



**FAMILY**PLATFORM

# Research on Families and Family policies in Europe State of the Art

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The consortium consists of the following 12 organisations:

- 1) Technical University Dortmund (Coordinators)
- 2) State Institute for Family Research, University of Bamberg
- 3) Family Research Centre, University of Jyväskylä
- 4) Austrian Institute for Family Studies, University of Vienna
- 5) Demographic Research Institute, Budapest
- 6) Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon
- 7) Department of Sociology and Social research, University of Milan-Bicocca
- 8) Institute of International and Social Studies, Tallinn University
- 9) London School of Economics
- 10) Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE), Brussels
- 11) Forum delle Associazioni Familiari, Italy
- 12) Mouvement Mondial des Mères, Brussels

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Unless otherwise stated, the views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

## Preface

Funded by the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme and coordinated by Technical University Dortmund, Germany, FAMILYPLATFORM gathers a consortium of 12 partner organisations working together to articulate key questions about the family for the European Social Science and Humanities Research Agenda 2012-2013.

There are four key stages to the project. The first is to chart and review the major trends of comparative family research in the EU in eight "Existential Fields" (WP1). The second is to critically review existing research on the family (WP2), and the third is to build on our understanding of existing issues affecting families and predict future conditions and challenges facing them (WP3). The final stage is to bring the results and findings of the previous three stages together, and propose key scientific research questions about families to be tackled with future EU research funding (WP4).

This report, *Research on Families and Family policies in Europe - State of the Art*<sup>1</sup>, is based on the following Existential Field Reports written by consortium partners and the two Expert reports:

### **1. Family Structures and Family Forms in the European Union**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/1-family-structures-and-family-forms>)

Loreen Beier, Dirk Hofäcker, Elisa Marchese and Marina Rupp

*State Institute for Family Research, University of Bamberg*

### **2. Developmental Familial Processes**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/2a-family-developmental-processes>)

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### **3. Major Trends of State Family Policies in Europe**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/3a-state-family-policies>)

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### **4. Family and Living Environment**

#### **Part A: Economic Situation, Education levels, Employment and Physical living environment**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/4a-family-living-environments>)

Epp Reiska, Ellu Saar and Karl Viilmann

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#### **Part B: Local politics: Programs and best practice model**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/4b-local-politics-programmes-and-best-practice-models>)

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*Forum delle Associazioni Familiari*

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<sup>1</sup> Published at <http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/final-report-1/final-report>.

### **5. Patterns and Trends of Family Management in the European Union**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/5-family-management>)

(Zsuzsa Blaskó & Veronika Herche

*Demographic Research Institute, Budapest*

### **6. Social Care and Social Services**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/6a-social-care-social-services>)

Marjo Kuronen, together with Kimmo Jokinen and Teppo Kröger

*Family Research Centre & Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy /Social Work, University of Jyväskylä*

### **7. Social Inequality and Diversity of Families**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/7-social-inequality-and-diversity-of-families>)

Karin Wall, Mafalda Leitão and Vasco Ramos

with contributions from João Peixoto, Heloísa Perista, Isabel Dias, Susana Atalaia, Diogo Costa and Alexandra Silva

*Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon*

### **8. Media, Communication and Information Technologies in the European Family**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/8-media-family-education>)

Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das

with contributions from Myria Georgiou, Leslie Haddon, Ellen Helsper and Yinhan Wang

*London School of Economics*

### **Expert reports**

#### **The Professional Standards of Care Workers: The Development of Standards for Social Care Services for Families**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/6b-development-of-standards-for-social-work-and-social-care-services>)

Prof. Dr. Aila-Leena Matthies, Kokkola University Consortium, Finland

#### **Expertise on “Transitions into Parenthood”**

(<http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/1-major-trends/reports/2b-transitions-into-parenthood>)

Prof. Dr. Barbara Stauber, University of Tübingen, Germany

All FAMILYPLATFORM reports are available to download from the dedicated website:

<http://www.familyplatform.eu>

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## Country codes used in the report

**EU15** 15 EU member states prior to enlargement in 2004 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom)

**NMS12** 12 New member states, 10 of which joined the EU in 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) - and are sometimes referred to as the NMS10 - and the remaining two in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania)

**EU27** 27 EU member states

**CC3** 3 candidate countries (Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey)

### **EU27**

AT Austria	LV Latvia
BE Belgium	LT Lithuania
BG Bulgaria	LU Luxembourg
CY Cyprus	MT Malta
CZ Czech Republic	NL Netherlands
DK Denmark	PL Poland
EE Estonia	PT Portugal
FI Finland	RO Romania
FR France	SK Slovakia
DE Germany	SI Slovenia
EL Greece	ES Spain
HU Hungary	SE Sweden
IE Ireland	UK United Kingdom
IT Italy	

### **Candidate countries**

HR Croatia  
 MK1 The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia  
 TR Turkey

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## Summary

The State of the Art of Research on Families and Family Policies in Europe is the concluding report of the first Work package of the FAMILYPLATFORM funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Programme. The work of the FAMILYPLATFORM encompasses four key stages, from which the first one is to chart and review the major trends of comparative family research within the EU. The research review provides an overview of studies on changing family structures, developmental processes, current social and economic conditions of European families, gender and generational relations within families, and on family policies in the EU member states from a comparative perspective.

This report summarises results of eight Existential Field Reports (EFs, one of them consisting of two parts) and two additional Expert Reports. The partners involved have done extensive systematic literature reviews on European comparative research published since the mid-1990s in their specific field of expertise using existing scientific and statistical databases, reports from previous and ongoing EC funded research projects, and other relevant publications, which are occasionally supplemented with own analyses of data available. This concluding report draws together the main results, conclusions and major trends identified in these more extensive reports, which are all available at the FAMILYPLATFORM website<sup>2</sup>.

This report is organised into four main chapters and research fields:

- 1) *family structures, forms and demographic processes;*
- 2) *current conditions of European families;*
- 3) *genders and generations in families; and*
- 4) *family policies and social care policies in Europe.*

*Concerning recent developments in family structures and family forms*, the review of existing research and statistics speak in favour of a comparatively high dynamic of family forms within European countries throughout the last decades. Some major trends can be identified based on demographic statistics and existing research:

- *postponement of first childbirth and first marriage, generally decreasing number of children, even though fertility aspirations are still at a comparable high level;*
- *increasing number of out-of-wedlock births as being married has lost its central role as a precondition for family formation;*
- *decreasing marriage-rate, increasing divorce-rate and increasing rate of re-marriages;*
- *as a consequence, notable decrease in the incidence of the “middle class nuclear family”, even though this model stays dominant;*
- *increasing diversity of family forms and family life.*

The degree to which these transformations have materialised varies considerably between European countries. The Nordic countries represent one end of the scale, where there has been a considerable move away from the “traditional” family model, with late marriages, modest marriage rates and a high proportion of out-of-wedlock births. The other are the Southern European countries, where family patterns are still much in line with the traditional model;

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.familyplatform.eu>.

central importance of marriage, low divorce rates, low degrees of out-of-wedlock births, little significance of new family forms. The former display the highest fertility levels.

These developments largely rely on long-term trends. Most recent data suggest that there may be some signs of a “flattening out” of previous highly dynamic processes, in the move away from the “traditional” family model. However, data indicating this is often very recent and it is hard to say whether it can be indicative for a more general future trend. Even if the trend towards "new family forms" will halt, a return to a "nuclear family model" is unlikely.

*Current conditions of European families* cover a variety of topics from housing and physical living environment into migration, from poverty into influence of media and technology in family life. What connects these themes is the question of social inequality, which penetrates all the themes. Thus, main emphasis is paid on families with children and inequalities, not only differences between countries but also between social groups and different families. Major trends based on this review can be identified as follows:

- *polarisation in contemporary European families is significant, in particular between low/highly qualified couples; male breadwinner/dual earner couples; low/high income families, EU/non-EU migrant families, in urban-rural dimension;*
- *the persistence of poverty in some groups and types of households which continue to show a higher risk of exposure to poverty;*
- *the extreme vulnerability of migrant families and their children, particularly of non-EU immigrant families in comparison with other families and EU migrant families;*
- *the mismatch between the life course diversity and housing market developments;*
- *new, interactive, individualised and personalised media technologies are rapidly contributing to a diverse media environment in Europe;*
- *children’s use of the internet continues to grow. Striking recent rises are evident among younger children (6-11 years) and in countries which have recently entered the EU;*
- *socioeconomic inequalities continue to matter with patterns of digital exclusion mirroring those of social exclusion.*

A review of existing research shows that social inequality plays a crucial role in family life and is related to family structure and dynamics in complex ways. Families reflect social inequalities, since the unequal distribution of various resources and differentiated opportunities affect the circumstances in which family life is built up. The formation of couples, the organisation of family life, the socialisation of children and parent-child relationships are all influenced by wider social forces and social structure. Families also reproduce inequalities, both in the short term and intergenerationally. Research shows that family background, life-style, and resources, including both material and socio-cultural advantages, tend to affect children’s lives and life chances. Transmission of wealth from older to younger generations and support in setting up family life during the transition to adulthood is significant in all European countries. In terms of intergenerational effects, families remain perhaps the most important mechanism for the transmission of unequal life chances.

*Gender and age* are widely influencing the experiences and everyday life of family members in different life phases. Life-course perspective links individuals’ biographies with social and historical change. The approach used also involves a particular concern for the importance of gender differences. Within this general framework, some major trends can be identified:

- *transition processes of young people have changed with the prolonged presence of young people in their family of origin and couple formation taking place later;*
- *new representations of partnership and parenthood emerge among young people with transformations in gender roles and in male and female identities;*
- *the family of today is a negotiation and affection based family;*
- *the role of grandparents is important as providers of support to children and grandchildren;*
- *the most marked change in the field of division of paid work is the increasing level of female employment;*
- *the gender gap in unpaid domestic work has narrowed somewhat due to women reducing their number of hours instead of any significant changes in men's behaviour;*
- *both employed and non-employed mothers have increased their childcare time and fathers' involvement in childrearing is slightly increasing;*
- *the male breadwinner model is being increasingly replaced by alternative models with "dual earner-female carer" model becoming the most widespread in Europe;*
- *family violence is still largely gender-based violence and there are specific groups at risk.*

The multiplicity of family models and family relations in Europe may be considered an expression of the cultural pluralism that characterises contemporary society, in which there coexist different ways both of giving meaning to the family and of understanding individual happiness and the life of the couple. There has also been a transformation in the modalities of passing through the various developmental processes. Co-longevity has increased the duration of family ties, which increases the importance of intergenerational relations within families.

Even if new representations of partnership and parenthood emerge among young people, changes seem to be rather slow and gender divisions begin to become more traditional after the birth of the first child. Although cross-country (and within country) differences are remarkable and changes are constantly on their way, some basic patterns of family life remain intact in Europe. Most importantly, the division of paid and particularly unpaid work continues to be gendered. The dual carer-dual earner society remains a theoretical concept in most of the Europe. Women spend less time in the labour market, they are more likely to take part-time jobs and have more career breaks than men do. At the same time, they are still mainly responsible for housework as well as for child rearing. These gender gaps in unpaid work decrease in size but do not diminish when and where partners spend a similar amount of time in the labour market. This is important because the most marked change over the past decades in the area of work-division is the increasing level of female employment.

The diversity of European welfare systems and family *policies* exceed existing country categories and welfare regime typologies. Most researchers today agree that the main differences in family policies and social care policies can be found between Southern and Northern parts of Europe. There is also significant national variation within these categories; even within the Nordic countries that are usually classified as a joint Nordic model. Furthermore, in these comparisons and classifications most recent EU member states are usually missing (mostly CEE countries). Still, there are some indicators that European countries' social care systems and family policies are becoming more similar, and that their related problems are too.

When it comes to family policies and social care policies in the European, national and local levels, some major trends can be identified:

- *the field of family policies has gained increasing importance and expanded in recent years, and while traditionally only a handful of countries had explicit family policies and designated family ministries, there is now a trend of growing institutionalisation;*
- *in terms of re- and defamilialisation in family and care policies across Europe, a mixture of re- and defamilialising measures can be identified;*
- *leave policies have in many countries aimed at activating fathers and reaching a more equal share of employment and family responsibilities between both parents;*
- *childcare services have been one of the most important family policy issues and reform areas and especially in this field the trend of “care going public”, defamilialisation, institutionalisation and professionalisation of care work and services will continue;*
- *social care remains a combination of formal and informal care where the role of families and especially women in families is remarkable in providing care for children, old people and other dependent family members;*
- *globalisation and internationalisation of care with its various forms and consequences will be one of the future trends e.g. care relations cross national borders, global care chains and transnational care, increasing numbers of migrant care workers both in formal and informal care work, and international market of care services;*
- *growing importance of local governments with more responsibilities and autonomy regarding many politically relevant issues for family policies and service provision;*
- *increasing role of local NGOs and networks of different actors (e.g. public sector, NGOs, private companies and families themselves);*
- *increasing intercultural dimension of the local communities facing the challenges linked to migration.*

The expansion of childcare facilities is high on the agenda in many European countries, and so is the expansion or reduction of child/family allowances and parental leave policies, often including elements of “active fathering”. Care issues seem to leave behind social benefits in family policy agenda even if those have crucial importance e.g. in reducing poverty and diminishing social inequalities. Even if the aging of population has been recognised as one of the biggest future challenges all over Europe, childcare will remain in the core of policy. The main emphasis has been on the coverage levels of childcare services, but there are some indications that the educational aims and contents of formal childcare services will gain more political and research interest in the future. This new kind of an interest in children and childhood can be seen a part of the “politicisation of childhood”, meaning increasing public interest and intervention into problems of children and parents, new social risks, early childhood education and care, child poverty, childcare as investment into future, and social capital perspective.

All over Europe, the field of childcare can be described as “care going public”. This trend is less clear in social care for older people, where the trend seem to be more twofold: on the one hand privatisation and marketisation of formal, professional care, and on the other, (re-)familialisation of care either with or without financial compensation. These changes represent a tendency where the user of care services is given considerably more say on the way her/his needs are being met. Social care, both childcare and care for older people and other adults, remains a combination of formal and informal care where the role of families and especially women in families is still remarkable. This raises an increasing political and academic interest in different combinations of formal and informal care including intergenerational care relations. Several researchers have been interested in whether formal care replaces (crowd-out) informal care or whether those rather complement (crowd-in) each other. There seem to be no strong evidence for the crowding-out hypothesis.

What comes to *substantial gaps in existing research*, the general notion is that existing research is rather nuclear family oriented largely ignoring the increasing diversity in family forms and family relations, except when studying statistically changes in family structures, and even then, data and research on more recent and rare family types are missing. It has concentrated on families with young children widely ignoring other stages of family life and the life course approach, which is highly important in family research. Existing research is also adult centred and children's perspective into their family life, policies and services are largely missing, which is certainly one of the major challenges for future research. Overall, experiences of families and individual family members within families and as policy "targets" and service users are largely ignored in existing research. What is also emphasised in many of the Existential Field Reports is the need for more research on the changing role of men in families. Furthermore, several research gaps in each of the four specific research themes are identified in this report.

Within the field of cross-national, comparative research, there are different *methodological orientations*. The main division goes between macro-level multi-national comparisons using quantitative data and micro-level, small-scale studies using qualitative or mixed methods. Most of the large multi-national projects have used either national statistical information, statistics provided by Eurostat, and/or large multinational surveys and databases. Even if the situation has improved in last decade, the need for comparative, harmonised, and often longitudinal data has been identified, as well as the need for more in-depth qualitative research that would allow providing more inside view of the family life, its changes, and decision-making processes. Small-scale qualitative comparisons can also advance theory building while large-scale comparisons mainly test existing theories.

## 1. Introduction

This State of the Art of Research on Families and Family Policies in Europe is the concluding report of the first Work package of the FAMILYPLATFORM project funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Programme. The work of the FAMILYPLATFORM encompasses four key stages, from which the first one is to chart and review the major trends of comparative family research within the EU.

The research review provides an overview of studies on changing family structures, developmental processes, current social and economic conditions of European families, gender and generational relations within families, and on family policies in the EU member states from a comparative perspective. Regarding the living conditions for families there are still significant cross-national differences between European societies. Legal systems, welfare structures, education systems, health and social care service systems and economic systems and conditions vary from country to country. Consequently, European family structures and family forms, as well as respective trends and developments are quite diverse. Thus, it is crucial to generate a comprehensive overview of various fields of family life and family policies in order to derive conclusions for political practice and further research. In the end, the aim of this Social platform is to generate key policy questions and define fundamental research issues, both substantial and methodological.

The main aim of this Work package (WP1) is to concentrate on reviewing the current scientific knowledge on family issues. It is important to reveal the major and the most common trends, cultural differences, specific developments of member states, and research gaps that exist in the field of family research with respect to the needs of families and family policies from the perspective of the research community, which will be then critically reviewed by the stakeholder representatives and other experts. Primarily, the aim of WP1 is to offer research based knowledge for the processes of forming functional European family policies that aim at the wellbeing of family.

The state of our knowledge about families, on the one hand, and public policies and nongovernmental initiatives, on the other hand, are linked very sparsely. European policies and research are currently confronted with a situation, in which some aspects of family life are investigated rather thoroughly, while other aspects, for example more recently recognised and rare family types, are still largely unexplored in scientific terms – with great differences between European countries and regions. Thus, the first major objective of the FAMILYPLATFORM has to be the establishment of an empirical foundation for further work. This means working out the current state of family research and bringing together recent findings. It furthermore includes getting an overview of policies and social systems, which make up the contextual framework for all aspects of family life.

At the final stage of the project, the FAMILYPLATFORM consortium and the stakeholder representatives will formulate a research agenda, which will develop the possible base for the European Commission Social Science and Humanities Research Agenda 2012-13. Hence, this report not only refers to substantial topics and regional aspects of future research, but also to aspects of the research design itself, as well as to methodological issues.

The Family Research Centre and the Unit of Social Work at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, has had the coordinating overall responsibility for this first stage of the FAMILYPLATFORM. This concluding report has been edited by Marjo Kuronen with contributions from Kimmo Jokinen and Teppo Kröger. Johanna Hyväluoma has assisted in technical editing and proofreading. Still, it has been a joint effort of the whole Consortium. It has been accomplished jointly by nine partners, and summarises results of eight Existential Field Reports (EFs, one of them consisting on two parts) and two additional Expert Reports all listed in Preface. The partners involved have done extensive systematic literature reviews on European comparative research published since the mid-1990s in their specific field of expertise using existing scientific and statistical databases (e.g. Eurostat and OECD statistics), reports from previous and ongoing EC funded research projects, and other relevant publications, which are occasionally supplemented with own analyses of data available. Single-country studies have been excluded except in some areas where there are no cross-national studies available. This concluding report draws together the main results, conclusions and major trends identified in these more extensive reports, which are all available at the FAMILYPLATFORM website.

This report is substantially divided and organised into four main chapters and research fields:

- 1) *family structures, forms and demographic processes;*
- 2) *current conditions of European families;*
- 3) *genders and generations in families;*
- 4) *family policies and social care policies in Europe.*

Thus, it does not strictly follow the previously defined existential fields but combine and collect them under wider themes as many of them contribute to each other.

Chapter 2 *Family structures, forms and demographic processes* mainly consists of EF1 *Family Structures and Family Forms in the European Union* written by Loreen Beier, Dirk Hofäcker, Elisa Marchese, and Marina Rupp from the State Institute for Family Research, University of Bamberg. Concerning conjugal instability and divorce, it has been complemented with EF2 *Developmental Familial Processes* written by Carmen Leccardi and Miriam Perego from the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milan-Bicocca. Chapter 2.2 on demographic impact of migration is based on a part of the EF7 titled *Social Inequality and Diversity of Families* written by Karin Wall, Mafalda Leitão and Vasco Ramos with contributions from João Peixoto, Heloísa Perista, Isabel Dias, Susana Atalaia, Diogo Costa and Alexandra Silva from the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon.

Chapter 3 *Current conditions of European families* covers a wide range of themes from housing and physical living environment into migration, from poverty into influence of media and technology in family life. What connects these themes is the question of social inequality, which is related to all of them. From EF7 *Social Inequality and Diversity of Families* the chapter includes research reviews on social inequality and poverty in families, and the situation of migrant families. Review on economic situation, employment, physical living environment, and housing is based on EF4A: *Economic Situation, Education levels, Employment and Physical living environment* written by Epp Reiska, Ellu Saar and Karl Viilmann from the Institute of International and Social Studies, Tallinn University. Chapter on media, communication, and information technologies comes from EF8 *Media, communication and information technologies in the European family* authored by Sonia Livingstone and Ranjana Das with contributions from Myria Georgiou, Leslie Haddon, Ellen Helsper and Yinhan Wang from the London School of Economics.

Chapter 4 *Genders and generations in families* is also a combination of several Existential Field Reports introducing the life course, generational, and gender approaches into family life. Discussion on transitions into adulthood is based on EF2 by Carmen Leccardi and Miriam Perego and the Expert report by Barbara Stauber on transitions into parenthood. Chapter on grandparenthood also mainly comes from EF2. Review on gender division in paid and unpaid work is based on EF5 *Patterns and trends of Family Management in the European Union* by Zsuzsa Blaskó and Veronika Herche from the Demographic Research Institute, Budapest. In addition, chapter on intergenerational relations includes some parts from EF6 *Social Care and Social Services* written by Marjo Kuronen, together with Kimmo Jokinen and Teppo Kröger from the Family Research Centre and the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy/Social Work, University of Jyväskylä.

Family policies, and more recently care policies, have been studied more often in a comparative context than other issues related to families and family wellbeing. This is probably because of their increasing political and economic importance. Chapter 5 *Family policies and social care policies in Europe* is reviewing this research field. It consists of EF3 *Major Trends of State Family Policies in Europe* by Sonja Blum and Christiane Rille-Pfeiffer from the Austrian Institute for Family Studies, University of Vienna, and previously mentioned EF6 on Social Care and Social Services. In addition, the chapter on local family politics comes from EF4B *Local politics: Programs and best practice model* by Francesco Belletti and Lorenza Rebuzzini from the Forum delle Associazioni Familiari.

At the conclusions of each main chapter, some major trends based on these extensive research reviews will be presented. Chapter 6 collects together major research gaps from all these fields, both substantial and methodological, identified in the Existential Field Reports. Concluding chapter (Chapter 7) is based mostly on a presentation given by Kimmo Jokinen from the Family Research Centre of the University of Jyväskylä, in the FAMILYPLATFORM Critical Review Conference at the University of Lisbon in May 2010, where he drew together some main results and trends based on the Existential Field Reports.



## 2. Family structures, forms, and demographic processes

It is a well-known and documented fact that family structures and family forms have changed considerably throughout Europe since the 1960s and 1970s. Recent studies point out the fact that the idea of a standard “nuclear family model” is increasingly becoming replaced by a variety of different alternative family forms and lifestyles (Kapella *et al.*, 2009).

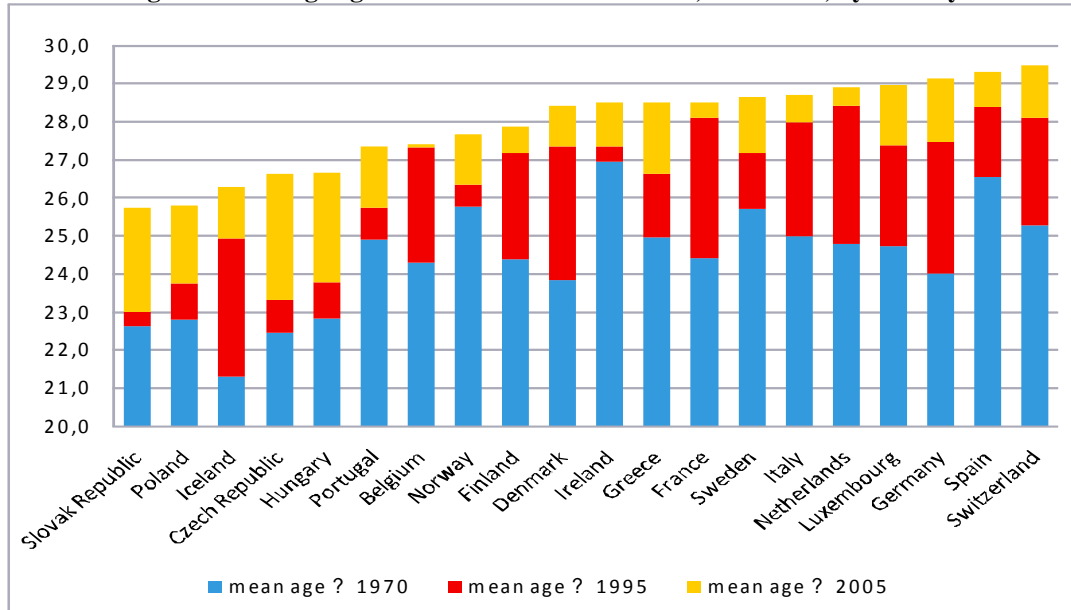
It is oversimplifying to speak about “the European family”. Instead, existing research indicates that there is still a large variety of different, nationally or regionally specific patterns, often strongly connected to different cultural backgrounds or family policy models. This chapter reviews these changes based on recent research and statistical information. It starts by reviewing *the development in fertility and related demographic processes, including migration*. Secondly, it will give an overview of the major *changes in family forms* with special attention to conjugal instability and divorce and their consequences. Thirdly, *newly emerged or rarer family forms* will be discussed, including living-apart-together family arrangements and gay and lesbian families.

