employed, or in search of work. Interviewees argued that their urgent family needs were for childcare services and facilities, parent-friendly legislation at the workplace, and better salaries, benefits or tax deductions that make an impact on family income. It is this combination of requirements, moreover, that is important to note. The following quotes are typical of the kinds of responses from the interviewees in this category. A married woman, with five children, working part time and living in Athens, suggested that

Parents should receive allowances even from their first child. Nowadays it is difficult even to obtain one child. We should have more and better benefits until children grow up. ... Women cannot afford not to work. ... But the state should help women by allowing them to leave their work earlier and get longer parental leave if possible.

A married man with children maintained that:

For women there should be some measures that will make their life easier. For instance, a mother should be able to work for four hours per day, that is to have

a part-time job ... but these kinds of measures should be combined with policy. Childcare centres and stuff like that do not exist.

In the case of couples with children at school age, the two main policy areas experienced are public education and health services⁴. Both are considered to be inadequate. A married man with grown-up children argued that

Family basically depends on parents; apart from parents the state can subsequently help families as well. [How?] With educational policy and health policy through different kinds of benefits.

Most couples who are, or have, experienced children growing up and attending schools, admit that they pay out a large part of their family income for further education services in the private sector. They see a role for the state in providing better education services for children. A male respondent with a large family commented: *'the state must have the ability to take a child through to higher education. ... Right now there are not the necessary conditions for it'*. The need for more money to support education was especially strong in rural areas where access to education is more limited. A female farmer argued that *'more money should be given for children's education'* because, for her, this *'is the biggest expense of all'*. Also, despite the universal coverage of the employed population through the public insurance health system, most families have, at some point, used private health services.

Many people need to support older family members living semi-independently. Family networking often provides full and constant care and services. These kinds of families are asking for more benefits (possibly to be delivered alongside the pension) and better provision and access to services for the person in need, especially to help them remain more independent. As an older female respondent commented: *'The state should provide them [older people] with a nurse, but in their own home, not in an old people's home. I don't like that.'*

Some respondents also felt that the carer needs support, even if they gain something from their duty as carer in the long term. As a 67 year-old married male respondent expressed it:

The older person owns some property that someone else will inherit, so these people have the responsibility to care for the older person. But the state should provide some help in the form of a benefit for the relative who looks after the older person.

In all these cases, policy needs are highlighted, but where policy measures are not provided, families continue to take responsibility for the needs of their members, drawing on extensive intergenerational networks that continue to bind families together, as one woman explained:

When I was out at work my mother would come here to my house and would look after my children. My mother stayed in her own home, which is down the road very near mine.

Another female respondent maintained:

Women should be working fewer hours and should be taking their pensions earlier. ... There is no problem at home because my mother doesn't work. She is mainly responsible for the house and the children [Do you feel that this allocation is unsatisfactory?] No, it is satisfactory!

Despite the fact that the Greek family is typically defined as nuclear, it has many connections and ties with other family members that, in function, resemble an extended family. Many families interviewed live close to older relatives and, very

often, are in daily communication with each other by telephone or running errands for them. This close network of family ties forms the social nucleus of Greek society and provides the safety net for coping with issues that families face. Indeed, Greek respondents, to a greater extent than in many other countries in the IPROSEC project, emphasized family networks as a vital component in social life.

The demand for family policy

The account above has demonstrated that, in the absence of policy measure to meet their demands, Greek families provide support for their members but, at the same time, are seeking additional support to cope with the impacts of socio-demographic, economic and political changes. However, it is precisely because of family networking that people remain apprehensive about increasing family policy provision, which would, in turn, increase state intervention in family life and potentially reduce the need for family networks. Some ambivalence is found concerning the desire to be self-sufficient and rely on traditional family networks or accept outside help. This ambivalence is expressed in the comments below from a married man, with children, which outline the desire not only for intergenerational solidarity, but also for independence of older people, which can be secured through state benefits.

Children should grow up with grandparents because they have many things to teach the child. It is much better than having a foreigner in the house. The child benefits in its upbringing and in many other ways, but I believe also that grandparents should not live in the same house with the family for both the families' sakes and for their own peace and quiet.

Basically, I believe that the family depends on the parents. Apart from that, the state can provide some kind of help.

The emphasis is on increasing choices for families rather than the state monopolizing services, though people are willing to accept greater state intervention in care for older people and children. Balancing the fine line between assisting families and enabling them to draw on their own family network resources was the central element in the arguments presented by policy users.

Where respondents expressed a desire for state intervention in family life, the response of one woman was typical of the preference for benefits rather than services: *'Family members must arrange all family matters among themselves so that everything works well. The state should help by providing benefits and some support'*. This could be because Greeks are more used to receiving benefits in the form of pensions, allowances and tax exemptions rather than services, which prevents them from having an alternative view of family policies as services. Some respondents also preferred benefits to services because they did not trust the state to provide services to meet their needs.