### 2.1. Fertility and demographic development

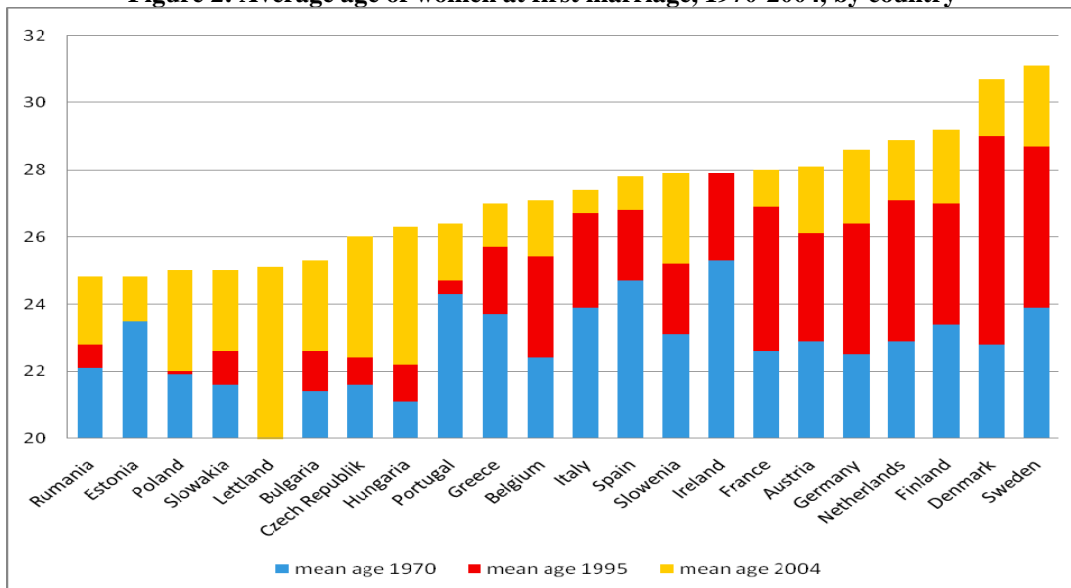
Knowledge on *fertility* and its demographic framework conditions has been most extensive in terms of the availability of indicators as well as the countries and time span covered. Available data points to considerable shifts in demographic behaviour throughout recent decades. The decision to marry and form a family has shifted to later ages in virtually every European country.

The medium age of women giving their first birth is lowest in Eastern Europe with average ages ranging between 24.9 (Bulgaria, 2006) and 26.9 years (Hungary, 2006). In contrast, highest average ages are observed in the UK and Switzerland where the average age of women at first childbirth is 29.8 (UK, 2005) and 29.5 (Switzerland, 2006) respectively. Southern European and German-speaking countries show similarly high ages, while only Portugal with a comparatively early age of 27.4 years appears to deviate from the Southern European pattern. Increases over time appear to have been most pronounced in Central European and Nordic countries (except Sweden).

The *medium age of first marriage of women* in Europe shows a very distinct country-specific pattern, with women in the Nordic countries displaying the highest average age, followed by the central European countries, Southern European and liberal countries. Women in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries display the comparatively lowest average ages at marriage, except Slovenia. The pattern in the postponement of first marriages of *men* is not as clear: whereas men in Eastern European countries again are the youngest and Sweden and Denmark are the oldest to marry, the pattern in the centre of Europe appears to be more mixed (OECD, 2009a).

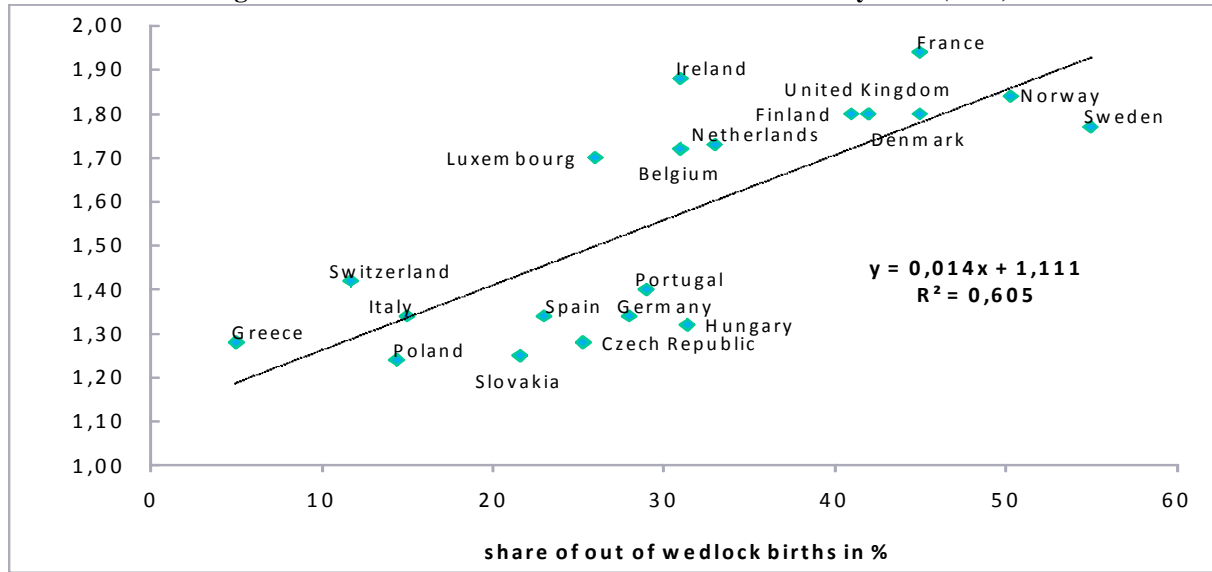
**Figure 1: Average age of women at first childbirth, 1970-2005, by country**

Source: OECD, 2009a

**Figure 2: Average age of women at first marriage, 1970-2004, by country**

Source: OECD, 2009a

Looking at both marriage and family formation trends simultaneously, data appear to indicate that especially in Northern Europe, marriage and family formation have increasingly decoupled, as a considerable share of children is born out-of-wedlock. Since the 1970s, their share first started to rise in France and in the Scandinavian countries, with Denmark and Sweden showing most pronounced increases. Since then, the trend has largely flattened out and remained at a largely stable level until 2006. The share of out-of-wedlock births started to increase in the Eastern European countries only after the 1990s. The Central and Southern European countries followed a development somewhat in between. Notably, the countries with a high incidence of out-of-wedlock births are also those with the highest fertility levels. The postponement (or even denial) of marriage thus cannot be seen as a major driver of declining fertility in modern European societies.

**Figure 3: Share of out-of-wedlock births and total fertility rates (2005)**

Source: OECD, 2009a

What emerges today is a change in the very concept of marriage. Marriage has increasingly become to be conceived as a subjective experience: choosing to marry or not to marry has become a fundamentally individual decision. The French sociologist Théry (1993) has called this phenomenon “*démariage*”. The traits of instability and uncertainty, which distinguish the transformations in the contemporary family are in line with the atmosphere that characterises society at large, marked by a climate of uncertainty so far as work and social stability is concerned, aggravated by a high level of economic instability. In this context, there is a perception that even creating a family becomes a “risk-bearing enterprise” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1994: 29) in reference to the consequences of the process of individualisation.

Due to the increasing postponement of family formation decisions, *period-specific fertility rates*<sup>3</sup> in all European countries have declined throughout the last decades, in some countries even at a rather dramatic pace. These developments have been most pronounced in the Northern and Central Europe where fertility fell from around three children per woman in 1965 to less than 1.8 in the mid-1990s. Southern European countries appeared to follow this general trend with a ten-year time lag and most pronounced falls of fertility levels in the 1980s and 1990s. In Eastern Europe, fertility levels started to decline after the transition from state socialism to market economies in the early- resp. mid-1990s. In Southern and Eastern European countries recent declines have resulted in very low fertility levels of less than 1.2 children per woman, that have made demographers describe these countries as displaying “lowest-low fertility” (Kohler, Billari & Ortega, 2006). In recent years, the lowering trend in fertility levels has “flattened” with only marginal changes since the 1990s. Some researchers even point to partial recovery in period-specific fertility levels since the turn of the century, especially in Northern and Western Europe (especially France and the Netherlands).

However, regarding long-term fertility developments, the period-specific fertility rates may be partially misleading. While women indeed are increasingly postponing family formation and the birth of their first child to ever later ages, it could, in principle, be assumed that women nonetheless are not generally reducing their overall lifetime fertility, but simply shifting their

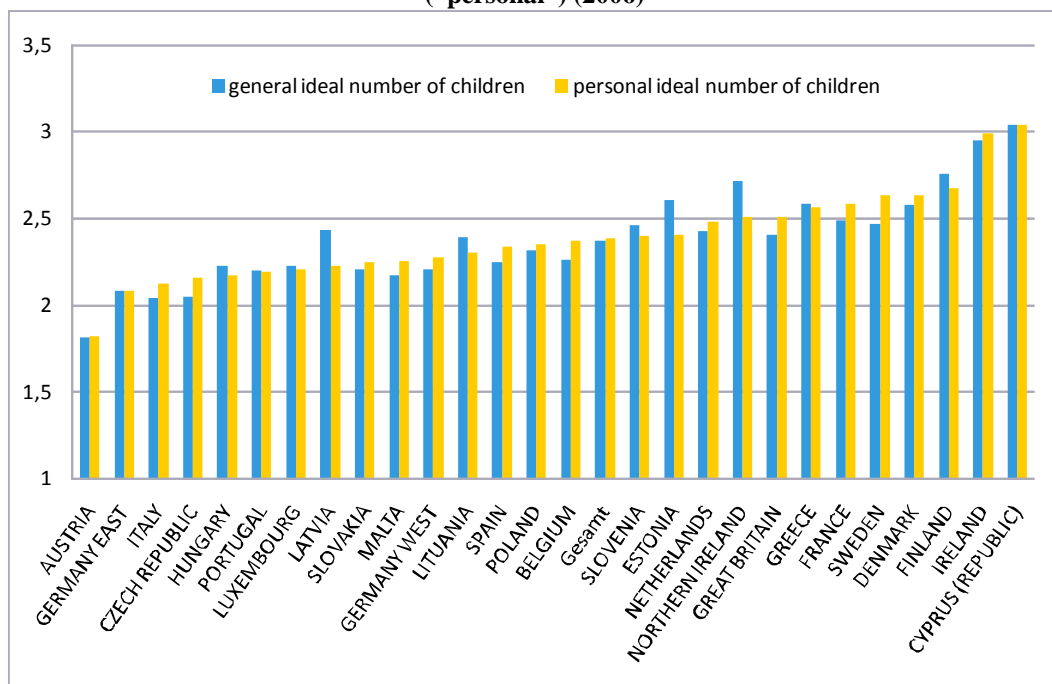
<sup>3</sup> Defined as the average number of children that would be born per woman, if all women lived to the end of their childbearing years and bore children according to a given fertility rate at each age (CIA World Factbook, 2010).

“family phase” to later stages in their life course. *Cohort-specific fertility rates* appear to indicate that the postponement of having children at younger age could be partially compensated by “recuperation” behaviour later (Frejka *et al.*, 2008: 6). Given the fact, that reliable data on cohort-specific fertility are available only up to the birth cohort 1965, it is too early to judge whether this recuperation-effect will “balance out” fertility rates in the long run.

A possible indicator of future fertility trends are childbearing preferences, as reflected in the perceived ideal number of children in a family, and the individual intention to have (further) children in the future. In recent years, various Europe-wide social surveys (the European Value Study (EVS), the European Social Survey (ESS), and the *Eurobarometer*) have used questions to reconstruct these individual preferences. The figure below, based on a *Eurobarometer* survey in 2006, gives an exemplary overview of childbearing preferences by representing the average number of children that women generally perceive as an ideal and those that they individually would favour.

Almost in all the European countries, both the general ideal and the personally favoured number of children outnumber actually realised fertility figure; a finding that recent sociological research (e.g. Blossfeld *et al.*, 2005) oftentimes has interpreted to reflect personally perceived inability to start a family, e.g. due to rising individual uncertainties. Alternative explanations have stressed the role of a general value change towards more “post-material values” such as self-fulfilment, which have contributed to a decline in the importance of more “collectivist” family values (Inglehart, 1990; Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa, 1986).

**Figure 4: Individual estimates of the ideal number of children in general (“ideal”) and for the respondent (“personal”) (2006)**



Source: Eurobarometer, 2006, own calculations

Instead, the traditional view that low fertility trends are an outcome of increased female labour force participation can be dismissed even if this relationship is rather complex. Today, countries with a high share of employed women simultaneously display highest fertility rates. It is not employment as such but the way in which the reconciliation between work and family is facilitated that drive women’s childbearing considerations (D’addio & D’Ercole, 2005; also Ahn

& Mira, 2002: 669-670; Rindfuss *et al.*, 2003: 411; Philipov *et al.*, 2009: 26). Family and gender policies, as well as work-related institutions may contribute to explaining the extent of these differences (Engelhardt & Prskawetz, 2004: 55-56). A macro-level comparison shows that both higher fertility and female employment rates are simultaneously found in countries where institutional support of working parents is fairly comprehensive (Philipov *et al.*, 2009: 27-28).

*Attitudinal data* suggests that the future challenge will be to enable parents to fulfil their fertility aspirations, e.g. through well-designed family policy packages. Also an average higher fertility rates in the Nordic countries emphasise the role of family and gender equality policies in women's/couples' decision-making. However, data from some individual countries (Austria and Germany) suggest that lower fertility aspirations are increasingly diffusing within society. This may signal that there will only remain limited time for such measures.

## 2.2 Demographic impact of migration

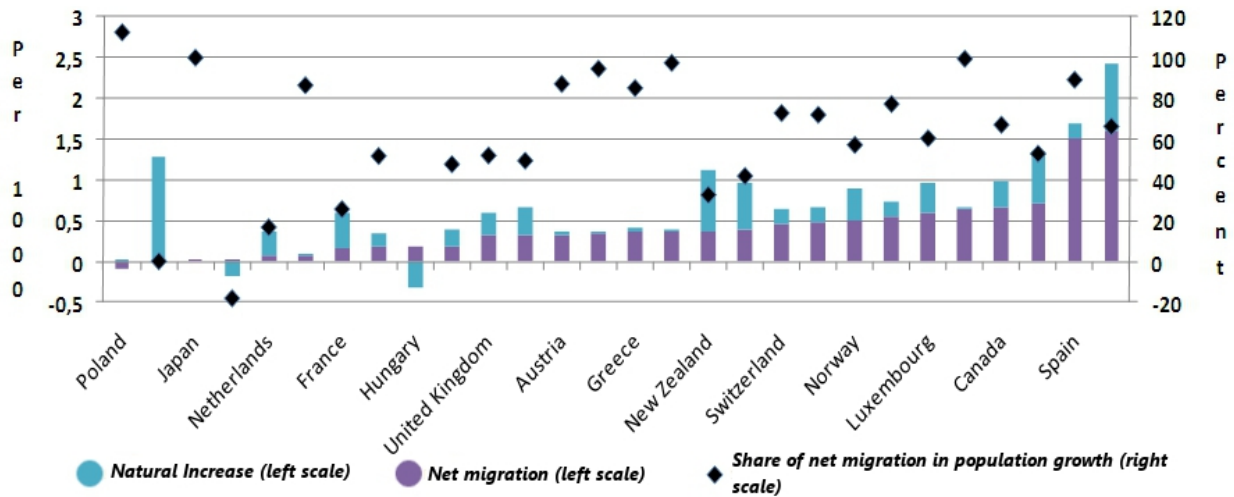
Migration is currently an area of vast scientific research, public debate, and policy intervention in Europe. The reasons for the centrality of this theme are numerous. On the one hand, migratory movements, which were always part of European history, have become increasingly visible in all European countries. On the other hand, they defy some of the entrenched principles in which cultures and identity lie. The settlement of populations with different national backgrounds, cultures, religions, and values goes against the notion of ethnic homogeneity on which European identities have largely been (mistakenly) based. It may be argued that international flows are nowadays one of the biggest sources of social change in Europe. In this chapter, migration is discussed as a demographic issue, and later on in this report (Chapter 3.3) the social situation of migrant families will be studied more closely.

In countries such as France, considerable inflows existed already in the first half of the twentieth-century. However, all developed Western countries experienced large inflows (mainly) after the Second World War in the framework of a solid economic expansion that lasted for about 30 years. Most of the immigrants were then supposed to be temporary guests, but many remained. From the 1970s onwards several changes occurred, including the enactment of restrictive policies, the changing geography of flows and new migration patterns. From the 1980s, Southern Europe and Ireland gradually became important targets of immigration, together with some Scandinavian countries. More recently, after the end of the Cold War, Central and Eastern European countries also became objects of concern, given the importance of transit and, later, durable forms of immigration (Bonifazi *et al.*, 2008; Okolski, forthcoming). During these decades, outflows also took place from most European countries – although always less researched. Many of these were intra-EU flows. At the same time, a clear policy-driven difference started to emerge between intra-EU flows and others involving third countries. The contradiction between (quasi) free circulation - successively updated with the new EU enlargements - and restrictions towards third-country nationals became increasingly evident.

The measure of international migration is complex. As described by several sources including, for example, an extensive work carried out by Poulain and others (2006), the methodology and concepts used in this field largely differ among European countries. Recently, the EC has launched an initiative to carry out a harmonisation of migration statistics in the EU. Despite the efforts of institutions such as the OECD, in the framework of its annual *International Migration Outlook*, comparative exercises are always weak.

Despite the methodological problems, recent statistical data confirm the importance and widespread character of immigration in Europe. The observation of net migration growth in Europe since the 1950s confirms several facts: the durability of inflows to the North-western countries to the present day; the turnaround from emigration to immigration in several countries, such as in Southern Europe; and the gradual advent of new immigration destinations. Furthermore, comparison between net migration and natural increase is a revealing indicator of how immigration is driving demographic growth: it is mainly migration that enables growth, and migration is therefore helping to 'smooth out' of the structural impacts of ageing.

**Figure 5: Contribution of net migration and natural increase to population growth (2006)**



Source: OECD Factbook, 2009

Some European countries, such as Luxembourg, Switzerland, Ireland, and Austria had in 2006 a larger share of foreign-born population than the United States, a country in which immigration is 'part and parcel' of national identity. Taking the criteria of foreign population, the same European countries are joined by Spain, Belgium, and Germany. When observing the rate of growth during recent years (1995 to 2006), both the share of foreign-born population and foreigners are on the rise in most European countries. The speed of growth has been higher in some of the recent European hosts, such as the countries of Southern Europe and Ireland, where the number of immigrants (or foreigners) sometimes doubled or tripled in just ten years. Spain is the most impressive example, having passed from a proportion of 1.6% of foreigners in the whole population, in 1997, to a huge 10.3%, in 2006.

The legal channels, which prospective immigrants use, are diverse. In 2006, family-related migration, including family reunification and marriage migration (entries of fiancés or recently married spouses of citizens or legal foreign residents) accounted for the majority of inflows, approaching 44% of the total. This was followed by individuals entering in the framework of free movement provisions, particularly in the case of the EU, labour migration, and humanitarian grounds (including refugees).

Demographic impact of immigration in Europe has been the object of an increasing amount of research. The reason for this is plain: in the face of the potential decline and structural ageing of the European population, the direct and indirect impact of immigration has generally been well received. The inputs resulting from (usually) young adult immigrants and their offspring have enabled increases in total population, slowed down the pace of ageing and smoothed some of its

consequences. On the other hand, the impossibility of replacement migration, in the sense of offsetting the consequences of European low fertility, has been repeatedly stated.

Studies such as that by Haug *et al.* (2002), carried out in the framework of the Council of Europe, have been among the first ones to study these issues on a comparative basis. Its conclusions pointed to the fact that immigration has contributed significantly to the positive demographic growth and the slower pace of ageing in a number of European countries, mainly since the 1960s. This has to do with both its sheer numbers (direct impact) and its delayed demographic effect, given the volume of immigrants' offspring (indirect impact). Fertility rates among immigrants, although varied, tended frequently to come down to host country levels. However, their concentration on adult fertile ages led in every case to a high proportion of births issuing from immigration – the actual basis of the second generation. Alternatively, their mortality rates were low, again a consequence of the young age structure.

However, several studies, such as Lutz and Scherbov (2006) and Bijak *et al.* (2007) confirm that immigration may be, at the most, a small part of the solution to an unavoidable problem, i.e., low demographic growth and ageing. However, simulations of net migration rates over the next decades suggest that significant immigration would be beneficial in sustaining the current quantitative level of the workforce and the current potential support ratios in most EU countries.

Further research has been conducted into the impact of immigration on fertility, family patterns, morbidity, and mortality. With regard to fertility, some recent studies suggest that immigrants' fertility, although varied and even when declining towards host country levels, have added significantly to national demographic patterns. On the one hand, immigrant children account for a growing share of total live births in many EU countries. On the other hand, they have had an impact on the stabilisation or even an increase in fertility in some countries, as in some lowest-low fertility countries, such as Spain and Italy (Billari, 2008).

The importance of immigration - including national, intra-EU and third-country national immigrants - for the present and future of European populations is universally accepted. Indeed, we should recall that inflows and outflows are part of demography, at the same way as births and deaths. It is only the political and cultural challenges associated with foreign inflows that have given so much visibility to this issue, particularly where non-EU citizens are concerned. The extreme evaluation of immigration's impacts is that of a British demographer Coleman (2006), who is known for his critical stance on inflows: although his proposal for a "third demographic transition" seems exaggerated, it is useful as a signal of its current significance.

### **2.3 Development and change of family forms**

In nearly all European countries in recent decades, family forms have become more diverse, and the incidence of the so called "middle-class nuclear family" (i.e. a household with married heterosexual couple and their biological children) has been decreasing. Especially in Northern and Western European countries, the recent decline of the "golden age of marriage" with high fertility and marriage rates, low divorce rates and an early start of family formation (Peuckert, 2008: 341), has been accompanied by an increase in less institutionalised relationships. This trend was largely driven by an overall decrease and/or postponement of marriage, an increasing number of divorces, declining fertility and the postponement of family formation, as well as a rising number of children born outside marriage.

Scholars have identified many different factors that have contributed to the crisis of matrimony in contemporary Europe. On the socio-economic level, the transformation of the labour market, with increasing labour force participation of women, have rendered the establishment of a marriage tie as a choice opposed to a “destiny”, a rite of passage into adulthood. On the cultural level, the process of secularisation (Norris & Inglehart, 2004) has contributed to the gradual spread and affirmation of cohabitation. Universal education and the emergence of collective movements such as feminism have partly played a key role in undermining the model of the traditional, patriarchal family. The marital tie in itself is no longer crucial but rather the individual sentiments that induce each of the partners autonomously seek a union (e.g. Weigel, 2008). Paradoxically, the tendency to place love at the basis of contemporary marriage constitutes one of the elements of its fragility and instability.

### *2.3.1. Decreasing marriage rates and increasing divorce rates*

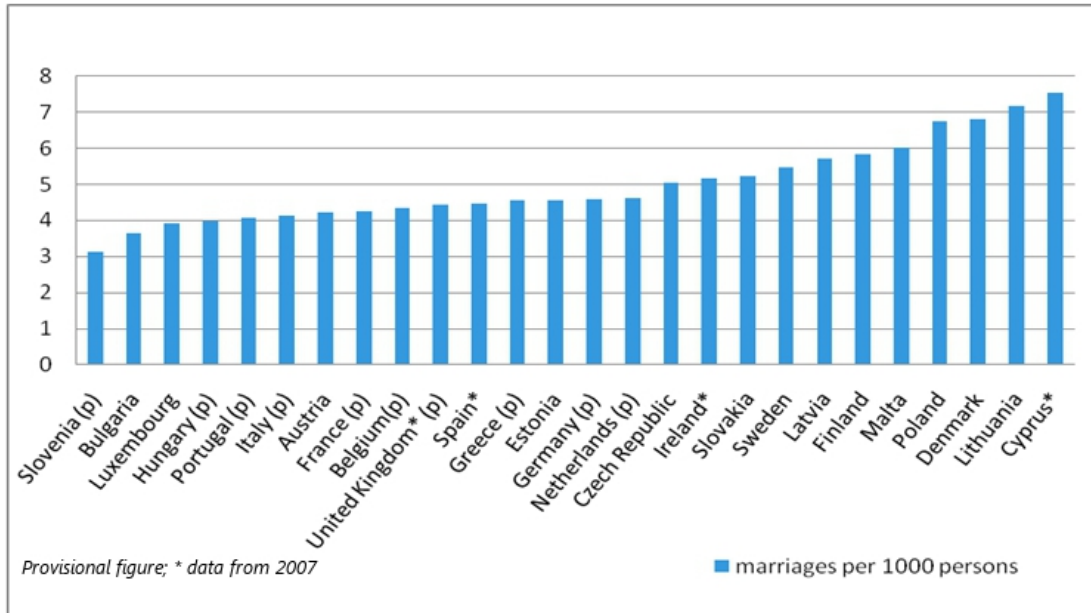
Since the mid-1960s, marriage rates in Europe have been declining and only recently have stabilised. While the marriage rate was at 7.64 marriages per 1,000 persons in 1965, it has fallen to as low as 4.87<sup>4</sup> in 2007 (Eurostat, 2010a).

When comparing European nations, some *Northern European* countries display high marriage rates (e.g. Denmark with 6.81 in 2008), following modest increases since 2003. Although *Eastern European* countries often share a similar background regarding their past political development, they are rather heterogeneous concerning marriage patterns (Eurostat, 2010a). A major reason might be that in some Eastern European countries the influence of the Catholic and Orthodox Church is still significant, e.g. in Poland or Romania. Since these religions advocate a more traditional family model, it is not surprising that their citizens show the highest marriage rates within Eastern Europe. Despite this, marriage rates have declined strongly between 1990 and 1992 in all Eastern European countries (as well as in the Eastern part of Germany; see Eurostat, 2010a), most likely a repercussion of both rising insecurities following the break-down of the socialist regime, but also the discontinuation of political support for the “nuclear family” model (see Peuckert, 2008: 358). In most *Central European* countries marriage rates have been falling already since the early-1960s and are now slightly below the European average (*ibid.*). In most *Southern European* countries marriage rates also have fallen continuously and are either well below the European mean (e.g. Italy, Spain or Portugal), or somewhat higher.

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<sup>4</sup> Estimated figure.



**Figure 6: Marriages per 1,000 persons in the EU27 countries (2008)**

Source: Eurostat, 2010

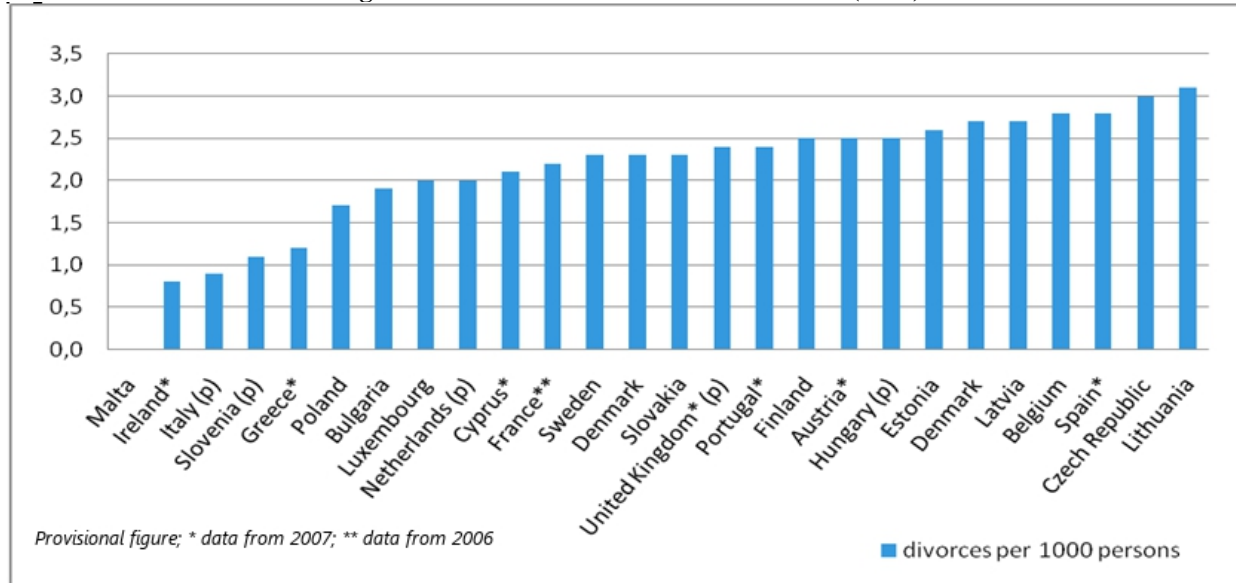
At the same time, the percentage of cohabitation families has risen over the time. Generally, cohabiting couples with children are most common in Northern Europe and in France, while they are again very rare in Southern Europe (see Kiernan, 2004). Still, cohabitation often makes up a “preliminary” form of partnership before getting married. This indicates that overall, getting or being married is still very important for most Europeans (see Kiernan, 2003; Spéder, 2005). Thus, the number of (long-term) cohabiting couples with children is still low, but recently has been increasing. In most Northern and Western European countries, except Western Germany and the Benelux countries, more than 40% of cohabiting couples already have children. Still, the percentage of first-born children of cohabiting parents is much higher than for second- or later-born children.

While marriage rates have decreased in Europe, divorce rates have been constantly on the rise, while they more than doubled from 0.8 (divorces per 1,000 persons) in 1965 to 2.0 in 2005<sup>5</sup>. The highest rates are found in Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, and Latvia. In Germany, Sweden and Slovakia, rates are rather moderate, whereas in Greece, Italy and Ireland, divorce rates are very low (Eurostat, 2010a). Taken together, there appear to be only little regional differences. The most obvious pattern is that the lowest rates are observed in countries with large catholic denominations.

Divorce is more and more frequently an initiative taken by women and is often explained with women’s increased economic independence. However, recent research shows that the relationship between women’s employment and the increase in the divorce rate varies according to socio-cultural context. In countries with greater gender equality e.g. the Netherlands and the UK, the economic independence of women has a positive effect on marital stability, while in countries in which equality is still far from being achieved, like Italy, the increase in the presence of women in the workforce is accompanied with increased instability. Furthermore, it is not so much women’s employment as the nature of the relationship itself that generates instability in a marriage (Saraceno & Naldini, 2007; MacRae, 2003a).

<sup>5</sup> No actual data available.

Figure 7: Divorce-rate in the EU27 countries (2008)



Source: Eurostat, 2010

A large number of studies, both economic and social, have examined the consequences of divorce on men and women. Several decades ago, some sociologists argued that a marriage is composed of two different marriages, “his” and “her” (Bernard, 1972). Men and women not only had different perceptions of the way their marriage was organised, but that they would also gain different benefits from it. More recently, some scholars have proposed that there is also “his” and “her” divorce (Kalmijn & Rigt-Poortman, 2006).

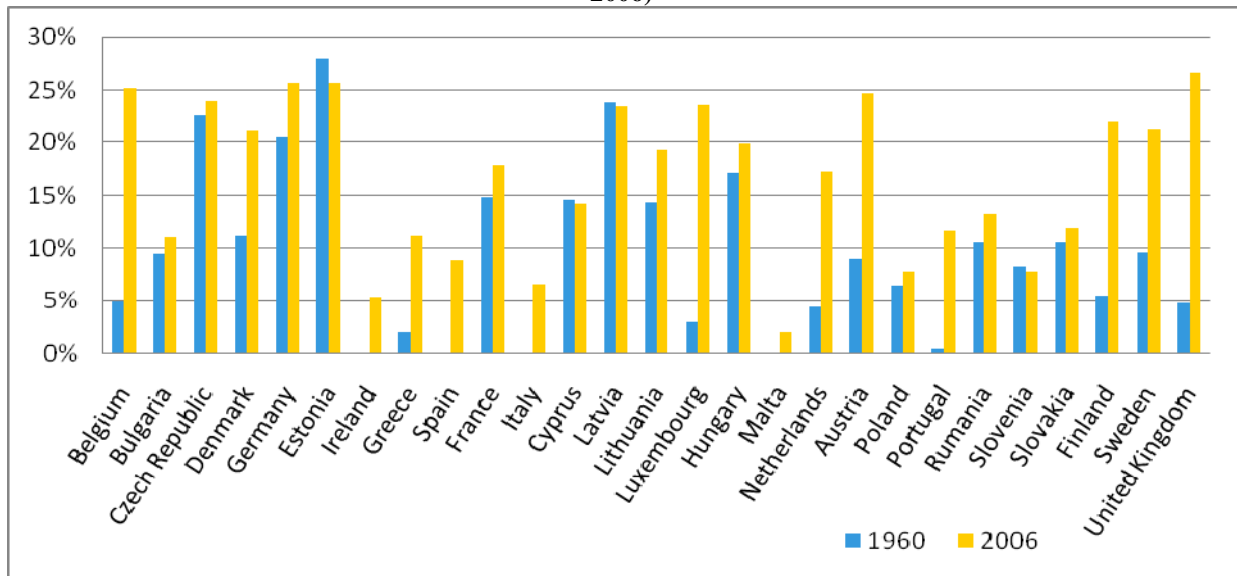
As far as the economic consequences of divorce are concerned, those mainly fall upon women (McKeever & Wolfinger, 2001; Aassve *et al.*, 2006). Separation and divorce also influence on men who, while suffering less economically, seem to suffer other negative effects, such as deterioration in the quality of their life style, housing and general consumption as well as deterioration in the quality of their relationships with family and friends. Obviously, a crucial role in regard to the economic and social consequences of divorce is played by the social welfare system and the services it offers, which differ from one European country to another (Kalmijn & Rigt-Poortman, 2006; Uunk, 2004).

### 2.3.2. Re-marriage

As divorce rates have risen, the relative incidence of re-marriages has also been on the rise. According to Kiernan (2003) “men are (...) more likely than women to remarry and are also more likely to remarry more quickly after a divorce”. In nearly all European countries, the percentage of first-matrimonies as a share of marriages in total decreased through 1960 and 2006<sup>6</sup>. Cross-national comparisons show, that the *Eastern European* countries had the lowest increase in re-marriages. In contrast, the *Northern European* states show increases of about 10% points. Central European countries are more heterogeneous: Whereas Belgium, the UK and Luxembourg display a high increase of re-marriages, Germany and France show very little differences over time. *Southern countries* (except Portugal with a moderate increase) as well as Ireland show very low respectively no differences (Eurostat, 2010a; own calculation).

<sup>6</sup> No overall availability of data for these two points of time; most post-socialistic countries only offer data since 1995 or later.

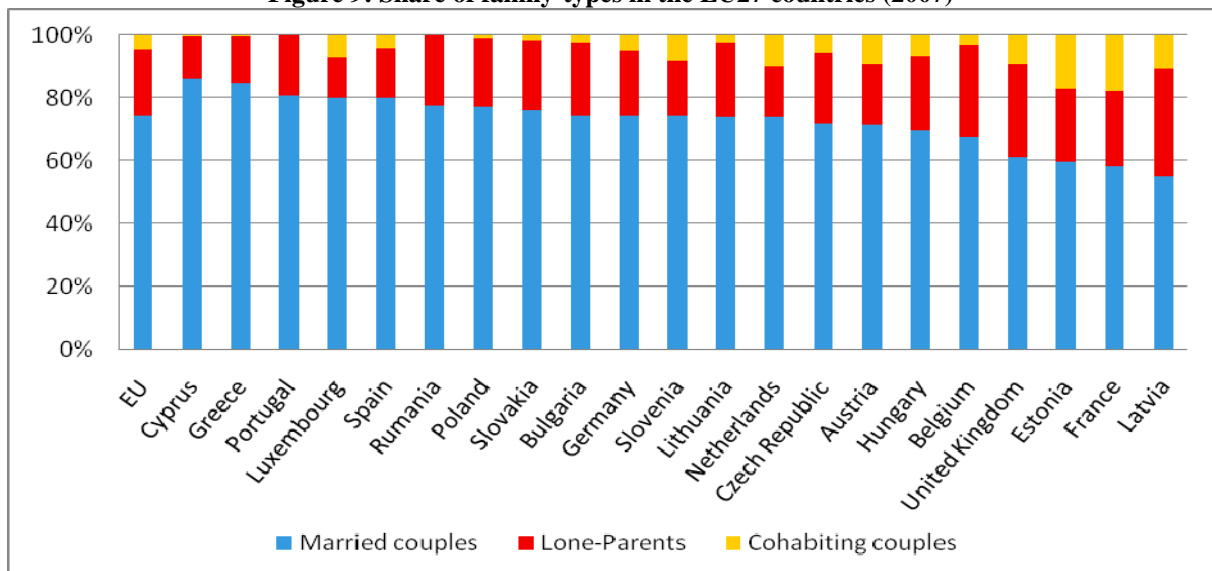
**Figure 8: Share of re-marriages of divorcés as the percentage of all marriages in European countries (1960 & 2006)**



Source: Eurostat, 2010a, own calculations

Despite the developments outlined above, the “nuclear family model” with married parents is still clearly dominant in all European regions. In this context, Peuckert (2008) differentiates three regional types with relative homogenous characteristics: the *Northern European* countries, where non-traditional styles of living are more wide-spread; the *Western European* states with a dominance of the “modern nuclear-family-model” (even though it is decreasing); and the *Southern* states including Ireland, which are still mostly traditionally oriented (*ibid.*: 368). As mentioned above, the *Eastern European* countries are more heterogeneous regarding the dominance of a specific family type, but in general seem to loose their inclination towards the traditional model.

**Figure 9: Share of family-types in the EU27 countries (2007)**



Source: Labor Force Survey microdata, 2007, ifb-calculations (unweighted data)

The described decline in institutionalised relationships goes along with an increase in other; previously less wide-spread forms of family life, such as lone-parenthood, reconstituted and cohabiting families.

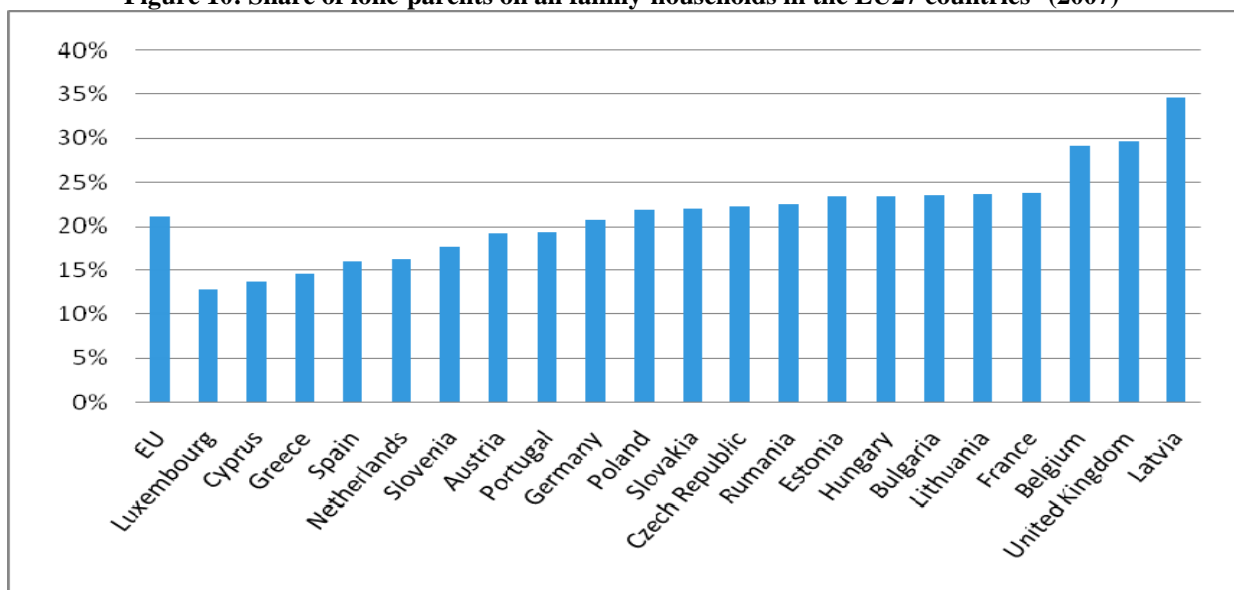
### 2.3.3. Lone-parent families

During the dominance of the “nuclear family model”, lone-parenthood often resulted from the death of one partner, most often the husband. Today there are comparatively high percentage of unmarried as well as divorced (or separated) single parents (mainly mothers) who live alone with their children (European Commission, 2007a: 13). Since the 1980s, the share of lone-parent families rose from 10% to 27% in 1999 in the EU15 and was at about 21% in 2008 in the EU27<sup>7</sup>.

As shown in the figure 10, high shares of lone-parents actually are found a in the UK, the Central European countries or in Eastern European countries like Estonia, Lithuania or Latvia. Again, very low rates can be observed in Southern-Europe (e.g. in Cyprus or Greece), but also in Luxembourg (Rost, 2009: 13).

Considering the composition of lone-parent families, especially Southern European countries show a very high share of divorced *and widowed mothers*. In contrast, there are only few unwed lone-parents. In the Central or Western European countries, e.g. France, Germany or the Netherlands there is a dominance of *divorced lone mothers* and a moderate share of single unmarried ones. The highest proportion of this group is observed in Denmark, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and in Eastern part of Germany (European Commission, 2007a: 18f.)

**Figure 10: Share of lone-parents on all family-households in the EU27 countries<sup>8</sup> (2007)**



Source: Labor Force Survey microdata, 2007, ifb-calculations (unweighted data)

<sup>7</sup> The above time series, however, need to be treated with care as data because available data is scarce. Furthermore, occasional evidence points to substantial variations in data on lone parenthood between different data sources.

<sup>8</sup> For Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Malta and Sweden there was no data available; the figures for the EU27 depends on the other available countries.

### 2.3.4. Reconstituted families

Another important issue with regard to the rising diversity of family forms is the increase in reconstituted families (stepfamilies). Most recent literature distinguishes different types of them (see Peuckert, 2008; Steinbach, 2008): *simple step-families* with children from just one side (most common is the “stepfather family”), *complex step-families* with children from both sides or even with shared children, and *multi-fragmented families* with more diffuse family formations by multiple divorces and/or deaths of one parent. Complex stepfamilies as well as multi-fragmented families are also called “patchwork families” (Nave-Herz, 2004: 33). Research on patchwork families in Europe is very rare, especially from the cross-national perspective. Most of the studies focus on the risk of separation and their probability for having (another) child together depending on whether one or both partners brought children from previous relationships into a new partnership or not.

As comparative data show, it is not so much the sheer occurrence of reconstituted families and lone-parent families that is new, but rather the substantial increase of their proportion over time. Comparing the different countries from where data are available in the Generation and Gender Survey (GGS) 2005, Germany nowadays displays the comparatively highest percentage of reconstituted families with about 14%. On the other end, Bulgaria and the Netherlands have the lowest rates with about 4%. France takes an intermediate position with 8% (own calculations).

Notably, reconstituted families play an important role in the context of fertility. Oftentimes, they are more likely to have additional children, because, on the one hand, they mostly have the intention of building up an own family identity (“union commitment effect”) and, on the other, the motivation of the childless partner to fulfil (mostly) his or her child-wish is rather high. This so-called “parenthood effect” positively affects the probability of having shared children (Prskawetz *et al.*, 2003: 108). The magnitude of the effect varies depending on the number of children both spouses previously have had: in particular, the number of children who are brought into the relationship is crucial, with the effect of stepchildren negatively affecting the likelihood of further shared children by itself (see Thomson, 2004). Furthermore, women who bring their own biological children into the new relationship generally are more willing to have another shared child as compared to men.

Although institutionalised relationships still make up the dominant style of living among households with children in Europe, it can be demonstrated that representations of the term “family” are getting more multi-faceted. For future research, it thus will be important to observe continuously the development of afore mentioned family forms, which are becoming more and more common.

## 2.4 New and rare family forms

This chapter focuses on new and rare family forms; the data available on these family forms is rather fragmentary. Especially cross-national comparative data for all EU-member states is very incomplete. What comes to more recent (or recently recognised) family forms it is important to consider gay and lesbian families (rainbow families) and families without common households as still small but increasing family forms or arrangements.

### 2.4.1. Gay and lesbian families (Rainbow families)

Rainbow families are defined “by the presence of two or more people who share a same-sex orientation (e.g. a couple) or by the presence of at least one lesbian or gay adult rearing a child” (Allen & Demo, 1995: 113). There are two main types of rainbow families: those where the child(ren) stem(s) from previous heterosexual relationships and those where the same-sex couples realise the desire for a child via reproductive medicine, adoption or fostering (Wegener, 2005: 53ff.). Exemplary data for Germany indicates that the first type is most wide-spread, but in recent years, also the second type to parenthood has become more and more frequent (Dürnberger *et al.*, 2009: 15; Jansen, 2010).

The legal recognition of same-sex couples shows a high variation between European countries. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Nordic countries were forerunners to give same-sex couples the opportunity to legalise their unions. A new legal term, the *registered partnership*, was introduced and first passed in Denmark in 1989. Other Nordic countries introduced this new civil status in the subsequent years (Norway in 1993, Sweden in 1995, Iceland in 1996), followed by a number of other European countries in later years<sup>9</sup>. Registered partnership does not assign all the same legal rights to same-sex couples as marriage provides for heterosexual partners. Depending on the country, the rights of same-sex registered partners do not include the opportunity to adopt a child, to have medically assisted insemination, defined forms of how to formalise the partnerships, and requirements of legal residency in the country before entering partnership. Other countries, such as Belgium (2000), Slovenia, the Czech Republic (2006) and Hungary (2009) chose a more property and inheritance orientated construction to recognise same-sex couples (Verschraegen, 2009: 434). In 1999, the French government chose a unique way and installed PACS (“Pacte civil de solidarité”) as a new social status and possibility for heterosexual as well homosexual cohabitants<sup>10</sup>.

In 2009, Norway and Sweden completed their process of granting same-sex couples the same rights to marriage as to heterosexual couples. Norway and Sweden are the only states in Europe where fully gender-neutral marriage legislation is implemented, while other European countries as Italy, Ireland, and Poland still have no institution at all to legally recognise same-sex couples (ILGA, 2010). In twelve European countries, national statistics offices show a high variety concerning data collection and publication on registered partnerships and same-sex couples (Banens, 2010: 11), which makes cross-country comparisons very difficult.

In Scandinavia, an increasing feminisation of the dynamics of same-sex marriages can be observed. In 2009, Sweden decided to open up marriage as a legal institution also for same-sex couples. There is also an increasing prevalence of childbearing and parenthood in Scandinavia among same-sex couples. The means by which same-sex couples realise their childbearing aspirations, such as adoption and the access to reproductive medicine, display a huge variation between countries (Verschraegen, 2009: 434). In Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, England and Wales, Scotland, Belgium, Iceland and Finland, same-sex couples have the right to adopt an unknown child, while in other countries as Germany this is not permitted. Additionally in Germany, France and Denmark the registered same-sex couples have the right to a so-called “stepchild adoption” where the (new) partner of the biological parent can “step-adopt” the child,

<sup>9</sup> The Netherlands and Spain in 1998, Germany and Portugal in 2001, Finland in 2002, England, Wales and Luxemburg in 2004 and Austria in 2010 (Banens, 2010: 10; Biele-Woelki & Fuchs, 2002: 215ff.; Verschraegen, 2009: 433ff.; Bundeskanzleramt, 2009; Festy, 2006: 419).

<sup>10</sup> This intermediate status, which is neither a union nor a contract, neither private nor public, expresses also the “French ambiguity of responding to increasing cohabitation” (Martin & Théry, 2001: 135).

once the other biological parent is known and agrees to this procedure. In Norway, same-sex couples additionally have access to reproductive medicine (Verschraegen, 2009: 434).