However, people also express dissatisfaction at the minimal impact of allowances on their family income because they are pitched at such a low level and because the tax system is weighted against them. A male respondent explained:

My family life was deeply affected by taxes and allowances; these parameters always existed in my mind since they affect to a great extent the ability I have to provide for my family, especially the tax system.

For another male respondent from the higher socio-economic group:

Both of them [allowances and taxes] affect the family. The former raises family income and the other reduces it. ... The law, unfortunately, is very strict on that. It says: 'You made that kind of money so you pay that much.' There's no objective way of looking at these matters. For instance, I could have said that my income wasn't enough this year because, let's say, my child got sick three or four times, or something unexpected happened. Nothing. The law recognizes nothing of the above.

Coupled with the strong mistrust of the state, the Greek custom of family networks also explains the demand for benefits rather than services. To facilitate the maintenance of family networks, people require benefits to support economic independence but, in terms of services, this is restricted to health services, which provide specialist care that family members are otherwise unable to provide. A less educated woman, aged 50 with one child argued:

The state should take a look at older people who are spending their entire life in a house. [How?] By, let's say, paying a social worker to visit. Each municipality should have its own social worker.

The provision of benefits is also considered less intrusive in the private domain of the family because financial benefits promote choice and flexibility for people to make their own decisions about their personal private lives rather than the state prescribing a particular service for them. People seem very suspicious about any policy intervention in matters concerning their decisions to marry or divorce, on certain fertility matters and gender roles. However, intervention is expected, accepted and recognized in the form of financial support to enable them to carry out their familial roles.

Balancing policy intervention and family network support

Despite the fact that families highlight the need for family policy, especially benefits, to cope with changing socio-demographic trends experienced in the twenty-first century Greece, obstacles prevent this from happening. They include: the fragmentation of the policy field and the associated complicated bureaucracy; the absence of a policy agenda to meet the needs of all families; the reactionary nature of policies designed to respond to immediate crises rather than long-term proactive measures; a lack of funding for more holistic policies; and the weak voice of many people outside the key pressure groups of large families and older people, which prevents them from articulating their demands for benefits and services that would meet their needs.

With no joined-up thinking between policy actors and policy users, families are left with little choice but to rely on strong family ties to provide for their needs. However, while the demand for policy is being made, people are unwilling, and/or unable, to allow this to weaken family ties because families supply the social safety net that they do not trust the state to provide. The inadequacy of policies to support families can, therefore, also be explained by the political apathy of families themselves and the acceptance of their duty to be responsible for their family members without recourse to the state.

Policy actors are poised in a curious position in Greece. On the one hand, they are being asked to intervene to help families and, on the other, they are being kept at arms length to avoid disrupting traditional family networks. However, whether Greek family policy is to be used as a tool for securing social peace or to promote social change seems irrelevant in the current situation. Instead, Greek families and policy actors need to find a way to negotiate the benefits of both. In short, to help Greek families, policy actors need to adopt a path that provides adequate support for families to help them cope with the demands of contemporary life, without encroaching on the family networks that are such an important part of Greek culture.

Notes

1. The elite interviews with policy actors carried out for the IPROSEC project involved three main groups: political, economic and civil society actors. The political actors included four of the most important political parties in Greece, the municipality of Athens and other municipalities in the greater Athens area, the Ministries of Health and Welfare, of Labour and Social Security and of the National Economy, the General Secretariat for Equality and the National Organization for Social Care. The economic actors included the Federation of Bank Employees, the Association of Greek Industries, the General Confederation of Greek Trade Unions, the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Public Sector and the Federation of High School Teachers. The civil society actors consisted of the Foundation for the Child and the Family, the Foundation for Social Work, the Association of Greek Social Workers, the Association of Unmarried Mothers, various research centres, the Federation of Large Families, the Society of Family Planning and the Orthodox Church. The interviews with policy users were conducted in urban and semi-urban areas as well as in Athens. A survey of 204 questionnaires followed by 50 in-depth interviews was used to capture as many aspects as possible of public opinion on family policy from a variety of family types. Lone-parent families, large families and families living in semi-urban and rural areas in certain parts of the Greek countryside were over-represented. The population examined is not, therefore, representative of Greek society.
2. According to the findings by the Greek team from KEKMOKOP for a research project co-ordinated by the European Institute in Florence, IAPASIS, and reported in 'Does Implementation Matter? Informal administration practices and shifting immigrant strategies in four member states' (2003).
3. Reported in the Framework Programme 5 project: 'The Rationale of Motherhood Choices: influence of employment conditions and of public policies' (MoCho), co-ordinated by the Department of Applied Economics (DULBEA), Free University of Brussels (ULB). Web address: <http://www.ulb.ac.be/soco/mocho>.
4. These findings are consistent with the results from another survey by the Employees' Hellenic Confederation of Social Policy Organizations. In particular, this survey revealed that 25% of the income of Greek families is spent on health services and education, despite the fact that such services are provided free by the state. More specifically, for every 100 euros of income, 7 are spent for health care (in addition to money paid for public insurance contribution) and another 18 euros are spent on (additional) children's education (*Eleftherotipia*, 2003, p.23).

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