Existing international research has mainly focused on legal and juridical aspects, such as the recognition process, the legal differences to marriage or the right to adoption (Biele-Woelki & Fuchs, 2002; Verschraegen, 2009; Festy, 2006). Furthermore, official statistics on rainbow families are based on very small case numbers so errors of estimation are very probable. The GGP provides data on rainbow families only for five European countries: In Bulgaria 0.1% of all families are rainbow families (with children), in Germany and the Netherlands 0.7%, in France 0.5% and in Hungary only 0.02%<sup>11</sup> (United Nations, 2005, own calculations). In Germany, even though registered partnership was introduced in 2001, the micro-census<sup>12</sup> started to collect data on registered same-sex couples only in 2006. According to their data in 2008, there were around 5,000 same-sex couples in Germany with children living in the same household<sup>13</sup>. At least 7200 children lived in those “rainbow families”. However, these data have to be carefully considered because sexual orientation was not directly inquired. The available data thus possibly represents an underestimation of same-sex couples with children.

In Germany, as compared to heterosexual partnerships, same-sex couples have a higher educational level and most of the couples share domestic and paid work more equally. These trends are also confirmed by the first representative German national study on registered partnerships with children “Children in same-sex partnerships” (Rupp, 2009). A further study demonstrates additionally that in Germany most of the rainbow families are composed by same-sex orientated women and their children (Eggen & Rupp, 2010).

There is almost no cross-country information about the way same-sex partners plan to have children, which is partly due to the afore mentioned huge cross-country differences in legal conditions for adoption or access to reproductive medicine. In this context, it should also be pointed out, that on both national and cross-national level, data and information of *reproductive families* (couples using reproductive medicine) in general are very scarce. Rare exceptions are studies by Golombok, Brewaeys and their colleagues, which study development, psychological wellbeing of children and the functioning in reproductive families in the UK, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands<sup>14</sup>. Their findings underline that in all four countries, parents of children conceived by assisted reproduction interacted more with their child and reported less stress associated with parenting than parents who conceived their child naturally. No group differences were found either for the presence of psychological disorder or for children's perceptions of the quality of family relationships (Golombok *et al.*, 2002; Brewaeys *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, there are some studies that argue from a theoretical perspective that the increase of same-sex partnership and parenthood has to be considered as a general trend from the (biological) nuclear family to a “family of choice” or “community family” (Maier, 2009).

Rainbow families are still a very rare phenomenon in Europe. Nevertheless, further research on rainbow families and a homogenised cross-national method to collect data about these families is crucial, because there is a lack of information concerning many important issues. How these

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<sup>11</sup> This accords to only one case in Hungary. In all GGP observed countries the cases of rainbow families raise only up to 27 cases (Germany).

<sup>12</sup> The German MIKROZENSUS is an annual survey of 1% of the German population.

<sup>13</sup> From a total of 69.600 cohabiting same-sex couples, which still should be interpreted as the minimal level due to underestimation because of refusals.

<sup>14</sup> They focused on in-vitro fertilisation and donor insemination in comparison with control groups of families with a naturally conceived child and adoptive families.

families are constituted and how multinational same-sex couples and families are (legally) respected in their different countries of origin (Verschraegen, 2009: 435) In addition, the research on rainbow families also holds a high potential for scientifically understanding families in general because all sex or gender related characteristics of both spouses are initially symmetrical in these families.

#### 2.4.2. *Families without common household: Living apart together and commuter families*

Living apart together and commuter families are relatively new research subjects in Europe. By definition, a living apart together relationship is a couple which does not live in the same household. These people define themselves as a couple, and they perceive that their close surrounding personal network does so as well (Levin, 2004: 227f.). These might be also families with children, where one parent does not live in the same household.

While the database on mobility in Europe in general can be considered extensive and based on numerous studies<sup>15</sup>, the data on living apart together and commuter families can only be described as incomplete. The data of the Gender and Generation Survey (GGS) provide a first database to describe, at least to some extent, this family form, even though it is not possible to differentiate specific details, e.g. how long the partnership lasts or how often the partner is commuting. Furthermore, it is not possible to identify commuter families<sup>16</sup>. Available evidence from GGP data shows that living apart together couples with children still are a rare phenomenon. Their percentage in Europe varies between 1.4% in Bulgaria and Hungary to 4.1% in France.

This data can be supplemented by more recent data from the *Job Mobilities and Family-Lives in Europe* research project, which includes data from six European countries<sup>17</sup> and focuses on the relevance and diversity of job-related spatial mobility<sup>18</sup> (Schneider & Meil, 2008). The study points out that, at some point during the professional career, half or more of the population has faced mobility demands. Job mobility in Europe differs more among social groups than among countries (Meil, 2008: 305ff.).

A number of results from this project appear to shed a critical light on the mobility term. While mobility was for a long time associated with new experiences and a promise of wealth and growth, Ruppenthal and Lück demonstrate that sometimes mobility is the last option to avoid a decline in social status (Ruppenthal & Lück, 2009: 5). They thus interpret mobility as a form of precarisation, a conclusion shared by Recchi, who shows that only 8,5% of respondent stepped into a higher-rank social class when taking up their first job after migration (Recchi, 2008: 218). Commuter families especially feel the burden of simultaneously organising private and professional life, as commuting reduces the available time for spending with the family. On the individual level, mobility influences the family planning, constrains the career opportunities of the parents and leads to a re-traditionalisation of the division of household and care tasks. Further, it complicates to reconcile mobility and parenthood especially for woman (Ruppenthal & Lück, 2009: 4f.).

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<sup>15</sup> Like the PIONEUR programme (European Commission, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Recent research on commuter families follows below.

<sup>17</sup> In Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, Spain and Switzerland.

<sup>18</sup> They differentiate various forms of mobility: *Residential mobility* (singular (mainly job-related) relocation) and *recurring mobility*, which follows a regularly rhythm as job-related overnights away from home (Limmer & Schneider, 2008: 32).



## 2.5. Conclusions

The previous analyses have given a concise overview of recent developments in family structures and family forms in Europe. Taken together, our results speak in favour of a comparatively high dynamic of family forms within European countries throughout the last decades. Some major trends can be identified based on demographic statistics and existing research:

- *postponement of first childbirth and first marriage, generally decreasing number of children, even though fertility aspirations are still at a comparable high level;*
- *increasing number of out-of-wedlock births as being married has lost its central role as a precondition for family formation;*
- *decreasing marriage-rate, increasing divorce-rate and increasing rate of re-marriages;*
- *consequentially, a notable decrease in the incidence of the “middle class nuclear family”, even though this model remains dominant;*
- *an increasing diversity of family forms and family life.*

However, the degree to which these transformations have materialised varies considerably between European countries. Opposed cases are represented by the *Nordic countries* (where there has been a considerable move away from the “traditional” family model, with late marriages, modest marriage rates and a high proportion of out-of-wedlock births,) and the *Southern European* countries (where family patterns are still much more in-line with the traditional model, i.e. central importance of marriage, low divorce rates, low degrees of out-of-wedlock births, little significance of new family forms). It is important to underline that it is in those countries with the highest degree of recent “de-standardisation” that display the highest fertility levels.

Outlining of the above developments largely rely on long-term trends. This was driven by the acknowledgement of the high degree of temporal inertia in demographic processes. Most of the outlined trends thus refer to developments over the last few decades. Most recent data suggest, however, that there may be some signs of a “flattening out” of previous highly dynamic processes, e.g. in the move away from the “traditional” family model or the development in marriage and divorce rates. However, data indicating this is often very recent and it is hard to say whether it can be indicative for a more general future trend. Furthermore, even though for some indicators, there has been a tendency to stabilise in some of the countries analysed, it can be assumed that in the future, a full reversal of previous developments will not occur. Similarly, even if the trend towards “new family forms” will halt, a return to a “nuclear family model” is unlikely.

Both data availability and academic interest have been highest in the area of fertility research where a multitude of data is available (e.g. the Gender and Generation Survey, The Family and Fertility Survey, the *Eurobarometer* studies, etc.) and previous research has focused on a large variety of research questions, both at the national as well as at the international level. In contrast, regarding the development of family forms and structures, research oftentimes has shown difficulties to “keep up the pace” with recent developments. Especially regarding newly emerging family forms, European comparative evidence is either scarce or virtually non-existent. These new family forms make up a major area for future research, as they are the most dynamic field of family development in contemporary Europe.

### 3. Current conditions of European families

This chapter concentrates on current social and economic conditions of European families. The focus is on some of the most crucial issues from the perspective of social inequality and families within and across European societies such as income, employment, poverty, physical living environment and housing, educational opportunities, and also the meaning of media, information and communication technologies in families. Social inequality shapes family life, but families and their members must also be seen as actors in the system of inequality (transmitting inequalities to subsequent generations, reproducing them within the home and through their networks, and resisting the effects of inequality).

Research on social inequality has a long tradition in Europe and has emerged again as an important topic on the research agenda over the last few years. Social inequality (or inequality between social categories) derives from the unequal distribution of various resources (economic, social, political, cultural), and has been analysed in terms of poverty (Atkinson, 1998; Berthoud, 2004), social exclusion and deprivation (cf. Paugam, 1998; Muffels *et al.*, 2002; Gallie *et al.*, 2003), class structure and stratification (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Crompton, 1998; Bourdieu, 1998; Ornstein, 2007) and educational inequalities (Duru-Bellat, 2002; Lahire, 2000).

The importance of inequality in today's research and policy agendas has various sources: the process and multiple effects of globalisation and international migration, an increase in inequality since the mid-1970s, a new conception of human rights that incorporates the need for minimum income, recognition of the negative effects of inequality on the social fabric, and an increased awareness of the effects of inequality at an individual level (Grusky & Kanbur, 2006). Several authors have addressed the question of inequality by emphasising its political importance (Therborn, 2006; Giddens, 2007; Milanovic, 2007; Grusky & Kanbur, 2006; Barry, 2005). In this context, the phenomenon of inequality is often analysed from the standpoint of "social justice", a perspective fostered by authors such as Rawls (2001) and Fraser (2008), which emphasises the consequences of injustice when people are prevented from fully participating in social life.

#### 3.1. Social inequalities, diversity and wellbeing of families

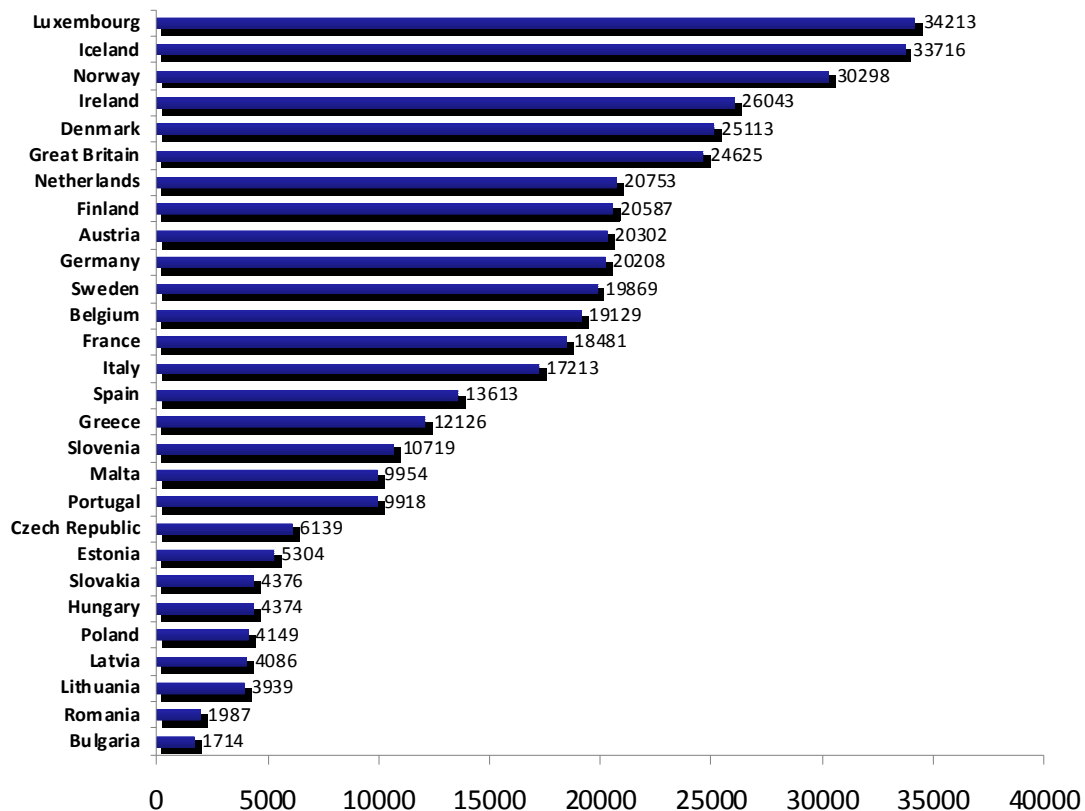
##### 3.1.1. *Income inequality across and within European societies*

Measurement of inequalities across and within European societies relies systematically on comparative statistical data regarding levels of income. There are significant differences in levels of income across Europe. Using data on mean and 'equivalised' disposable incomes (in EUR) (Figure 11) we can see that Luxembourg, Iceland, Ireland, Denmark and Great Britain have the highest levels of income within the EU27, but they are closely followed by a large group of countries (Netherlands, Finland, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, France, Italy). Eastern and Southern European countries have lower levels of income. The lowest levels in the EU27 are in Romania and Bulgaria.

Income inequality within each country is also significant. Drawing on one main indicator of income inequality - the ratio of total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20% of the population with the lowest

income (lowest quintile)<sup>19</sup> - the countries with the highest GDP per capita are not necessarily the most equalitarian. Together with the Nordic countries, we find lower levels of income inequality in countries such as Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Austria. Income inequality has increased in many countries over the last decade: in Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden. Although they are amongst the most unequal societies, Italy, Portugal, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland have reduced their income inequalities.

**Figure 11: Mean and equivalised disposable incomes by country (2007)**



Source: Eurostat, 2010b

Despite remarkable differences, it has been shown that living standard, expressed as GDP per head, is generally lower in rural than in urban areas (European Commission, 2008c: 55). The available data do not permit a systematic and complete analysis of rural-urban patterns in income poverty in Europe. Nevertheless, some country-specific surveys show that the gap in poverty rates between rural and urban areas is bigger in Eastern European countries than in the Western countries. In Western countries, poverty is concentrated in remote regions and, in general, regions with accessibility problems (European Commission, 2008c: 75).

Comparative datasets using the concept of class and taking up socio-professional and educational indicators to compare social categories across countries are more difficult to find and are not included systematically in the analysis of social inequality. Many authors have nevertheless argued that “class”, although a multi-faceted concept with a variety of different meanings, makes a significant contribution to understanding structured social inequality in contemporary societies and have even proposed new and improved approaches to the topic (Bottero, 2004 & 2005;

<sup>19</sup> Income must be understood as equivalised disposable income.

Devine *et al.*, 2005; Savage *et al.*, 2005; Crompton, 1998 & 2006b). The position taken up by contemporary research on class is that, although there has been considerable social change in European societies and individuals may have more choices to make than in the recent historical past, class and stratification analysis is important and useful for understanding and explaining the complex realities of inequality in late modern societies.

Ferreira de Almeida *et al.* (2006) applied the ACM<sup>20</sup> social class typology (Almeida, Costa & Machado, 1988; Costa, 1999) to data from the 2002 European Social Survey. Overall, in European Societies, industrial workers and routine employees are still the most numerous categories. However, professionals and qualified technical employees that have a high level of scientific, technical and cultural resources, are the majority (or close to 30%) in several countries: Denmark, France, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The authors point out the relevance of the professionals and technical employees group as a distinctive indicator of economic modernisation and social development, mainly because its distribution across Europe reflects differing degrees of progress regarding the information and knowledge society (Almeida *et al.*, 2006: 100).

Seen from a gender perspective, in most countries the professionals and technical employees category consists, for the most part, of women (the female majority is more evident in Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands and Germany). By contrast, in the other category at the top of the class structure, the entrepreneurs and executives, there are always more men, a difference which is more significant in France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Israel, with male representation being over 2.5 times higher than that of females. Usually men are also the majority among the self-employed.

Traditionally, research and policy makers have preferred economic and social indicators of wellbeing, deemed more appropriate to measure the development of societies. Measures of life satisfaction, happiness and generally subjective indicators of wellbeing have not been widely used in the analysis of human welfare. So far, research on subjective wellbeing has been mostly concentrated in highly developed countries. Comparisons have been based on levels of satisfaction rather than their distribution across the population and focused on countries with small variance in subjective wellbeing, thus diminishing possible effects of socio-economic factors. More recently, a strong case has been made for the use of subjective indicators combined with economic variables. Synthetic indicators have been proposed (Somarrriba & Pena, 2009), combining various objective dimensions such as income, living conditions and employment with subjective indicators like perception of quality of life.

A relationship between income inequality and subjective and objective welfare indicators is defended by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009). They provide extensive proof of the relation between (in)equality and welfare. The association between inequality and social problems cannot be explained by cultural differences or population size alone. According to them, unequal societies tend to perform worse on objective indicators, such as life expectancy, health, crime rates, and on subjective indicators, such as trust in fellow citizens or life satisfaction. They also point out that, in the more developed countries, measures of wellbeing are no longer associated with economic performance, suggesting that the quest for increasing material wealth needs to be replaced with increased social cohesion, improved social environment and quality of life. Data for the European Values Study from 1999-2000 (EVS Data Files and UNDP Data) for 32 European societies on the cognitive assessment of one's situation combining it with average

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<sup>20</sup> The typology combines socio-occupational and socio-educational indicators, such as occupation, employment status and educational level at the individual level.

income (using parity GDP). It can be observed that life satisfaction seems to be related to overall societal economic performance as life satisfaction is higher in more affluent societies (1999-2000 EVS Data Files and UNDP Data). Denmark, Malta, Ireland, Iceland and Austria are the top five countries in terms of life satisfaction (with an average score of eight or more in a 10-point scale). Most countries of central and northern Europe have above-average life satisfaction scores, also more southern countries such as Slovenia, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Croatia and Greece scores are average, when compared with the overall results. The bulk of countries with low life satisfaction scores are ex-socialistic societies. In Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, countries outside the EU, citizens are most unsatisfied with their life, and the average results are lower than five. Overall, there is a consistent relationship between life satisfaction and GDP, i.e. more affluent societies tend to have more highly satisfied citizens (also Fahey & Smyth, 2004).

Despite the fact that some of the richer societies in the EU are rather unequal, the level of comfort and material wellbeing achieved seems to mitigate the effect of social inequality. In poorer societies, such as those in the Eastern or Southern Europe, there seems to be a stronger link between social inequality and life satisfaction, suggesting the existence of a “lock-step” of societal well being. In other words, once a certain plateau is achieved this limits the effect of social inequality (i.e. low incomes and related disadvantages may have a greater impact in poorer countries than in rich countries, in terms of subjective wellbeing).

### *3.1.2. Economic situation of families*

Since the focus is on the economic situation of families, it is meaningful to compare the incomes of different family types. Average annual net earnings can be presented as annual net income per a family member, which allows to compare different types of families and also the effect of family type on the income level i.e. how supportive are the monetary family policy measures of the state.

Average annual net earnings for a *single person without children* across the EU were 20 208 EUR in 2007. Average earnings were a bit higher when looking at EU15 and considerable lower in the new member states. The lowest annual net earnings were recorded for Bulgaria, where a single person without children earned annually 2 048 EUR on average. It is incredible low even compared to the other new member states. The annual net income was also very low in Romania (3 485 EUR). The only candidate country, that is included in Eurostat data on annual net earnings, Turkey, had also similar average income level (Eurostat, 2007).

The average annual net earnings for two earner married couple with two children per a family member are almost everywhere about half of the income of a single person (Eurostat, 2007). The average net income per a family member for a *one-earner family with four members* is highest in two of the new member states, the Czech Republic and Slovenia (about 34% of the income of a single person). The measure is also similar in one of the wealthiest member states Luxembourg. The situation is hardest for such a family type in Turkey, but the average income is also quite low in Cyprus, Lithuania and the United Kingdom. Family poverty will be discussed later in this chapter.

### *3.1.3. Employment situation*

Employment has a crucial effect on the financial situation of families. Families with one earner and their children are in a relatively bad financial situation when compared to two-earner families. This explains the greater need for two incomes and presents a new problem for the

families: how to *combine work and family life*. Steady lifelong jobs are disappearing, making families confront unexpected periods of either too much or few work demands, which is accompanied by income insecurity. Welfare regimes have not yet found ways to cope with these changes. (Knijn & Smit, 2009: 8). Interrelatedness between labour market developments and changing family lives has two income-related dimensions: Family formation might be frustrated by difficulties accessing steady jobs, since childbearing as well as marriage are rather sensitive to financial instability. Furthermore, time to care for children is only partly compensated for by paid leave, and only marginally included in pensions. A career break for care purposes decreases one's lifelong income substantially (Knijn & Smit, 2009: 10-11). The impact of family decisions is bigger for women due to the effect the different time use has on the position in the labour market and potential wage (Bauer, 1998: 507)<sup>21</sup>.

The presence of children, especially young ones, can influence strongly if and what kind of a job is sought, particularly among women (Eurostat, 2009c: 17). However, changing female aspirations have led to increased female labour market participation in many countries - and the biggest change in behaviour has taken place among married mothers (OECD, 2007a: 42; Eurostat, 2008b: 53). Between 2000 and 2006, female employment rates increased in all but three member states (Romania, Slovenia and Slovak Republic). Strong increases were registered in a number of Mediterranean countries (Spain, Greece and Italy) and in certain new member states (notably in Cyprus, Latvia and Estonia) (Eurostat, 2009c: 17). Still the proportion of men of working age in employment exceeds that of women throughout Europe (Eurostat, 2008b: 53). In 2007, the *employment rate for women* was 58.3% in the EU27, a significantly higher than that recorded in 2001 (54.3%), although considerably lower than the corresponding rate for men (72.5%). The differences between employment rates of female and male employees are smallest in Sweden and Finland (Kovacheva *et al.*, 2007: 17).

Employment for men and women varies according to family type. Single persons without children were predominantly employed full-time, but at varying degrees (Eurostat, 2009c: 28-29). Single parents tend to work. Working full-time is fairly wide-spread in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovak Republic and Finland (with shares above 70%). In Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom more than 30% of single parents work part-time. More than 30% of single parents were unemployed in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom (Eurostat, 2009c: 28-29). In most couples without children both partners work full-time. With the exception of the Netherlands (39%), this share stood above 50% in all member states. The highest shares (above 70%) were observed in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom. The second most relevant pattern observed among couples without children was "one person working full-time and the other person not working", with shares ranging from 12% in United Kingdom to 34% in Greece. The third type of employment pattern, with one partner working full-time and the other working part-time, was fairly common in Belgium, Germany and Austria, with shares of around 20%. However, this type of working pattern was most wide-spread in the Netherlands, with 45%. The fourth and last working pattern, in which both partners are unemployed, accounts for only a minor share to the overall distribution of couples without children (Eurostat, 2009c: 30).

For the couples with children, the employment patterns "both working full-time" is also the most frequent. However, this share stood above 50% in only 14 member states. It is recalled that in many Eastern European member states, the dual full-time earner model was traditionally the norm, particularly in communist times, although it became less common in recent years. In some

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<sup>21</sup> Paid work of women and men will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

countries, other employment patterns are prevalent. In Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom the pattern “one working full-time and other working part-time” was the most wide-spread. In Spain, Italy and Luxembourg the situation where one person is employed (full-time or part-time) and the other person is not employed is the group with highest shares (Eurostat, 2009c: 30). The male breadwinner family runs a considerable risk of poverty especially if the family is headed by a low-skilled male (*The Well-Being of Children: the Impact...*, 2005: 10). Again the situation where both persons are not working is not wide-spread in the member states. With the exception of Slovenia, in all member states the presence of a child in the household leads to a decrease in the working pattern where both persons are working full-time (Eurostat, 2009c: 30).

There is evidence that poverty is much lower in countries with the earner-carer strategy, which emphasises policy approaches meant to balance care and employment for both men and women. At the same time, poverty rates are significantly higher in countries that employ the earner strategy, which takes a market-driven approach to care issues. Poverty rates are significantly higher for single mothers and particularly single mothers of young children not only in countries that employ the earner strategy but also in those that employ the carer strategy. Policies that support care outside the home reduce poverty more for single mothers than for partnered mothers (Misra, Moller & Budig, 2007).

This study makes a plea for the importance of combining market and transfer income: employed women are less likely to fall into poverty, while family benefits unsurprisingly also decrease poverty. The findings suggest that beyond the positive impact of cash benefits paid to families with children, work-family policies such as childcare and short-term leaves have powerful effects on poverty. Yet work-family policies that encourage women to take long leaves for caretaking have effects that are more ambivalent. In the year 2009, unemployment was higher in EU15 compared to EU27, although the differences were very small. Some 3.1% of those actively seeking work in the EU27 in 2007 had been unemployed for more than one year and 1.8% were unemployed for more than two years (Eurostat, 2009a: 280).

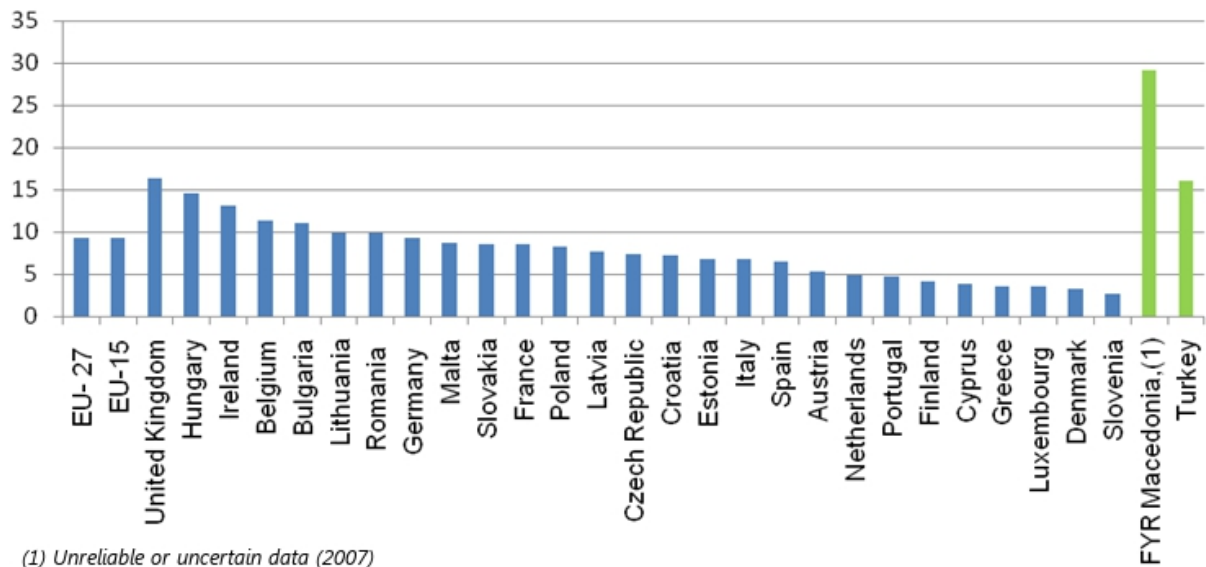
Over the period from late seventies until nineties youth unemployment has moved up considerably. At the same time the variation among member states has become larger (EU14 was looked at) (Micklewright & Stewart, 1999: 701-702). Persons under the age of 25 tend to face the most difficulty in securing a job. The average unemployment rate among 15 to 24 year olds who were actively seeking employment was 15.3% across the EU27 in 2007. The highest youth unemployment rate and biggest differences between generations were recorded for Greece. The relative difficulty facing young job seekers was also particularly high in Italy (15.4% difference), Romania (15.2% difference) and Sweden (14.8% difference). In contrast, youth unemployment rates were closest to (but never lower than) the overall unemployment rate in Germany, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Denmark (Eurostat, 2009a: 280).

Employment stability plays an important role in *decisions for home-leaving and family formation for young people*. The importance of employment status varies across Europe. In Poland, Slovenia and Italy regular employment seems to be more important for couples starting to cohabit (in three out of four cases one of the partners was in regular employment) than in Germany (over 40% of cases none of the partners was in regular employment) (*Job Instability...*, 2007: 238-240). Employment stability for at least one of the parents seems to be a necessary condition in the decision of having the first child, especially for those who are younger, do not have clear plans to form a family and have children or are still living in the family of origin. However, besides a favourable economic situation, the need for more flexible working

arrangements and other measures aimed at reconciling work and family are also indicated as relevant for family choices (*Job Instability...*, 2007: 248-254).

In the whole EU, over 9% of *children live in households where no-one works*. The proportion of households with children without a working adult increased from 8% in 1985 to over 10% in 1996, despite the fact that official unemployment rates were stable during that period (Micklewright & Stewart, 1999). The proportion of children living in jobless households in the EU in 2008 was largest in United Kingdom (16.4%), Hungary (14.6%) and Ireland (13.1%) and lowest in Slovenia (2.6%) followed by Denmark (3.3%), Luxembourg (3.6%), Greece (3.6%), Cyprus (3.9%) and Finland (4.1%).

**Figure 12: Share of children (0-17) who are living in households where no one works (%)**



Source: Eurostat, 2008b

Recent report on child poverty emphasises that lack of employment is also a major cause of child poverty. “For children in households at risk, earnings from employment account for a particularly small share of income in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Hungary and the UK, giving a first indication of the importance of joblessness as a factor in these countries. In the Southern EU countries and Poland, the share of earnings in the household income is much greater, suggesting that the risk of child poverty is linked to low earnings rather than to joblessness.” (Child poverty and child wellbeing in the European Union, 2010: 10).

### 3.2. Families and poverty

In 2007, around 17% of the Europeans were considered to be at risk of poverty (meaning that 17% households in the EU27 had an equivalised disposable income that was less than 60% of the respective national median income). Different groups in society are more or less vulnerable to poverty. *Women* are generally at greater risk of living in a poor household. In 2007, 18% of women of all ages had an income below the threshold, against 16% of men. As shown earlier, there are considerable differences in the at-risk-of poverty rates of people according to activity status. The unemployed are a particularly vulnerable group: 43% of unemployed persons were at-risk-of-poverty in the EU27 in 2007, with higher rates in the Baltic member states. About one in six (17%) retired persons in the EU27 was at-risk-of-poverty in 2007; rates were much higher in the Baltic member states, the United Kingdom and, in particular, Cyprus. Those in



employment were far less likely to be at-risk-of-poverty (8% in the EU27), with relatively high rates in Greece (14%) and Romania (18%). The *level of education* attained also appears to play an important role in whether or not people are more vulnerable to poverty; across the EU27 in 2007, those leaving education with no more than a lower secondary education were more than three times as likely to be at-risk-of-poverty than persons with a tertiary education. *Children and the older people* tend to face a higher risk of poverty than the rest of the population (even after social transfers). In 2007 one in every five children (20%) across the EU27 was at-risk-of-poverty, with a slightly higher proportion (22%) recorded amongst the older people. Although *the older people* were at greater risk of poverty than the population of the EU27 as a whole, there was a notable difference between men and women: old women were more at-risk-of-poverty than old men (22% compared with 17% in 2007). This gender inequality was widest in the Baltic member states, Slovenia and Bulgaria, but relatively narrow in Luxembourg, France and the Netherlands. Malta was the only Member State where old women were less at-risk-of-poverty than old men. One in every five (20%) young adults aged between sixteen and 24 was at-risk-of-poverty within the EU27 in 2007, a higher proportion than across the whole population (17%). In addition, the risk of poverty strongly relates to household type (Eurostat, 2010b).

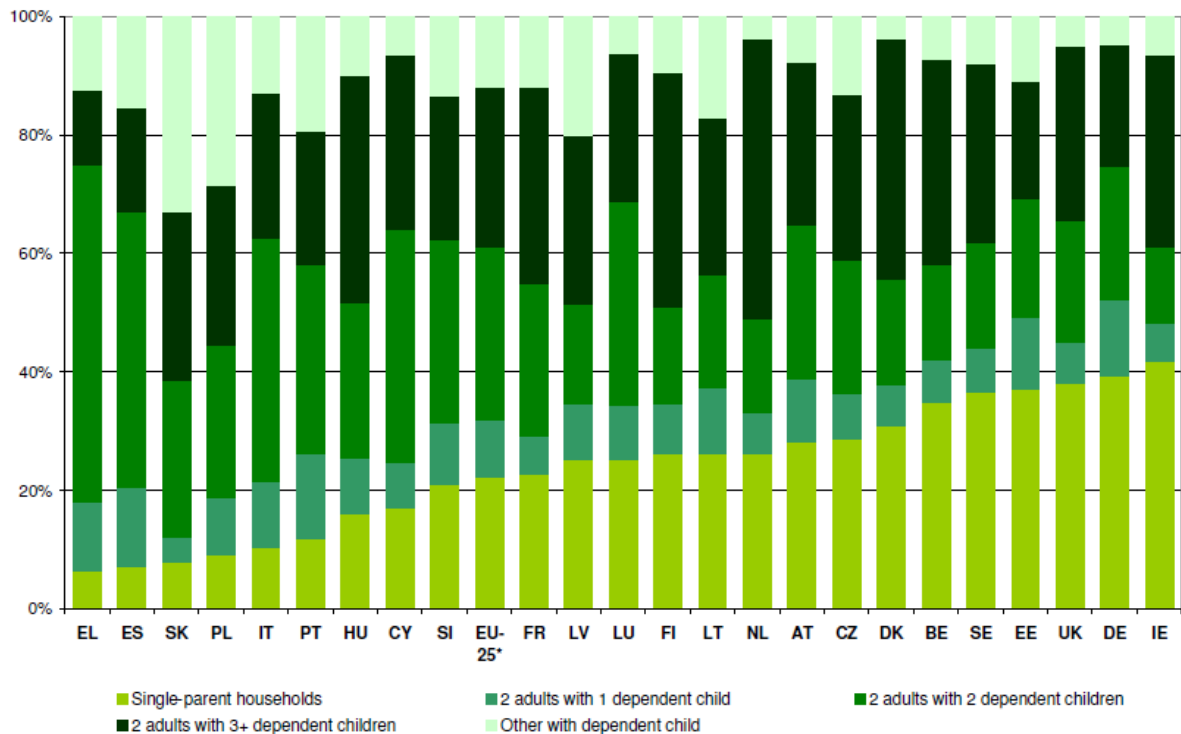
### 3.2.1. *The age profile of poverty: child poverty and youth poverty*

*Child poverty* has merited increasing research interest and policy focus, in recent years. Förster and Mira d'Ercole (2005) are among the authors who argue that relative poverty is, in most countries, more common among children than among the entire population, and this increased further in the second half of the 1990s. While child poverty rates are lower in countries with higher levels of maternal employment, there is much diversity in country experiences, suggesting that specific factors increase the risks of destitution for children in some OECD countries. In the Northern European countries characterised by generally low levels of poverty, the risk of poverty in childhood is below average, often due to the effects of universal income maintenance payments to children and plentiful, subsidised childcare (Walker & Collins, 2004).

The *European Task Force on Child Poverty and Child Wellbeing* (2008) conducted a detailed analysis of child poverty, following a demand made by the 2006 Spring European Council to the member states and the Commission to take decisive steps to eradicate poverty among children. The analysis that follows was largely taken from the report drafted by this *Task Force*<sup>22</sup>. In 2005, 19 million children lived under the poverty threshold in the EU27, meaning that 19% of children were at risk of poverty, against 16% for the total population. In most EU countries, children are at greater risk of poverty than the rest of the population, except in the Nordic countries (where 9-10% of children live below the poverty threshold).

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<sup>22</sup> There is also a more recently published extensive report on child poverty. That is why this issue is only briefly covered in this report. See: Child poverty and child wellbeing in the European Union. Report for the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Unit E.2. Volume I: Main report. TÁRKI Social Research Institute (Budapest, Hungary) & Aplica (Brussels, Belgium) 2010.

**Figure 13: The distribution of children at risk of poverty, by household type, EU25\* (2007)**

Source: Own calculations based on EU-SILC 2007, version 01.03.2009.

Note: \* Excluding Malta.

Source: **Child poverty and child wellbeing in the European Union, 2010**

In the EU, half of the poor children live in the two types of households that are most at risk of poverty: 23% live in lone-parent households (against 13% for all children together) and 27% in large families (against 21% for all children together) (see also Figure 13). However, the extent to which lone parent households and large families experience greater risks of poverty depends both on their characteristics (age, education level of parents, etc.), and on the labour market situation of the parents (joblessness, in-work poverty, etc.). The latter can be influenced by the availability of adequate support through access to enabling services such as childcare, measures of reconciliation of work and family life, and in-work income support. On the other hand, the distribution of poor children by household type varies greatly across countries. This shows that the member states are faced with different policy challenges in their fight against child poverty.

Children in the EU, whose parents are below 30, have a significantly higher risk of poverty than those living with older parents. The educational level of parents is another key determinant of children's current and future situation since it affects both on the current labour market and income situation of the parents and on the children's own chances of doing well at school. Children living in a migrant household (defined as a household where at least one parent is born abroad) face a much higher risk of poverty than children whose parents were born in the host country. In most countries the risk of the poverty rate they face reaches 30% or more and is two to five times higher than the risk faced by children whose parents were born in the country of residence.

In a recent article, Franzini and Raitano (2009) analyse the intergenerational transmission of income inequality in thirteen European countries (the EU15 countries - excluding Germany, Greece and Portugal - plus Norway) on the basis of information provided by the European Union

Statistics on Income and Living Conditions 2005 dataset. Their estimates confirm that family economic condition has a significant marginal negative effect on educational attainments of children. Moreover, they identified a specific and direct effect of economic conditions of the parents on the wage earned by their sons, independently of school achievements, i.e. an effect showing itself across individuals with the same formal education. On average, this effect over all countries is sizeable, but shows a large variability across countries. Results largely confirm, in the specific and so far unexplored field of inequality transmission, the traditional distinction of welfare regimes: in most Nordic countries, such effects are small while the opposite holds for Mediterranean countries.

Whereas there is a well-developed literature on poverty among households in general, very little research has focused on *poverty among young adults*. The literature on youth poverty has only very recently emerged. The risk of poverty for young adults was highest in Denmark (28%), where, as in other Nordic member states, it was about twice the rate for the whole population. The fact that young individuals in Scandinavian countries face a higher poverty risk compared other European countries may be unexpected. With generous and universal welfare benefits, one would expect youth poverty to be much lower in these countries. One important answer lies in the very fact that compared to other countries, young Scandinavians tend to leave home at a much earlier age. However, the poverty experience of young Scandinavians is generally short-lived, implying that poverty by itself may not be a good measure of youth disadvantage (Aassve *et al.*, 2008). In many countries, an increasing proportion of young adults continue to live in their parents' homes and are, therefore, less likely to be recorded "at-risk-of-poverty" since they share in their parent's income. This does not necessarily reflect their true situation, which may often be characterised by a lack of access to a decent income of their own (see also Chapter 4).

Young adults traditionally were at a lower risk of poverty or deprivation. Across all countries, unemployment, inactivity and low educational levels were highly correlated with an increased chance of being in and remaining in poverty. In all countries, especially those in Southern Europe, family support systems were likely to affect deprivation risks advantageously for young adults (CASP, 2000). However, parental dependency may influence youth poverty in different ways (Hammer, 2002). It may strengthen the process of intergenerational transmission of poverty in deprived areas. At the same time, parental support may be essential for the prevention of poverty among unemployed youth and may lessen homelessness and social exclusion, especially in Southern Europe. Aassve *et al.* (2005) claim that although there are significant differences across countries, living arrangements (in particular living in a single person household) is one of the most important predictors of youth poverty and deprivation.

As to the effects of union formation and childbearing (Aassve *et al.*, 2005), both marriage and cohabitation appear to protect young individuals from poverty and deprivation, though marriage generally has a stronger effect than cohabitation (indeed, cohabitation does not appear to protect against deprivation in Portugal, Spain and Italy). The effects of having children are smaller than the effects of marriage and cohabitation, and in the opposite direction: having children is associated with a general higher risk of poverty and deprivation. The exceptions are, interestingly, Finland and Denmark, where children do not have any influence on the likelihood of poverty.

There are also large variations in the extent of youth poverty within countries, between what we might term "younger youth" (aged 16-19) and "older youth" (aged 25-29). A research report (Aassve, Iacovou & Mencarini, 2006) argues that for individuals at the very beginning of the transition to adulthood, the factors associated with youth poverty are similar to the factors

associated with child poverty. The majority have no incomes of their own, and their risk of poverty is thus largely dependent on the incomes of adult members of their households (mainly, their parents) in relation to the size of their households. However, as young people move towards adulthood, the factors associated with youth poverty become more complex. Young people's incomes vary widely – both between countries, and within countries. Young people may be in education; they may have a job (low-waged or better paid); they may be unemployed; they may be caring for children; or they may be out of the labour market for other reasons. Young people's living arrangements also vary: many young people live with their family of origin while others have left home and live alone or with a partner, or with friends. Some have children of their own, with or without a partner. For young people with low or no earnings, living with their parents may protect them against poverty – although conversely, the extra burden their presence places on household finances may throw the whole household into poverty. Young people whose own earnings are relatively high may not be poor if they live apart from their families of origin, and if they do live at home, they may act as a resource for their families of origin, increasing household equivalent income to a level higher than it would otherwise have been.

Parisi (2008) developed a study on the so-called Southern European countries: Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. The outcomes of this study also show that leaving home is associated with a higher chance of having low income. Moreover, the poorer the family of origin, the more likely the leaver is to be poor. On the other hand, the longer a young person delays leaving the parental home, the more likely the individual is not to be poor if he or she does leave. The explanation is straightforward: remaining in the parental home longer increases the chances of getting a higher educational qualification and hence a better paid job. Perhaps surprisingly, there appear to be no differences in these various patterns across the four southern European countries studied.

Aassve *et al.* (2008) developed an alternative measure of young adult's poverty experience and proposed as a better measure of social disadvantage among youth. Using observed poverty spells from the European Community Panel Survey (ECHP) a three-group classification is defined: 1) never poor, 2) socially vulnerable, and 3) persistently poor. The analysis shows that high rates of poverty do not necessarily translate into poverty that is more permanent. For instance, there is little evidence to suggest that people remain poor longer in Scandinavian countries, even if the latter have higher poverty rates. Generous welfare provision and an effective labour market are able to stave off youth disadvantage. On the other hand, whereas previous studies have reported significant gender differences in poverty rates, the analysis shows that such differences are much weaker when it comes to remaining poor. On the contrary, controlling for a range of background factors, young women are less likely to experience poverty permanence and hence youth disadvantage. Elsewhere, in Mediterranean countries and Liberal welfare societies, it turns out that gender is a significant factor, and - in particular - that being a woman is a protective factor against long-term poverty. The main conclusion drawn from this study is that both structural factors and the effect of welfare regimes play a significant and substantial role in explaining differences in persistent poverty levels.

### *3.2.2. Household types and the shaping of poverty*

The types of household at greater risk of poverty than others are single person households, single parent households with dependent children and households comprising two adults with three or more dependent children (so-called large family households). Single parent households and large households have been identified as more vulnerable to poverty over the last few decades, whereas single person households, in particular of young adults, have emerged more recently as more vulnerable.

*Single adult person households* have been identified as more prone to poverty than other types of family (e.g. Walker & Collins, 2004). Quintano and D'Agostino (2006) carried out an analysis in four European countries (Italy, France, Germany and the UK) having welfare systems that represent Mediterranean (Italy), continental (Germany and France) and Anglo-Saxon (UK) regimes. The gender effect was strong in all countries, indicating that women are at a greater disadvantage than men in each country. The effect of age showed that women over seventy years of age had a much higher poverty rate everywhere.

The effect of marital status was interesting; women who had never married had low median incomes and very high poverty rates in all countries. The same effect for divorce was observed except in France where the poverty rate did not change. On the contrary, in Germany and Italy, divorce had a strong effect on poverty rate. German divorced women had a poverty rate of 48%; in Italy this value was 34%. An interesting social aspect for single-person households was also the effect of divorce with respect to gender and age at divorce. The impact of divorce was worse for women than for men, and was more evident in Germany and the UK than France or Italy. The effect of age was also strong. Both younger and older divorced women run the risk of poverty in Italy and the UK; a different pattern was observed in Germany and France where the older cohorts were better off (see also Callens & Croux, 2009).

In terms of different welfare systems, the results confirm that the Italian Mediterranean regime penalises younger generations which suffer from very high poverty rates and remarkable inequality with respect to older generations. On the other hand, the Continental and Anglo Saxon regimes seem to favour younger generations and to penalise the older generations (Quintano & D'Agostino, 2006).

There is a wide consensus among researchers that *lone parents*, which in most cases are headed by a woman, are the type of household most vulnerable to poverty (e.g. Fouarge & Layte, 2005; Walker & Collins, 2004; Kröger, 2004). In an EU study focusing on different life-course transitions, conducted under the coordination of CASP (2000) showed that many lone parents relied on low-level social assistance to top up their low earnings, or as their only source of income. The position of lone mothers with non-dependent children was somewhat different. This was the result of household members providing an additional income, and perhaps of maintenance payments received from absent parents. Whereas the experience of poverty differed considerably between lone parent groups within the same country, there were greater similarities within countries with respect to necessity-deprivation. Within the family type of "lone-lone" parents (those who do not have informal support networks), the necessary and exclusive use of formal services (public or private) constitutes a special form of poverty trap, since it consumes a disproportionate part of their scant revenues (Kröger, 2004).

**Table 1: At risk-of-poverty rates by household type (2007, %) (1)**

	Single person	Single parent with dependent children	Two parents with two dependent children	Two adults with three or more dependent children	Three or more adults	Households with dependent children	Households without dependent children
EU-27	25	34	14	25	10	18	16
BE	26	36	8	18	6	15	16
BG	44	30	22	71	10	25	18
CZ	16	37	8	29	2	13	6
DK	25	17	4	15	3	8	15
DE	27	34	8	12	9	12	17
EE	49	44	12	21	8	16	23
IE	45	40	10	20	8	17	19
EL	27	34	22	30	15	23	18
ES	35	34	22	37	12	21	18
FR	17	27	10	18	10	15	11
IT	27	31	23	41	11	23	17
CY	46	33	9	16	7	10	26
LV	59	34	16	46	10	18	26
LT	49	42	13	38	7	18	20
LU	15	45	14	25	6	17	9
HU	16	29	14	28	4	16	8
MT	21	54	15	24	4	15	14
NL	15	30	5	19	7	11	9
AT	20	31	11	19	4	12	12
PL	16	31	20	36	10	21	11
PT	33	34	17	43	9	18	19
RO	36	42	22	55	17	27	22
SI	39	29	7	15	6	9	15
SK	17	26	12	26	4	14	6
FI	32	22	5	13	6	10	16
SE	21	24	5	13	5	10	12
UK	30	44	13	31	11	19	19
IS	26	23	7	12	2	9	11
NO	28	29	5	8	6	10	15

(1) The income reference period concerns the year preceding the survey year for the majority of countries.

Source: Eurostat, 2010b

Lelkes and Zólyomi (2008) analysed the EU-SILC data of 2006 and concluded that the poverty rate of single parents reached or surpassed 30% in the majority of the countries examined. Over 40% of single parents had incomes below the poverty line in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal, and the UK. Contrary to these countries, the situation of single parents was relatively favourable in international comparison in Denmark, Finland, and Norway, where the poverty rate of this group is not higher than 20%. Note, however, that this figure was still higher than national average poverty rates in these three countries.

Taking the group of Mediterranean countries, the common element in the three countries is that lone fathers are the type of lone-parent family with the lowest poverty risk. By contrast, when considering the Netherlands and Norway it is found that the least disadvantaged group is widows. Thus when considering the relative positions of different lone parent families, systematic differences seem to emerge between the Mediterranean and Northern European countries. In the former, lone fathers are undoubtedly advantaged when compared to all other

lone parent families, whereas in the latter, the biggest differences seem to be found between widowed lone mothers on the one hand, and divorced or single lone mothers, on the other.

*Large families* are also among the groups more prone to poverty. Bradshaw et al. (2006) refer to several previous studies that evidenced this increased vulnerability of large families regarding poverty. Cantillon and Van den Bosch (2002) used Luxembourg Income Survey data and found that the poverty rate among families with three or more children was equally high as that among lone parent families in Belgium, Spain, Finland (although at a comparatively low level), Italy and the UK. The poverty risk of large families generally exceeded that of childless non-aged families, except in the Nordic Countries and the Netherlands. Layte and Fouarge (2004) and Whelan *et al.* (2004) examined the impact of various socio-economic factors on cross-national differences in deprivation using the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) survey. Logistic regression showed that having a larger number of children (3+) tended to lead to higher levels of deprivation across all countries, but the effect is rather small when compared to other variables, such as long-term unemployment, being a young single person aged 17-24, or lone parenthood. The negative effect of having a large family was strongest in Italy, Portugal and the UK (followed by Germany and Ireland).

Fouarge and Layte (2005), however, make an interesting argument about the fact that changes in the number of children - either more or fewer children - are both associated with an increased and decreased poverty risk. At first sight, this finding seems contradictory but can be explained through the effect that changes in household composition have on both household income and household needs. A tentative explanation in this context is that young children coming into the household induce an additional financial burden that is generally less than compensated for by child benefits. Children leaving the household are generally older and have their own market income, which may have negative consequences on the household's income position.

### *3.2.3. Poverty dynamics: the ins and outs of poverty*

Research on poverty dynamics, although crucial to an understanding of the processes shaping entering and exiting from poverty, was made possible only fairly recently (at least in quantitative terms and based on a cross-national comparative approach), with the dissemination of panel data. The first wave of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) dates back to 1994.

CASP coordinated a project in 2000, which conducted an analysis of inter-country and inter-group patterns of poverty and deprivation dynamics (based on ECHP data). It demonstrated the added risk of poverty and deprivation faced by life course and risk transition groups. Moreover, it highlighted two distinct clusters of risks. First, there are those who experience above average poverty rates but no great probability of entering or exiting poverty and deprivation. Secondly, there are those with below average poverty rates but also low exit rates.

Jenkins and Schluter (2001) studied child poverty dynamics in the UK and Germany. Their results point to the importance of the welfare-state-related differences as the principal source of differences in child poverty rates. In particular, relative to British children, German children are better protected against the consequences of adverse labour market events, and positive labour market events are more reinforced. When experiencing a trigger event, Germany provides a greater cushion against adverse events and better reinforcement of positive events. Differences in the prevalence rates of trigger events do, of course, also play a role; a notable example being the greater risk of job loss in Britain compared to Western Germany.

The outcomes of a 2001 study conducted in France by Breuil-Genier, Ponthieux and Zoyem stress the importance of family-related factors regarding poverty dynamics. They show that the same activity profile may be associated with different poverty risks, depending on family configurations: two-earner couples, one-earner couples, one single full-time earner, and lone parent families. In particular, whatever the number of children, one non-earner partner decreases the probability of exiting poverty. Family-related factors thus seem to play a decisive role in affecting the probability of exiting poverty.

Fouarge and Layte (2005) develop a detailed analysis of the effects of family-related factors on the probability of exiting poverty. Having a female head of household slows down exit from poverty significantly, as does having a head in the oldest age group (55-64). Less favourable employment conditions for these groups or depreciated stock of human capital are possible explanations for this finding. Interestingly, although being a single parent does not seem to impact on exit, not being married does seem to be significant and negative. Although the number of adults in the household has not a significant influence, each additional child slows exit. The effect for the number of children is not unexpected, as much work shows that in many countries (although France is an exception) larger numbers of children are associated with a greater poverty risk. It is also clear that singles, and especially single parents, are more likely to be persistently poor and have a lower probability of exiting poverty.

A comparison between two European countries – Germany and Great Britain vs. Canada and USA was done by Valletta (2006). According to this study, most poverty transitions, and the prevalence of chronic poverty, are associated with employment instability and family dissolution in all four countries. However, government tax-and-transfer policies are more effective at reducing poverty persistence in Europe than in North America. Changes in family structure are frequently associated with poverty transitions, especially in Canada. In each country, divorce and marriage are the most common family events associated with poverty entry and exits, although poverty entries also are commonly associated with the formation of new families that split off from existing households. Among the events that are related to poverty entries, in all countries divorce has the largest association. In regards to more general policies aimed at alleviating poverty, Valletta's (2006) findings confirm widely held beliefs about the key contributions of family stability and work attachment for staying out of poverty in North America and Europe. This suggests important roles for individual behaviour as well as public policies that strengthen family stability and work attachment. Childcare subsidies may be one example of such policies enabling cash-strapped and time-strapped parents effectively balance work and home commitments.

Research on poverty dynamics show that different factors impact differently on men and women's entry or exit from poverty. While employment-related changes are important for men in particular (but also for women), demographic events are only important for women. For women, divorce is the event that has the strongest effect on the probability of becoming poor. For men, on the other hand, the most important individual event associated with poverty entry is unemployment. As to female poverty exit, a marriage almost doubles the risk of poverty exit, while a divorce more than halves the risk of women's poverty exit. For men's poverty exit, finding a job increases the odds of poverty exit by 350%; whereas losing a job seems to decrease the odds of poverty exit by 17% (Callens & Croux, 2009).

Research focusing on poverty dynamics often links this analysis to a discussion about the role of welfare regimes (e.g. Sainsbury & Morissens, 2002; Fouarge & Layte, 2005; Callens & Croux, 2009; Förster & Tóth, 2001; Cerami, 2003). Some of the major outcomes of these studies point



to the fact that welfare regimes have an impact on the likelihood of poverty entry but not on the likelihood of poverty exit. In the conservative and the southern type there are fewer poverty dynamics (i.e. fewer entries and exits, mainly because living in poverty is more long standing, with some people for example being born and never exiting material deprivation). Country welfare regimes, on the other hand, strongly influence long run poverty, with social democratic countries reducing the level of persistent and recurrent poverty. Liberal and Southern European regime countries have both higher rates and longer durations of poverty. Despite their dissimilar patterns of poverty duration, European welfare states display rather similar patterns of exit from poverty, once we control for duration.

### 3.3. Social conditions of migrant families

Migrant families are a special group to consider when discussing social and economic conditions of European families. During the traditional period of guest worker migration, immigration was not supposed to lead to settlement, nor was immigrant families a challenging issue. The family reunification that took place at the time usually followed the male breadwinner model, thus pointing to a monotone type of immigrant family. In fact, family migration was neglected until recently, both by academics and policymakers.

Available research on migrant families has addressed four main topics:

- 1) *the migration decision (insofar as migration is often an ongoing family project, negotiated at the family level and structured around the needs and resources of the households);*
- 2) *the forms of family migration (including migration led by male or female partners and whole family migration);*
- 3) *the demographic trends (mainly focussing on immigrants' fertility);*
- 4) *the assimilation of immigration families (studying the different modes of integration of family members, including the second generation) (Wall, 2007: 2253-4).*

Family patterns have changed substantially in Europe, sometimes leading to migration events. Furthermore, migration itself has changed (in addition to labour migration there are migrants who are refugees and asylum-seekers, clandestine entrants, skilled professionals, students, retirement migrants etc.), bringing with it implications for the family (King *et al.*, 2004: 5-6). The increasing diversity of gender roles, migration strategies and integration outcomes, including independent female migration, and transnational families (Kofman & Meeto, 2008: 154) has increased research interest in migrant families.

It is not easy to draw up a typology of immigrant families. One was suggested by Kofman (2004): i) family reunification; ii) family formation or marriage migration; and iii) whole family migration. A second classification was suggested by King *et al.* (2006), who add to the former typology a separation between family formation and marriage migration, as well as a new category, split-family formation.

Family reunification is the conventional form. It occurs when an immigrant, living in an host country for a certain period of time and with an already existing family back home, brings in his/her family members. Although the typical form of reunification encompasses a male immigrant and his family, there are more and more cases of processes led by immigrant women (Wall *et al.*, 2010). Family formation or marriage migration includes two main sub-groups. "The

first consists of second and subsequent generations of children of migrant origin who bring in a fiancé(e)/spouse from their parents' homeland or diasporic space, a particular characteristic of Turkish and North African immigrant populations (...) The second variant of marriage migration involves permanent residents or citizens bringing in a partner they have met while abroad for work, study or holiday" (Kofman & Meeto, 2008: 155-156). Studies have shown that the volume of family formation surpassed family reunification in recent years. This was particularly true in countries with large settled immigrant communities (Kraler & Kofman, 2009). Particularly, the number of mixed marriages, or 'bi-national' marriages, has been rising fast. A particular case is arranged marriages where the most usual pattern involves males from developed countries and women from less developed countries. There is typically a short period of courtship and, in a growing number of cases; the internet is replacing direct contact as the means of personal introduction (Kofman & Meeto, 2008: 161). Recent research has highlighted the growing role of women's agency in family formation (Kofman, 2004). There are an increasing number of female immigrants bringing in male spouses and fiancés from the countries of origin. This trend is related to a more equal gender balance in the second generation and normative changes in the sending countries. This is the case, for example, of immigrants from Turkey and North African countries. At the same time, more and more marriages resulting from international contacts are the consequence of women travelling, studying, and working abroad. The third type of family migration is whole-family migration. In this case, the entire family - usually a nuclear family - moves at the same time. Given the legal restrictions, this case is not common in Europe. The major exception involves some highly skilled immigrants, including intra-EU ones, and refugees. In the first case, some EU countries accept that the family of students, work-permit holders and trainers moves along with the immigrant (see *Job Mobilities and Family Lives in Europe*).

### 3.3.1. Gender and migration

One of the most relevant points raised by the literature has to do with the impact of international migration on women's roles and power, i.e., gender relations. Some studies suggest that immigration has beneficial effects on women and gender relations. In some situations, immigration and wage-earning in Europe may lead to the increasing independence of women, a more flexible division of labour at home, less segregation in public spaces and the increasing centrality of women in transnational families and networks; this helps to explain why, in some cases, women are more reluctant than men to return to their country of origin. Other analyses are more negative: gender is seen as another layer of the multiple oppression of migrant women - structurally discriminated against as migrants, as women (both by the host society and within their own ethnic group), as members of the labouring underclass, as racially stigmatised, and, finally, as accepting these oppressive structures. These studies underline that many migrant women still suffer from some specific circumstances of their community's culture and family life (for example, social exclusion and enslavement), which tend to collide with values of the host country - which are usually more favourable to women's increased autonomy and freedom. At this level, many findings indicate that there is a connection between violence and migration, namely male violent behaviour against women (spouses, sisters and daughters). Some of these studies explore the links between violent male behaviour and social conditions, such as the experience of racism or unemployment and social relegation, while others explore the connection between violence and different forms of social control within the migrant community (for example, violence against young girls from the second generation). Since some immigrant women create their own activist groups, this means that there is sometimes an awareness of women's rights within the community.

Furthermore, violence is a problem that goes beyond households and immigrant communities. The channels of “sex, marriage and maids”, as expressed by Phizacklea (1998), define some of the main avenues of female migration to Europe. The sex industry is largely demand-driven, providing opportunities for trafficking networks and prostitution, bringing in young women from less developed countries. Marriage, particularly arranged marriages and matchmaking, often links men from European host countries and women from less developed ones – as in the case of mail-order brides. Domestic work and caring, both in live-in and external work arrangements, provide numerous job opportunities for immigrant women, particularly in Southern European countries, where gender relations are more asymmetric (household tasks are less balanced between men and women) and caring is attributed to families. Many of these domestic and caring jobs are viewed as awkward and exploitative (King *et al.*, 2004).

In sum, statements concerning female migration strategies, independence and power in migration processes and in households, and overall change in gender relations as an outcome of migration, should be cautiously considered and in the context of the need for more empirical research. Supporting this approach, a large array of research has been addressing the topic of female migration in Europe in recent years, including various comparative projects funded by the EU<sup>23</sup>.

### 3.3.2. Age-related migration

Migration is closely related to age and the life course. Most economic migration occurs at young adult ages, given the larger period of return (as migration is an economic investment in human capital, it would not be rational to migrate in mature adult years). Studies about residential mobility suggested that changes in the life course are related to geographical movements.

Studies on migrant children may be divided according to the framing of the migration movement: migrant children as refugees and asylum seekers, as victims of trafficking (particularly trafficking for sexual exploitation), migrant children with EU citizenship, migrant children of third country nationals and inter-country adoptees. Studies on student migration are very recent and fast growing. They stress the recent growth of these flows, reinforced by the incentives to mobility (such as the Erasmus and Socrates programmes at the EU level), their framing within the globalisation of higher education and their linkages to youth culture. Studies on retirement migration are also spreading. They address its multiple facets, which include, among others, retirement migration of wealthy North-Western Europeans to Southern Europe and retirement migration of former economic migrants to their countries of origin (often intra-EU migration). Recent research has also highlighted the changing patterns of residence and

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23 Female Migration Vision, coordinated by Rossana Trifiletti, University of Florence, Italy, 2005-2006 (see <http://www.fondazionebrodolini.it/Kernel/Common/DocumentPage.aspx?docId=6401>); GRINE – Migrant Women Face Increased Prejudice, coordinated by Luisa Passerini, European University Institute, Florence, Italy, 2001-2004 (see [http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/055\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/055_en.html)); FEMAGE - Needs for Female Immigrants and their Integration in Ageing Societies, coordinated by Charlotte Hoehn, Bundesinstitut fuer Bevölkerungsforschung, Wiesbaden, Germany, 2006-2008 (see [http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/195\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/195_en.html)); FEMIPOL - Integration of Female Immigrants in Labour Market and Society. Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations, coordinated by Maria Kontos, Institute of Social Research at J.W. Goethe University, Germany, 2006-2008 (see [http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/196\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/projects/196_en.html)); GEMIC – Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions in the Mediterranean and South East Europe: an Interdisciplinary Perspective, coordinated by Maria Stratigaki, Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences, Athens, Greece, started in 2008 (see <http://www.gemic.eu>); and GEMMA – Enhancing Evidence Based Policy-making in Gender and Migration, coordinated by Diassina Di Maggio, Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea, Rome, Italy, started in 2008 (see <http://www.gemmaproject.eu>). The latter site also provides information about other research projects related with gender and migration, including some of those quoted above (see [http://www.gemmaproject.eu/projects\\_static.aspx](http://www.gemmaproject.eu/projects_static.aspx)).

mobility: in the international sphere, as previously in the national sphere, dual residence and seasonal mobility is increasingly common. Given the legal framework, this is much more relevant in the EU than in other international contexts.

All these processes are related to age but they are also related to other social variables. Some of them are gendered. Other processes are dependent on social status. Both student migration and retirement migration are clearly connected to the individuals' social position and his/her ability to afford such strategies. Finally, many depend on immigration policies: the free circulation of EU citizens allows for easier and greater mobility than in the case of third-country nationals.

### *3.3.3. Second generation*

Studies on the second generation are crucial for understanding immigrants' integration. This mostly results from the time perspective that is so important in migration studies. Only a long-term perspective can measure the success or failure of migration projects. Time is needed to pay-off the costs of migration, to acquire new human and social capital, and to overcome obstacles to integration. Studies on intra-generational and, particularly, intergenerational mobility are thus crucial in integration processes. Moreover, second generations often may acquire the citizenship of the host country – which is, in many respects, the main obstacle to integration and participation. Hence, their success or failure is telling us about the way a society is dealing with its new members. Under the term “second generation” are usually subsumed the native-born children of immigrants (foreign-born parents) and, in some cases the children who arrived before primary school. Sometimes the term “1.5 generation” is also used to designate children who arrived very early in their lives or immediately after starting their school careers.

Second generations in Europe are still recent. Taking into account the major inflows that took place after the 1950s, most of the immigrants' offspring is still in an early stage of its life. The majority of the immigrants' descendants attended primary school in the 1980s and secondary school in the 1990s, and they are now entering the labour market. This explains why most of the studies until now observed the educational attainment and the transition from school to work, but not yet the occupational trajectory. Immigrants' offspring are increasingly a part of the European demography, meaning that ever-larger generations of children with an immigrant background are entering, year by year, into families, schools, work and public life.

In general, studies have shown that in educational terms immigrants' children perform worse than children with no immigrant background do, though better than foreign-born children. When observing their early performance in the labour market, they have lower employment rates, vulnerability to unemployment and lower access to skilled jobs, when compared with native youngsters, although again showing better indicators than foreign-born youngsters do. These gaps are justified by the low socio-economic background from which they come (third country immigrants in the EU are usually characterised by low education and/or low socio-economic condition), worse access to social networks in the labour market and discrimination (Castles & Miller, 2009: 227-229). Since many of these descendants have acquired national citizenship, the fact that discrimination is not only based on nationality, but also on ethnic origin, explains part of the problem.

The situation of second generations in Europe is however more complex (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003; King *et al.*, 2004 & 2006). Much recent research has highlighted many differences among EU countries and among immigrant groups. On the one hand, national contexts explain a large part of the variability in integration patterns. This is less often related to immigration policies

than to educational and labour market national arrangements, such as type of schooling (vocational or non-vocational) and access to higher education. On the other hand, immigrant communities display heterogeneity and polarisation (even when coming from the same sending country), between and within EU countries. This means that one may observe a fraction of second-generation youngsters, for example Turks, performing well in some EU countries, and at risk of becoming an underclass in others.

Several EU cross-national projects have been developed in recent years<sup>24</sup>. They have confirmed the complexity of integration patterns among the second generations; the wide variety according to national contexts; some contradictory situations within the same groups; differing degrees of ethnic closure; and even unexpected variations in time. The picture is further complicated by the polarisations within ethnic groups that exist in some countries. Moreover, if we view the development of different groups over time, we do not see a linear process (Crul & Vermeulen, 2003: 982-983).

### 3.4. Physical living environment and housing

Living environment and housing are crucial aspects in wellbeing and health, affecting in many ways on family life. Most important characteristics that make people satisfied with their home and environment are nice general appearance of the neighbourhood and satisfaction with housing (Parkes *et al.*, 2002: 2427; Kim *et al.*, 2005: 1631). The existence of crime in neighbourhood as well as insecurity and the fear of crime are very strong predictors of neighbourhood dissatisfaction (Parkes *et al.*, 2002: 2427; Pa Ke Shon, 2007: 2236). General environmental indicators like pure air and availability of clean water are important components of a good living environment.

#### 3.4.1. Natural environment

Quality of air and water has substantial effects on health and wellbeing. Measurements of air quality show that almost 90% of the inhabitants of European cities are exposed to concentrations that exceed the WHO air quality guideline level (European Environment Agency, 2009: 14-15). The highest concentration of particulate matter was found in Bulgaria and Romania. Exposure to air pollution by ozone was highest for the urban populations of Italy and Greece. Both measures of air pollution were lowest in Finland, Sweden and the UK (Eurostat, 2009a: 422-424).

The issues related to green open spaces are especially relevant because large proportion of Europe's population lives in urban areas, where the contact with nature is often lacking. Therefore, green spaces, such as parks, are an essential constituent of urban quality of life. Baycant-Levant *et al.* (2009: 209) found, that when the indicators related to the availability of urban green spaces are used to determine the green performance and ranking of European cities, the Southern European (France, Italy, Spain) cities are in the lead. However, when the planning performance indicators are taken into consideration, the Northern European (Belgium, Finland, Germany) cities have higher scores (Baycant- Levant *et al.*, 2009: 210).

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24 EFFNATIS –“Effectiveness of National Integration Strategies Towards Second Generation Migrant Youth in a Comparative European Perspective” (1998-2000); TIES (2003), “The Integration of the European Second-Generation”, (see [http://www.tiesproject.eu/component/option,com\\_frontpage/Itemid,1/lang,en](http://www.tiesproject.eu/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/lang,en)).(for some results see e.g. Crul, 2008). TRESEGY – “Toward a Social Construction of an European Youthness: Experience of inclusion and exclusion in the public sphere among second generation migrated teenagers” (2006-09). EU MARGINS – “On the Margins of the European Community - Adult Immigrants in Seven European Countries (Spain, UK, Italy, France, Estonia, Sweden and Norway)” (2008-2011).

Accessibility, possibilities for outdoor recreation, distribution and the overall design of the urban area are important to individual satisfaction and encourage daily physical activity such as walking and cycling. Access to green areas are found to be linked with several health issues like obesity, cardiovascular disease (European Environment Agency, 2009: 17-19; Nielsen & Hansen, 2007: 897) and experienced stress (Nielsen & Hansen, 2007: 894). There are significant differences between urban and rural areas: people living in urban areas feel less healthy (Verheij *et al.*, 2008: 308). Green areas have found to be beneficial for *children* in various ways: children with good access to green open space, fewer high-rise buildings and more outdoor sports facilities are more physically active. School children who have access to - or even sight of - the natural environment show higher levels of attention than those without these benefits (European Environment Agency, 2009: 15-19). Neighbourhood open space (local parks, play areas, village greens) plays an important role also for *older people* in maintaining and enhancing their quality of life. Older people who have pleasant and safe green areas within comfortable walking distance are more likely to be satisfied with life. Connections were also found between the existence of good paths and the activity of walking even if no significant associations with health indicators were not found (Sugiyama *et al.*, 2009: 3-4, 13-14).

Besides the mere existence of infrastructure, it is important, that people feel safe to use these areas. Feeling safe in the neighbourhood is likely to increase levels of physical activity (European Environment Agency, 2009: 14). On average, a quarter of national populations felt unsafe walking alone in their area after dark, being higher Bulgaria, Poland, Greece, Luxembourg and Italy (over 35%) and lower in Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Austria (under 20%) (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2007: 127-131). However, fear of crime and actual victimisation are not strongly linked. Countries with a higher share of people reporting fear of crime do not experience a higher victimisation while, within countries, older and richer people feel more unsafe than younger and poorer people do, despite being less likely to be a victim of crime (Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009: 53).

Environmental and health impacts are not equally distributed throughout Europe or within cities. Inequalities in quality of living environment reflect inequalities in economic, social and living conditions. Disadvantaged groups typically inhabit the worst parts of the city, e.g. near contaminated sites, and are more affected by the lack of green space and public transport services, by noisy and dirty roads and industrial pollution. Climate change is a new and complex challenge for cities (European Environment Agency, 2009: 14-17).

#### 3.4.2. *Neighbourhood and location of the accommodation*

Satisfaction with neighbourhood is dependent on the characteristics of the place of residence and on socio-demographic background of the inhabitants. However, socio-demographic background variables alone are relatively poor predictors of neighbourhood satisfaction: perceived neighbourhood attributes are much more useful to understand it (Parkes *et al.*, 2002: 2434; Feijten & Van Ham, 2009: 2115).

Economic status, length of residence, accommodation type and age (Parkes *et al.*, 2002: 2426; Feijten & Van Ham, 2009: 2116) are some socio-economic factors linked with residential satisfaction. Most important characteristics that make people satisfied with their neighbourhood based on a study conducted in UK are nice general appearance of the neighbourhood and satisfaction with housing. Quite important is also the existence and quality of schools, friendly people/friendship with neighbours, community spirit and emotional roots. The existence of

leisure facilities and green open areas has also some importance. Crime as well as insecurity or fears of crime are very strong predictors of neighbourhood dissatisfaction (Parkes *et al.*, 2002; Pa Ke Shon, 2007). Other things that make people dissatisfied with are noise (Parkes *et al.*, 2002: 2427), nuisance (Pa Ke Shon, 2007: 2236) and neighbourhood density (Kim *et al.*, 2005: 1630). Besides that, lack of activity in the neighbourhood, monotony and dullness are mentioned as reasons for dissatisfaction, especially for young people (Pa Ke Shon, 2007: 2236).

40% of Europeans are reported living in dwellings that are badly situated (Giorgi, 2003: 31), in areas with high levels of noise, pollution or crime (Giorgi, 2003: 31) or poor access to transport, opportunities and services (Cameron, 2009: 8-9). There are tendencies towards spatial segregation of different income groups (Czasny, 2004: 9). The distribution of low-income households, the older people, the unemployed and lone parents, is not even or random but involves significant concentrations in particular parts of cities and regions (Musterd & Murie, 2002: 40). Groups that are especially vulnerable to spatial segregation are migrants and ethnic minorities. The degree of spatial segregation of immigrants across the EU varies. There are multiple causes for this variation, including immigrants' income levels, discrimination in the housing market, public housing policies and degree of ethnic closure (Spencer & Cooper, 2007: 36). Segregation is not just a product of inequality in incomes, which forces poorer people to move to specific neighbourhoods: segregation itself alters the spatial differentiation of cities, in particular by altering neighbourhoods where poor people are concentrated (Skifter Andersen, 2002: 166).

Education and educational standards and results of the schools in socially excluded neighbourhoods have been a major focus of policies. One of the earliest theories of poverty concentration - the concept of a "cycle of deprivation" - identified poor educational performance as a key mechanism in transmitting deprivation and disadvantage from one generation to the next (Cameron, 2009: 41-42). When comparing the long-term effects of living in good and bad neighbourhoods during childhood or youth Andersson (2004: 641) (study conducted in Sweden) found the surroundings indeed to be relevant for educational outcomes, however neighbourhood effects on occupational status (employed/unemployed) and income were relatively small. Gordon (1996: 418-419) also found major disparities in exam results between different neighbourhoods, which however according to him can be better explained through socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the areas, not the deprivation of neighbourhood.

Areas, that are characterised by a concentration of low income households tend to have various problems which amplify each other, for example unlikely provision of market for viable businesses, which causes the lack of employment opportunities and makes services hard to reach, ill health as a consequence of long-term unemployment, low motivation and underachievement in schools. All these problems place pressure on family and community life.

### 3.4.3. Housing

The average *number of people living in a household* in the EU27 was 2.5 in 2005. It tends to be lower in Northern part of Europe and higher among the Mediterranean countries and those countries, which joined the EU since 2004 (Eurostat, 2009a: 252-253). In the actual quality of dwellings, there is also a clear-cut break between the former Eastern Bloc countries and the countries of the EU15 (*Housing Statistics in the European Union*, 2005/2006: 9-10).

Some social groups, households or individuals *lack access to suitable housing*, because of homelessness<sup>25</sup> or the accommodation being characterised as in “bad condition” (disrepair, overcrowding, leaking roofs, insufficient heating) (Cameron, 2009: 9; Giorgi, 2003: 30-31). 24% of Europeans report living in accommodation, which is in bad condition (Giorgi, 2003: 31). Problems with access to suitable housing are most relevant to *poorer people* who have a far worse housing quality than other households (Czasny, 2004: 8; European Commission, 2007b: 104-105). This is particularly the case in many of the new member states. *Housing conditions in rural areas* appear to be worse than in urban areas. The urban-rural division reflects also the differences according to age, income and occupational status: young people, unemployed, low-skilled and low-income people report worst conditions. This phenomenon appears to be almost non-existent in Northern countries, while they are quite severe in Eastern and some Southern countries (namely Italy, Greece, and Portugal) (European Commission, 2008c: 9-10).

*Overcrowded conditions* are defined as when the number of people living in their homes exceeds the number of rooms in the household (excluding kitchen and bathroom). The extent of crowded housing for children varies considerably between countries: in every country, at least one in ten children lives in an overcrowded home<sup>26</sup>. Children in Eastern Europe experience overcrowding the most and it is quite wide-spread in Italy and Greece, while children in the Netherlands and Spain are least likely to suffer from overcrowding (OECD, 2009b: 37-40).

There are wide ranging differences across the member states as regards to housing ownership status (Eurostat, 2009a: 252-253; Norris & Shiels, 2004: 6-7). A phenomenon, that characterises Europe as a whole is the reduction in the rental housing stock. This trend may be attributed to two main reasons: the shift of housing support policies from rental to ownership and major sales of the public housing stock in Eastern countries, England and the Netherlands. Finland and Sweden moved against this trend and saw their rental housing stock increase because of the rise in the public housing stock (*Housing Statistics in the European Union*, 2005/2006: 10-11).

Housing price index has risen more rapidly than the general price index. Regular rise has been recorded in the incidence of the housing price over the total household consumption in all countries. The proportion on household income devoted to housing costs is significantly higher in the long-standing 15 EU member states than in the new member states and applicant countries, but it seems that in terms of housing affordability, these two regions of Europe are converging (Norris & Shiels, 2004: 17-18).

A growing *mismatch between the diverse life courses of people and less diverse nature of housing stock* can be detected. The life course of individuals and households has become more complex, producing an ever-greater variety of housing needs, not only at different stages in family life course, but also in relation to growing job insecurity regardless of the family situation. Simultaneously, the nature of the housing stock tends to become less diverse, with more and more people buying detached dwellings located in suburban areas (Bonvalet & Lelievre, 1997: 197-199). The current model of “every-one owning their home” is unable to satisfy wide-ranging housing demands. Contrary to housing market trends, the growth of small households resulting from the fall in the birth rate and the ageing of population, together with the increase in the number of single-parent families, childless couples and people living alone, point to the need for more rental housing (Bonvalet & Lelievre, 1997: 197-199).

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example Edgar (2009).

<sup>26</sup> Only members of OECD are compared.



Ageing of population will provoke demand for changes in the provision and design of housing and services such as caring and transport; it will also influence the lifestyles of citizens of all ages and the trajectory of urban development (OECD, 2003: 10-12). Older people are diverse in their purchasing power (richer and poorer) and lifestyle preferences. As a result of this diversity and better financial situation there is a new emphasis on freedom of choice and self-funding retirement housing and care that, if not carefully handled, is likely to exacerbate inequality of access (Ageing..., 2003: 15-19).

Another expression of the diversification of living arrangements concerning younger people is the postponement of leaving the parental home<sup>27</sup> (European Commission, 2008b: 9). *Housing and fertility decisions* are also related. In contexts where social and economic transformation is underway and the welfare state is minimal or inadequate, like in Mediterranean regions or former socialist countries, major ambiguities and dilemmas result from balancing the ideal of entering parenthood after having secured the financial and housing conditions and the opportunity to realise such security (Philipov *et al.*, 2009: 48-49). It is indicated that intentions of younger respondents to have children are less likely to be realised, because earlier in life, respondents have not yet completed education, started working career and/or found convenient housing, which all are considered necessary preconditions (Philipov *et al.*, 2009: 61).

The differences in the handling of housing costs for poor and vulnerable households result from differences in the *aims of general housing policy* (Czasny, 2004: 91-92). Two dimensions are relevant: 1) the scope of state involvement, measured in terms of coverage (supporting all to the “right of housing”/ supporting those in need) 2) the focus of housing policy (ownership as ultimate form of housing security / social housing as a measure for state to fulfil its pivotal role in housing sector) (Giorgi, 2003: 18-19).

Based on two different classifications (Giorgi, 2003: 18-19; Czasny, 2004: 91-92), which are largely similar in their contents *four different approaches* can be identified:

- *housing policies favouring universal coverage and placing high value on private ownership (Belgium and Germany): policies are aiming at rather low level of general housing costs through supply-sided interventions in the housing market (Sweden, Netherlands);*
- *housing policies favouring universal coverage, yet with a strong commitment to social housing (Austria and Denmark);*
- *housing policies favouring partial coverage and placing a high value on private ownership (Italy and Ireland): support is provided for those in need in a basically free housing market (UK, Spain and France);*
- *housing policies favouring partial coverage with a commitment to supporting measures for those in need, including support for social housing. Other measures can be aimed at achieving additional price-reductions for the poor through laboured social gradations of housing quality via various supply- and demand-sided measures (France).*

According to some opinions *home ownership* is an important dimension of wellbeing since it protects owners from fluctuations in rents, ensures families a stable and safe shelter and the value of property represents a major source of wealth for households (OECD, 2007d: 140). Home ownership is supported in most of European countries (Giorgi, 2003: 20; Priemus & Dieleman, 2002: 192) and preferred by residents (Priemus & Dieleman, 1999: 627). Due to the

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<sup>27</sup> This topic is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

rising housing costs, governments are trying to provide more affordable housing (Paris, 2007: 3). However, *social housing* does not seem to be a popular solution anymore, since this sector is in decline practically everywhere (Giorgi, 2003: 25; Priemus & Boelhouwer, 1999: 644). There are also some regional differences: in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark the social rented sector is in decline. In France and Sweden, the sector is stable or even slightly expanding. In southern Europe, the social rented sector is marginal (Priemus & Dieleman, 2002: 191).

The housing sector in CEE countries is unusual because of the effect of *privatisation and restitution* (Hegedüs, 2009: 3; Buckley & Tsenkova, 2001: 276). Home ownership was perceived as the most desirable and efficient form of tenure and became the most important objective of privatisation (Pichler-Milanovich, 2001: 155). Relying on the introduction of market economy according to neoliberal theory, there have been hardly any restrictions on private ownership of economic enterprises, urban land or real estate. Due to that, most CEE countries have achieved high levels of homeownership (average of 80% of dwellings). Privatisation had also a regressive social effect: low-income households were trapped in the residual social rental sector (Hegedüs, 2009: 3). Other kinds of problems arise when the new owners lack financial resources to maintain and renovate old housing stock (Pichler-Milanovich, 2001: 170). The collapse of the former East European housing model produced radical changes in *housing finance systems*. Subsidies for the construction of state-owned housing were largely withdrawn (Norris & Shiels, 2007: 73; Pichler-Milanovich, 2001: 169).

The switch from subsidies for dwellings to those of households has dominated policy change in Europe between 1980 and 2000 (MacLennan, 2008: 424; Paris, 2007: 3). The emphasis is on reaching the needs of vulnerable groups, not at improving the life quality of broad segments of the population. *Housing allowances* are considered a suitable and the most important measure to provide help with housing costs (Turner & Elsinga, 2005: 108; Priemus & Kemp, 2004: 666; Paris, 2007: 3; Priemus & Boelhouwer, 1999: 644). Countries are also aiming at reducing exclusion through housing (spatial segregation) by *targeting areas of poverty concentration* (Cameron, 2009: 10). Urban regeneration policies are a common phenomenon in western European countries (Kleinhans, Priemus & Engbersen, 2007: 1069).

### 3.5. Educational level and the impacts on children

Educational level of parents is a key determinant of children's current and future situation since it has impact on both (European Commission, 2008a: 26). There are large differences between European countries in the distribution of population by education levels. Today, on average in the EU, most children are raised with at least one of their parents having fulfilled secondary education. However, national situations differ across the EU, since the percentage of children living with low skilled parents ranges from 10% or less in half of the countries (including most of the former socialist member states) to 30% to nearly 70% in the Southern States and Ireland (European Commission, 2008a: 26).

The percentage of low-skilled is usually over-represented among *lone parents*, but not in *large families* in which parents' educational levels correspond to those of the average population. (European Commission, 2008a: 26). PISA results illustrate the *impact that specific family structures can have on the performance of pupils*. For instance, the 2000 and 2003 results show that children growing in lone parents households perform relatively lower than children from other families (European Commission, 2008a: 58; Ghysels & Van Vlasselaer, 2008: 294). This is mostly true in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden while in a number of

countries their performance is not significantly different from pupils growing in other families (European Commission, 2008a: 58).

As expected, the parents' education profile of poor children differs significantly from their peers, since for more than 30% of poor children none of the parents reached a secondary level of education, and only 16% of them have a parent with upper education. However, in most of the former socialist member states, where child poverty is high, the proportion of children whose parents are low skilled remain rather low (European Commission, 2008a: 26).

People from disadvantaged families face considerable obstacles in realising their full potential and achieving better living standards for themselves and their children (European Commission, 2008a: 58-59). Parental wealth reduces the importance of capital market barriers to the acquisition of education. Low-income parents might not invest optimally in their children's human capital: poverty risks, joblessness and lack of education are therefore likely to accumulate and result in a larger share of individuals at risk of social exclusion (OECD, 2009b: 149-150).

*Educational deprivation* reflects the resources available for children's learning. Fifteen year old children are considered deprived when they have fewer than four of following eight basic items: a desk to study, a quiet place to work, a computer for schoolwork, educational software, an internet connection, a calculator, a dictionary and school textbooks. The variation between countries in terms of educational deprivation is large and does not directly reflect the income levels of families. Educational deprivation is smallest in Iceland and Germany. There are also gender differences: boys are more often educationally deprived than girls (across the OECD 3.6% of boys are educationally deprived, compared to 3.3% of girls), with the exception of Denmark, Iceland and Sweden (OECD countries were compared) (OECD, 2009b: 35).

The PISA 2003 data shows a strong and positive correlation between the parents' own educational attainment and the performance of the fifteen year old pupils in mathematics, reading, and science. In particular, pupils whose mothers completed only primary or lower secondary education score 20 points lower in average than those whose mothers completed upper secondary education (European Commission, 2008a: 58). Children of highly educated mothers more often have a better educational attainment (Ghysels & Van Vlasselaer, 2008: 294). The educational background of fathers is also a significant factor in many countries. The impact of the parents' educational level varies to some degree across countries, depending on the equity of the educational system (European Commission, 2008a: 58).

Young people who leave school too early and with only lower secondary education are at a disadvantage on the labour market. Their personal and social development is in danger of being curtailed and they are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion than other young people who continue their education and training. In 2006, 15.3% of young people aged between 18 and 24 in the EU27 had left the education system with only lower secondary education and were not in further education and training. At EU level, the rate of early school leavers has improved slightly since 2000, reflecting an improvement in the great majority of countries. However, this rate varies greatly across the EU, from around 5% in Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovak Republic to 20% or more in Southern countries (Italia, Spain, Portugal and Malta) (European Commission, 2008a: 57). A number of national and international studies found explanative factors to be socio-economic background, ethnicity, sex, prior school achievement, peer pressure, motivation and truancy (European Commission, 2008a: 57).

Social inequality has been identified as the pathway by which childhood social disadvantage may lead to lower levels of educational attainment (Fergusson *et al.*, 2008). There are different perspectives on this issue. The *materialist or neo-materialist perspective* emphasises the role of poverty and material resources as the primary route through which childhood social disadvantage is translated into educational under-achievement (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Ryan *et al.*, 2006). The *family perspective* stresses the importance of family processes (such as parental educational aspirations, differences in language use, etc.) and childhood socialisation, which place children born in low socio-economic status families at a disadvantage at school (Linver *et al.*, 1999; Walker *et al.*, 1994; Singly, 2006; Déchaux, 2007). Furthermore, the *cognitive ability perspective* links the origins of socio-economic differences in educational achievement with underlying socio-economic differences in childhood intelligence (Jensen, 1996; Teasdale & Owen, 1986). The *school perspective* focuses on the role of educational institutions. This approach sees disadvantaged children as being exposed more often to school contexts that do not encourage their educational performance.

From the point of view of the transmission of childhood social advantage and disadvantage via the family, existing research focuses on two main strands of transmission, material and cultural. First, income differences between families mean that not only do some children grow up in more affluent circumstances, but they will also inherit economic capital – that is, material advantage may be directly passed on (Crompton, 2006b). Regarding the cultural dimension, a review of the research shows that there are empirically established class differences in the way children are socialised, and the extent to which parents invest time and resources in children’s acquisition of social, cognitive and educational skills (Kellerhals & Montandon, 1991; Laureau, 2003; Reay & Lucey, 2003; Déchaux, 2007; Singly, 2006).

In this context, recent research carried out on intergenerational mobility in OECD countries also provides important findings (OECD, 2007b). It shows that education is a major contributor to intergenerational income mobility and that educational differences tend to persist across generations. In relation to childhood social disadvantage, the report argues that early and sustained investment in children can help, as a key role is played by early childhood education, care and health. On the other hand, economic transfers and in-kind services to parents also emerge as important, as they provide families with the resources to better rear and care for their children. The report concludes that, “overall, a strategy based on a greater investment in children holds the promise of breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantages because of its effects in reducing child poverty and contributing to child development”. However, as other reviews argue, the issue of childhood social disadvantage cannot only be addressed in the context of poverty, since research findings underline the family, both economically and culturally, as the main transmission belt of disadvantage. For Esping-Andersen (2003), this implies addressing not only the question of poverty, but also the issue of the parental division of labour, in particular of maternal employment, and the related issue of childcare.

### **3.6. Media, communication and information technologies in families**

In 2007, for the first time, a majority (54%) of households in the EU27 had internet access, and the main location for accessing the internet was the home (Eurostat, 2009a). The proliferation of communication and information technologies has placed media and digital literacies at the centre of policy priorities (cf. the EC’s Digital Agenda, launched in March 2010), as well as high on the research agenda. For most families in Europe, the media have shifted in status from a merely incidental, if desirable, element of private life and leisure to becoming thoroughly embedded in

families' everyday life, providing the indispensable infrastructure for domestic space, daily timetables and, in consequence, a taken-for-granted mediator of social relations within and beyond the home.

Media is here articulated both as *object* - items in the household, whose location, access, gendered usage, use for facilitating work at home or care and support for older people and the infirm have significance for the timetable, spatial arrangements and social relations of family life, and as *text* - where the content and reception of media messages, the ways in which they represent dis/advantaged groups, and the symbolic (and material) risks as well as opportunities they pose influence people's perceptions of the wider world and of their place within it.

In addition to transformations in the media environment, some important *social trends* shape the family context within which media are accorded a place in the household (Livingstone, 2002 & 2009). As children remain dependent on their parents for longer, their teenage and young adult years are spent in the family home, creating a demand for multiple personalised media goods to accommodate competing leisure interests. With the rise of consumerism, commerce is targeting ever-younger children, expanding the commercial value of the child market and creating new markets for many forms of interactive or mass media. As the number of children in each family declines, parents are able to spend more on each child, such expenditure typically including media goods, digital toys, heavily advertised fashion items and media-related bedroom *décor*, sometimes with consequences for parental authority and values. In some countries (especially the UK and US), parental fears regarding the safety of their children in public places, encourages a tendency to equip the home as a place of leisure entertainment to compensate for declining public provision. As the period of education extends through the late teens, and as competitive pressures to gain workplace skills increase, parents are under social and financial pressure to provide household goods, technologies and toys to support informal learning at home.

As the means of communication changes, requiring updated provision and new digital skills, adults too must engage in a continual process of learning – to use the technology in its own right and to use it to compete in a more flexible labour market. For diverse reasons, from the growth of an elderly population, increased migration, limits on state welfare provision and more diversity in family structures, family communication must extend over time and place, positioning communication technologies as increasingly valuable. *Finally*, the shift from top-down state provision to a consumer-led model of governance places more emphasis on informed choice and varieties of technological mediation, this requiring in turn the accessible provision of information, choice and networking opportunities for connecting within and beyond communities.

### 3.6.1. *The changing place of media in the European home*

Research shows a range of functions performed by media in household and familial spaces, including provision of a common focus for leisure and conversation, provision of symbolic resources for family myths and narratives, the regulation of family time and space and a means of separating or connecting family subsystems within and beyond the home. On the one hand, media experience still tends to be shared with other family members. On the other hand, media are becoming more personalised, used in private spaces, mobile phones enabling more personal communication and the diversification of media goods and services supporting individualised taste cultures and lifestyles within the family.

Ever since it was first introduced into the family home from the 1950s onwards, television rapidly became children's main leisure activity. The idea of media budgets (Roberts *et al.*, 1999 & 2005) stresses that time for other activities decreases when that spent on media-related activities increases; however, they also found that heavy users of one medium are also heavy users of others. Indeed, young people seem to be multitasking and using a variety of media simultaneously. Reporting from the comparative project, Children and their Changing Media Environments, Johnsson-Smaragdi (2003: 193) found that simple media displacement is rare, given specialised media use, reallocation of media time and additive media use. Television displacing reading time has been a worry, but one without conclusive findings. Johnsson-Smaragdi's (2002: 45) findings reveal that the habitual time spent before the television screen has increased during the past 15 years with differences at the gender and social background interact, where boys from low SES families spend the most time before the screen, and girls from high SES families the least.

As television has been increasingly complemented, if surprisingly little displaced, by the use of new interactive technologies within the home, a new body of research developed, following Silverstone's (2006) concept of *domestication of new technologies* in the 1990s. The argument was that even once technologies had been purchased by the household, the process of rendering them meaningful, finding them both space and time in the life of the family, is an unfolding process of interpretation and adjustment (Silverstone, 2006), "ongoing processes rather than being a one-off event" (Haddon, 2006: 196).

Despite rapid increases in internet access over the past decade, household access and use of the internet still varies widely across Europe, ranging from 25% in Bulgaria to 86% in the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2008a). Gender differences in internet and computer use remain inconsistent, although present, across Europe. Seybert (2007: 1) reveals that "the difference between the proportion of young women (62%) and young men (67%) in the EU25 using computers daily in 2006 was relatively small [...], slightly more young men (53%) than young women (48%) used the internet daily". While parental education and income both have a part to play, their effects may be opposed, and it is certainly not simply the more affluent who have more. Family type also matters: while two-parent households (and households with working mothers) are much more likely to provide a media-rich home, reflecting their considerably higher incomes, single parents are just as likely to provide media-rich bedrooms for their children.

For children and young people, one of the most important contributions of research has been to challenge the moral panics that commonly associate youthful media use with fears regarding their vulnerability and victimisation or, on the other hand, their engagement with new forms of mediated "hooliganism". A good example of this sensibility is research on the emergence of a *media-rich bedroom culture* for children (Livingstone, 2009). This could be framed in terms of children's isolation from family life and their consequent vulnerability to commercial, violent, or other media messages. Although children are hardly immune to such messages, qualitative research influenced by domestication theory adds a different understanding.

The rise of a media-rich bedroom culture suggests several consequences for the family. Children spend time in highly individualised, consumerist, and usually strongly gendered spaces. Children's media use may be more extensive, continually in the background if not also the foreground, and relatively unsupervised or unmediated by parents; the family's leisure time is more compartmentalised (Rompaey, 2001), with families "living together separately" (Flichy, 1995), and with time spent together "as a family" something that requires deliberate

arrangement. Even when children are in the home, not physically co-located with friends, their leisure time may be spent in a peer context, in touch with peers as much or more than with parents (Ito et al., 2009; Livingstone, 2009). Age makes a difference. Generally, older children and boys have more media goods in their bedroom, particularly screen entertainment media. Livingstone (2002) notes that families with sons place computers in bedrooms more often; those with daughters place them in a common space (see also Johnsson-Smaragdi et al., 1998).

Considerable cultural differences in bedroom culture are evidenced cross-nationally. The *Children and their Changing Media Environment project*, which surveyed children in 12 countries in 1997-98, found differences. A “screen entertainment culture” is particularly strong in the UK, with Denmark following close. Households in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands are “pioneers” of new technologies, including for children. In Spain, both boys and girls are particularly likely to spend time with the family and to spend comparatively less time in the bedroom, while Swedish and Finnish teenagers are overwhelmingly more likely to spend their free time with a group of friends, also spending a smaller proportion of their free time in their own room. Indeed, Swiss teenagers spend a more than average proportion of their time in their own rooms, while Finnish teenagers spend less than average, even though Swiss children own fewer televisions or computers and spend less time on these media while for Finnish children the opposite is the case (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001: 196).

For parents, media pose considerable challenges regarding values, competences and authority. They also bring considerable advantages in terms of leisure, shared interests, and pleasures.

### 3.6.2. *Digital and interactive media technologies and associated risks*

With 75% of European children using the internet, a figure that continues to rise although it may soon plateau, societal concerns regarding the associated risks also increase, raising new research questions with pressing policy implications.

The evidence across Europe shows that, notwithstanding considerable cross-national differences in children’s internet use, the more parents use the internet, the more children do so also. Several patterns are emerging: (i) gender gaps in access diminish as home and school internet access becomes common; (ii) there is a growing bedroom culture for teenagers and solitary use of the internet is increasing, particularly for boys; and (iii) the amount of time spent by boys and girls online has been increasing in all countries.

Giving out personal information is the most common risky behaviour at around half of online teenagers. Findings from the *Eurobarometer* survey (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009) suggest that, according to their parents, children encounter more online risk through home than school use (although this may be because parents know little of their children’s use at school).

There is evidence supporting a classification of countries based on the likelihood of children experiencing online risk. This classification suggests a positive correlation between use and risk. High use, high-risk countries are, it seems, either wealthy Northern European countries or new entrants to the EU. Southern European countries tend to be relatively lower in risk, partly because they provide fewer opportunities for use (Hasebrink *et al.*, 2009).

It seems that children’s internet-related skills increase with age. Such skills are likely to include children’s abilities to protect themselves from online risks although, perhaps surprisingly, this has been little examined. There are cross-national differences in coping, it seems. Children’s

perceived ability to cope with online risk reveals higher ability to cope among children in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany and the UK, and lower ability to cope in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Portugal and Spain (intermediate countries are the Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden).

### *3.6.3. Parenting, media, everyday life and socialisation*

Traditionally, infants and toddlers have engaged little with the media, although television, radio and music are often in the background. During primary school years, children are generally not major media users, although television and electronic games are highly popular. Over the teenage years, young people begin to broaden their range of media uses and tastes, often seeking to individuate themselves from their friends via media tastes while simultaneously being absorbed in the (often normative, even coercive) culture of their peer group. By their late teens and early twenties, young people are negotiating a wide range of information, communication and literacy demands as they manage the transition from school to further study and/or work.

Generally, much of the available literature on media and socialisation addresses questions of media exposure and effects. Overall, the research literature points to a range of modest effects, including effects on attitudes and beliefs, effects on emotions, and, more controversially, effects on behaviour (or the predisposition towards certain behaviours). However, there are many methodological qualifications and contestations accompanying these conclusions, especially the critique of cause-effect assumptions in much socialisation theory, and the concern that such research neglects the child's own agency.

In terms of family reception of media content, and questions of values and tastes, the context of family viewing is a crucial determining factor in what causes offence. Research suggests that audience concern most often focuses on terms that stereotype or marginalise. Buckingham (2005) suggests that children may adopt their taste judgements from adults, including finding swearing, sex or violence distasteful or embarrassing. On the other hand, they also consider that such content in reality television, game shows and soap operas has value in offering them a kind of a projected adult future. Thus Buckingham and Bragg (2003 & 2004) found that children may value sexual material as a means of gaining information otherwise difficult to obtain or as providing a pretext for discussing difficult issues in the family.

Parental mediation strategies for children online can be classified as active or instructive mediation, rule making or restrictive mediation, and parental modelling or co-viewing. Research on parental mediation of the internet in fact reveals that mediation is fairly widely practised, albeit with substantial cross-national variations. The effectiveness of time restriction in European countries shows that the significance of the strategy differs with the socialisation cultures of the countries. However, evidence of "a regulation gap", impeding parental mediation especially for the internet, shows that since parents are willing and ready to mediate television more than the internet, even though they worry more about the internet and television, it is lack of skills rather than lack of concern that results in lower levels of internet mediation. Kirwil (2009: 403) concludes that "although parental mediation is associated with fewer number of children at risk from online content, the effectiveness of several strategies seems to depend on the country's socialisation culture. In Europe, both restrictive and non-restrictive mediation may be effective in one childrearing culture, but ineffective in another one".

The economic and educational resources of the family are replicated in digital environments. To create societies in which all families are equal, it is important to understand how we can break



this vicious cycle for disadvantaged families so that access to services, social relationships, education and information is not limited by cultural, social or economic background.

The use of ICT in education and learning at school and at home is the site of attention and action at the policy level as the use of ICT for positive impacts on learning outcomes, achieving potentials, acquiring job skills and enhancing lifelong learning is indicated. In terms of utilising full benefits of ICT in education and learning, Livingstone (2009: 64) identifies two hurdles: “one is attitudinal, for parents must share this educational and technological vision for their child; the other is material, for parents must possess the resources (time, space, knowledge and money) to implement this vision”. Recently, there has been optimism that mobile phones may help to overcome digital divides between learners with home broadband access and does without, or that it may improve feedback from teachers. However, mobile learning necessitates a good amount of technical training, preparation and planning, production of learning material and a sequence of other many time-consuming activities. It must be admitted that, as with ICT and education, the advantages of this are still unclear, and as always, these are bound to vary by demographic factors.

### 3.7. Conclusions

This chapter has covered a wide range of themes influencing current conditions and everyday life of European families including economic situation, housing and environment, education, and media. Main emphasis has been paid on families with children and inequalities, not only differences between countries but also between social groups and different families. Major trends based on this review can be identified as follows:

- *polarisation in contemporary European families is significant, in particular between low/highly qualified couples; male breadwinner/dual earner couples; low/high income families, EU/non-EU migrant families, in urban-rural dimension;*
- *the persistence of poverty in some groups and types of households which continue to show a higher risk of exposure to poverty;*
- *the extreme vulnerability of migrant families and their children, particularly of non-EU immigrant families in comparison with other families and EU migrant families;*
- *the mismatch between the life course diversity and housing market developments;*
- *new, interactive, individualised and personalised media technologies are rapidly contributing to a diverse media environment in Europe;*
- *children’s use of the internet continues to grow. Striking recent rises are evident among younger children (6-11 years) and in countries which have recently entered the EU;*
- *socio-economic inequalities continue to matter with patterns of digital exclusion mirroring those of social exclusion.*

A review of existing research shows that social inequality plays a crucial role in family life and is related to family structure and dynamics in complex ways (e.g. Langman, 1988; Singly, 1987 & 1993; Kaufmann, 1993; Lahire, 1995; Paugam & Zoyem, 1997; Allan & Crow, 2001; Attias-Donfut *et al.*, 2002; Cohen, 2004; Segalen, 2006; Kellerhals *et al.*, 2004; Wall, 2005; Crompton, 2006a; Aboim, 2006; Déchaux, 2007). Family forms, events and relationships may be the consequence, or the cause, of various forms of social inequality. In poverty and hardship, some families may be able to activate extended support networks and serve as resource pools to protect against scarcity (of income, lodgings, care, and even technology), while others are socially isolated. For the affluent, families are conduits for the intergenerational transmission of wealth, status and social capital, usually promoting educational achievement and social mobility for all

members of the family; for others, low income or the burden of caring for dependent persons may impose gender differentiation or impediments to social and professional mobility.

Two main interrelated trends in the relationship between social inequality and families can be identified. First, *families reflect social inequalities*, since the unequal distribution of various resources (economic, educational, social, cultural) and differential opportunities affect the circumstances in which family life is built up and access to certain types of family forms, divisions of work, services or life-styles. Research shows that the tendency of individuals and couples in late modernity to organise family life and intimacy in plural ways and with more freedom, beyond the external constraints of normative context and social control, does not mean that social determinants have disappeared. The formation of couples, the organisation of family life, the socialisation of children and parent-child relationships are all influenced by wider social forces and social structure. In sociology since the 1990s, some of the existing research on families, largely single country research, has systematically searched for the impact and effects of social differentiation on family forms and relationships (Van Zanten, 2001; McRae, 2003b; Kellerhals *et al.*, 2004; Widmer *et al.*, 2004; Devine, 2004; Widmer *et al.*, 2006; Duncan, 2005; Wall, 2005; Bozon & Héran, 2006; Aboim, 2006; Lyonette *et al.*, 2007; Crompton *et al.*, 2006).

Secondly, *families reproduce inequalities*, both in the short term and intergenerationally. Research shows that family background, life-style, and resources, including both material and socio-cultural advantages, tend to affect children's lives and life chances. Transmission of wealth from older to younger generations and support in setting up family life during the transition to adulthood is significant in all European countries, with more affluent families being able to transfer more material and cultural resources. In other words, conjugal and family life seems to foster and reaffirm social and gender orders. In terms of intergenerational effects, families remain perhaps the most important mechanism for the transmission of unequal life chances.

One central characteristic of EU countries is the value given to social equality and solidarity. In spite of growing doubts created by ethnicity, changes in class-consciousness, and a stronger belief in the values of freedom and self-determination, public opinion in the EU considers that social equality is a major value, and that it is not automatically obtained through market forces. It is part of the government's responsibility and is considered as a marker of the European social model. Thus, social inequalities and their development play a major role, politically and socially, not only in EU member states' thinking and policy agenda but also in the feelings of justice and wellbeing of EU citizens and families.

From the point of view of European research, we can say that analysis of social structure, with its inherent consideration of economic, social, cultural, and educational inequalities, goes back to the founding fathers of sociological theory and thought, largely stimulated by the ways in which capitalist societies were generating differentiated groupings and new forms of social advantage and disadvantage. The predominant analytical frameworks for late modern societies have found it more fruitful to consider social classes and social inequalities as no longer (or less) useful and to focus, instead, on paradigms highlighting the concepts of agency, individualisation, choice and biographical diversity. The gradual erosion of the divisions, which had long split society into three fairly homogeneous and antagonistic classes - the middle class, the working class and the peasantry - and the move toward a looser social fabric, with the majority of Europeans concurring in their tendency to increase the relative share of the same consumer goods, has also encouraged research to pinpoint preferences, attitudes and choices rather than social constraints and determination.

The fact that the classic tripartite social structure has given way to a looser setup does not mean that the social fabric of European societies is becoming increasingly uniform or that inequality, based on existing research using indicators of income inequality, is decreasing. Although research acknowledges the emergence of a new complex social structure, concern and analysis has tended to focus on high-risk and excluded social groups, such as immigrants, the unemployed, the poor, rather than on a broader perspective of social inequality and its reproduction. The focus on social exclusion and poverty tends to be accounted for on the basis of two seemingly conflicting trends affecting “post-modern” societies. On the one hand, there is the gradual uniformisation of life-styles and, on the other hand, the emergence of a “dual” society, characterised by a professionally mobile and qualified “superclass” surrounded by a fairly homogeneous collection of intermediate socio-professional groupings, and a poorly integrated “underclass” with a disproportionate number of immigrants, unemployed and unskilled people.

## 4. Genders and generations in families

In this chapter, the developmental processes of families are reviewed with particular emphasis on gender and generational relations in families: on parent-child relationship, the process of transition to adulthood, relationship between partners, women and men, as spouses and parents, and between older generation, their adult children and grandchildren. In the research of the developmental processes of the family, the factor of age is certainly an important point of reference. In this respect, an approach involving the conception of the life course, which is founded on age, may well constitute a useful perspective.

Subjects of different ages tend to relate to each other and to the social world in different ways; in particular, relationships with the family and within the family undergo change in accordance with changes in age. Age regulates entries into and exits from various life worlds together with forms of action – for example, when it is appropriate to marry, have children, not have children, enter the world of work or exit from it (Elder, 1975; Elder & O’Rand, 1995). Nonetheless, today it is necessary to consider this with a critical eye. In the new century this markedly age-related intersection of multiple choices and trajectories, has undergone some relevant changes, related to the decreasing normative strength of age itself. From this perspective, it should be kept in mind that in contemporary society biological age and social age tend to be separated: the former is no longer an obligatory reference point for the definition of the latter. It is possible, for example, to be a child yet already have the status of an autonomous consumer or, alternatively, to be categorised in the so-called “third age” - biological age that would qualify one as elderly - yet socially play important social roles. Youth and adulthood exemplify the progressively autonomous nature of the relationship between biological age and social age. On a formal level, becoming an adult implies a series of changes in status and assumptions of roles that lead to a progressive independence, accompanied by a growing social responsibilities. However, today this construction appears to be somewhat artificial (Modell *et al.*, 1976).

The sequences that mark the passages from one social age to another are weaker than some decades ago. Thus, for example, today the adult is no longer defined through a substantial existential stability (in the family, in work, in his/her personal relations) but rather to a considerable degree through his/her subjective capacity to dominate the continuous flow of changes (Saraceno, 1983). In the climate of uncertainty that characterises contemporary societies (Giddens, 1990; Beck, 1994; Bauman, 1999), it is less and less feasible to construct biographical trajectories based on age that are consolidated and socially structured.

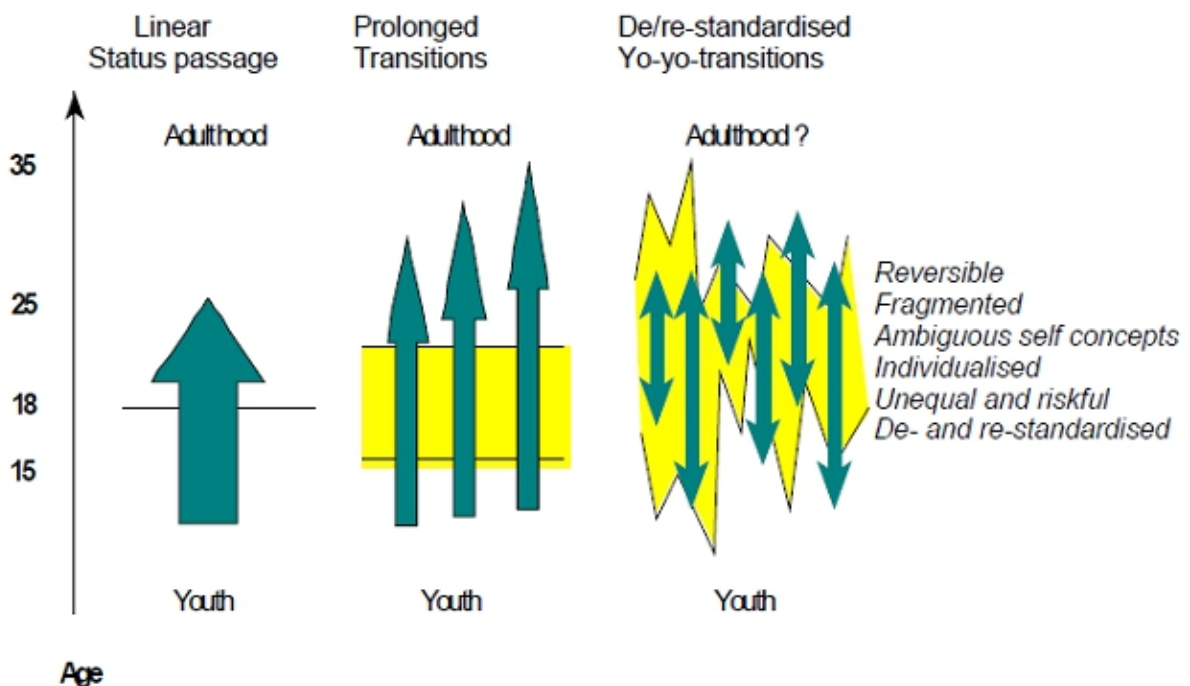
Socio-cultural processes that contribute to weakening the life-course approach are first, the process of *individualisation*, and secondly, the process of the *transformation of cultural norms*, in particular in the direction of their increasing subjectivisation (Bozon, 2004). Individualisation is a process where individuals take upon themselves the onus of making choices and existential decisions. The dynamics of individualisation tend to “liberate” men and women from the traditional ties of gender and from familiar role models (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). What has been defined as the “subjectivisation of norms” (Bozon, 2004) has a deep impact on family life, for example, on sexual morality. Thus, for example, the norms that regulate cohabitation and sexual relations can be manipulated by individuals, thereby being transformed into an instrument for evaluating and negotiating the relationship. In addition, the application of norms has to be continually justified. There is also a widening distinction between principles and practical situations, between principles and everyday life. Norms tend to be transformed from “social” to

“private” norms. The moral codes relating to the life of the couple and the family are not dissolved but rather progressively pluralised and individualised (Leccardi, 2009b).

#### 4.1. Transition to adulthood

Transitions that young people go through in late modern societies are interrelated and intertwined. So-called “yo-yo” transitions (*EGRIS*, 2001) are potentially reversible transitions that unfold in respect of the multiplicity of interlacing “strands” that in late modernity constitute the path to adulthood. Today young people find themselves having to negotiate transitional processes that are made up of a highly complex mixture of dependence and autonomy, not the least problematic aspect of which is a pervasive, underlying, ineluctable tendency for the processes themselves to be subject to reversal. This *reversibility* is characteristic for all the various aspects of the condition of young people: their transition from school to work (see Walther *et al.*, 2006), their relations with their family of origin (Biggart & Walther, 2006; Stauber & du Bois-Reymond, 2006), also with regard of leaving or (ever longer) staying (see Buber & Neuwirth, 2009), the development of their life styles, their emotional life and, last but not least, their life plans and their own family-building.

Figure 14: Different transitions into adulthood



Source: Walther *et al.*, 2006

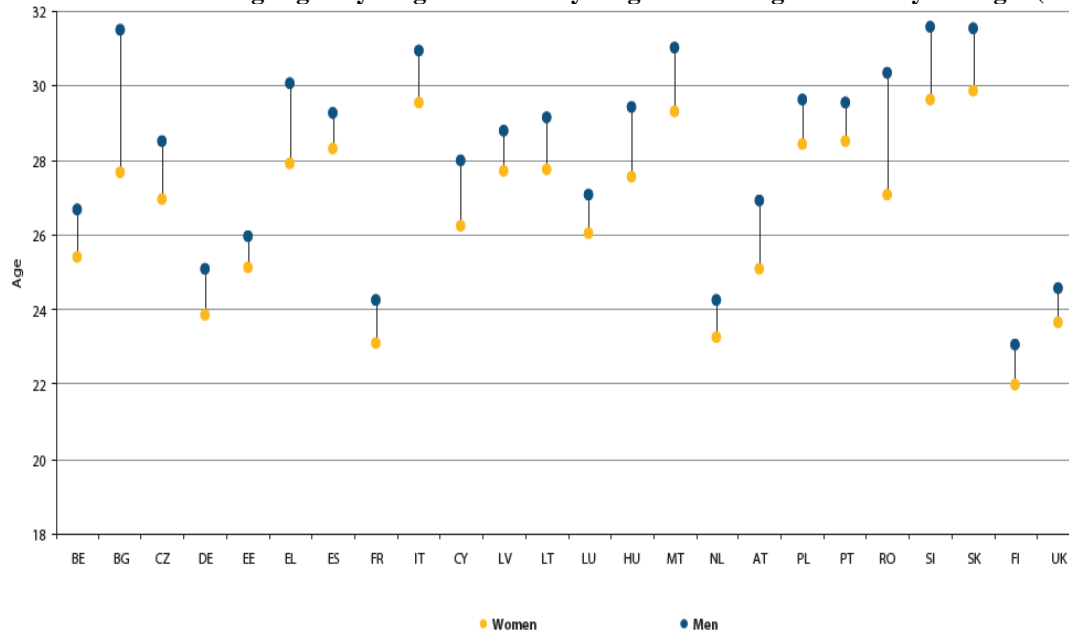
The nature of the relations that young people have with their family of origin, moving out from the family home, and their couple formation has changed. Today this delicate passage takes place later than in the past, especially in the countries of central and southern Europe<sup>28</sup>.

Table 2 shows the age at which young people, women and men, leave their family of origin in the various European countries (Eurostat, 2009a). Of particular note is the advanced age at which young people leave their family of origin in Belgium, Italy, Slovakia and Malta, where on average they continue to live in their parents' home beyond the age of 28. Young women leave

<sup>28</sup> See also Chapter 2.

home earlier compared with young men. In Greece, Romania and Slovenia too, young people leave their family of origin at a relatively advanced age. The European country, in which young people leave home earliest, is Finland, where on average young women and young men become independent at the ages of 22 and 23 respectively.

**Table 2: Average age of young women and young men leaving their family of origin (2007)**



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS  
Note: DK, IE, SE: data not available.

Source: Eurostat, 2009a

This has a significant impact on the process whereby young people enter into adult life. Two distinct sets of factors and conditions contribute to this phenomenon: on the one hand, the temporal extension of educational/work training paths and the concrete difficulties of entering the workforce that, to an ever-increasing extent, lead young people, in particular women, into high level of precariousness. On the other, there is the emergence of emotionally closer and more supportive relations between the generations. The family of today is a negotiation and affection based family. The passage from the rule-governed family to the family based on sentiment makes way for the emergence of a picture of the family in which affection becomes the core of the experience. This family then tends to be represented as a place dedicated to caring and protection, the principle purpose of which is to provide love and security to children, satisfying their economic, social, and affective needs. This can lead to ambivalent consequences: on the one hand, a more open and richer affective relationship between parents and children but on the other, a more marked and prolonged dependence of children on parents.

Research dealing with transition processes has revealed a marked variability in the life trajectories of different individuals (Arnett, 2004 & 2006; Coté, 2000; Leccardi & Ruspini, 2006). The traditionally and socially structured sequence of events once typical of the transition to adult life no longer constitutes the norm. Life trajectories, which for previous generations were more standardised, have become increasingly fragmented, without clearly identifiable connections between one phase and another; indeed, at times the phases can even be inverted. This process has been referred to as the destandardisation of life courses (see Walther & Stauber, 2002) and it manifests itself in what has been called choice biography (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; du Bois-Reymond, 1998), characterised by a marked individualisation and an accentuation of traits of risk; related especially to social inequalities. *Transition to parenthood*, in contrast to

other transitional processes such as those relating to work, personal relationships, housing etc., is distinguished by an indisputable *irreversibility*: becoming a mother or father inevitably involves becoming a parent until the end of one's life (even after one's child has her/himself become a parent). This characteristic as such plays a fundamental role not just in the construction of identities but also in the construction of representations of reality and societal images of (good) parenthood. Thus, the link between reversibility (of life choices) and irreversibility (of parenthood) generates a considerable amount of ambivalence that young people in becoming parents have to cope with. In investigating the ramifications of this ambivalence, it is important that young people themselves are considered as *agents* who not only react to social expectations and pressures but who also respond to them in an active and engaged way. It is in their agency, i.e. in the strategies and solutions that they themselves generate, that we expect to identify instances of social change, phenomena that might then be analysed in terms of cultural practices and representations as well as (new) learning obligations.

Becoming a parent involves an extremely profound change not just in the life course of individuals but also in the nature of the relations within the couple. It is for this reason that couples today, whether married or not, tend to evaluate and weigh up ever more carefully a series of circumstances, both present and future, before committing them to bring a child into the world. Right from the 1990s, decisions relating to parenthood began to be influenced by a series of new considerations (Hobcraft & Kiernan, 1995): 1) having a partner: although an increasing number of children are born outside marriage, the majority are still born to a mother and father that live together in a married couple, 2) completing education and work training: the majority of young Europeans do not become parents before completing their studies, 3) having a job that guarantees an adequate income: changes in the labour market have led to an increase in and prolongation of the financial dependence of young people on their families, young people, both men and women, have to evaluate whether it is economically feasible for them to become parents, 4) having a house of one's own, and 5) having a "sense of future": apart from the concrete factors discussed above, having a child also demands being able to anticipate events at least over the medium-term period.

An especially important thematic strand for decision-making processes towards parenthood is the timing of becoming parent(s) – i.e. the postponement of parenthood on the one hand and the decision for early parenthood on the other, as the two "extremes" in terms of results of decision-making. The tendency to evaluate rationally the timing and the conditions involved in the creation of a stable union and the process of becoming a parent are an expression of the degree of insecurity that young people experience today. The implications of becoming a parent are perceived and felt differently by men and women. It is necessary to view the two facets of parenthood - maternity and paternity - in relation to the other social roles that parents have (for example, professional roles). The potential contradiction in identity that derives from the multiplicity of roles that young people, particularly women, are required to cover today (including being a mother and a worker at one and the same time) can manifest itself in an inner and/or social conflict.

After a period of moral panics on the topic of teenage pregnancy, the current discourse - at least on a scientific level - now seems to focus on resources related with an *early entry into parenthood* (e.g. Phoenix, 1991; Arai, 2009). Teenage parenting may be more of an opportunity than a catastrophe, and often makes sense in the life worlds inhabited by young mothers. Recent studies have mostly ignored those young mother and fathers who intentionally and very consciously have become parents (Coleman & Cater, 2006). Coleman and Cater show that a part of their interviewed young fathers and mothers clearly relate parenthood with an idea of "leading

a different life”, with different ways of fathering and mothering as have experienced in their families of origin.

The birth of a baby significantly changes the existence of parents, influencing not only the identity of the young parents but also the organisation of the family as a whole, its times and its rhythms. Women very often engage in a radical review and readjustment of their career ambitions. Men, on the other hand, tend to apply themselves to work even more energetically to satisfy the needs of the new family, working harder and even seeking additional jobs to increase the family income. Moreover, if on the one hand the role of parent reinforces one’s self-esteem and helps to establish one’s identity, on the other hand it can provoke a considerable amount of tension between private life and work, especially if, as often happens, the work in question is not stable. Often such contradictions remain unresolved and the negative consequences generally end up falling on the shoulders of women.

It seems possible to identify certain common traits among the representations of the maternity and paternity of young Europeans today (Walther *et al.*, 2009: Up2Youth project). A first point to note is the discrepancy between the ideas expressed by young women and young men and the actual practices put into action in family life. While there is a tendency to aspire to more equal and balanced relations within the couple, it seems that in everyday life these aspirations do not find expression in terms of the actual distribution of domestic work, which still penalises the maternal figure as a different national time-budgets show. Alongside traditional visions of parenthood, some new models of parenthood are beginning to emerge in Europe, which make provision for changing gender roles, obligations and a reallocation of tasks within the family.

Studying negotiation and decision-making on transitions into parenthood reveals that it cannot be characterised just as choices resulting from values and attitudes nor as mere strategies for coping with structural conditions but rather have to be regarded as young women’s and men’s complex engagement in shaping of their lives (see Burkart, 2002). Issues to be confronted here most often deal with questions of “doing gender”: the need to cope with gender-specific, existential demands; the invention of femininities and masculinities, motherhoods and fatherhoods; and the construction of family life from a subjective point of view.

One general insight of European research on transitions into adulthood is that young people depend to a large extent on facilitating structures, such as socio-economic resources and opportunity spaces, in order to negotiate, shape and cope with uncertain transitions to family, work and citizenship, especially where they are structured by precariousness. However, the success of these facilitating structures in turn cannot secure predictable trajectories. Policies are required, which let young people perceive such structures as accessible, relevant and manageable and in consequence accept and use them.

This implies that measures and policies (national and local) need to allow for individual ways of using them according to subjective needs and priorities. Research on this issue (see Walther *et al.*, 2009: Up2Youth; Walther *et al.*, 2002: Misleading Trajectories; Walther *et al.*, 2006: Youth Policy and Participation) brought up the concept of *integrated transitions policies* (López-Blasco *et al.*, 2003), which are characterised by coordinating different policies affecting young people’s lives starting from their biographical perspective. Especially, analysis of research on young parenthood has revealed that this is not yet the case for many young women and men in terms of a lack of resources and opportunities needed to reconcile work, studies and family.

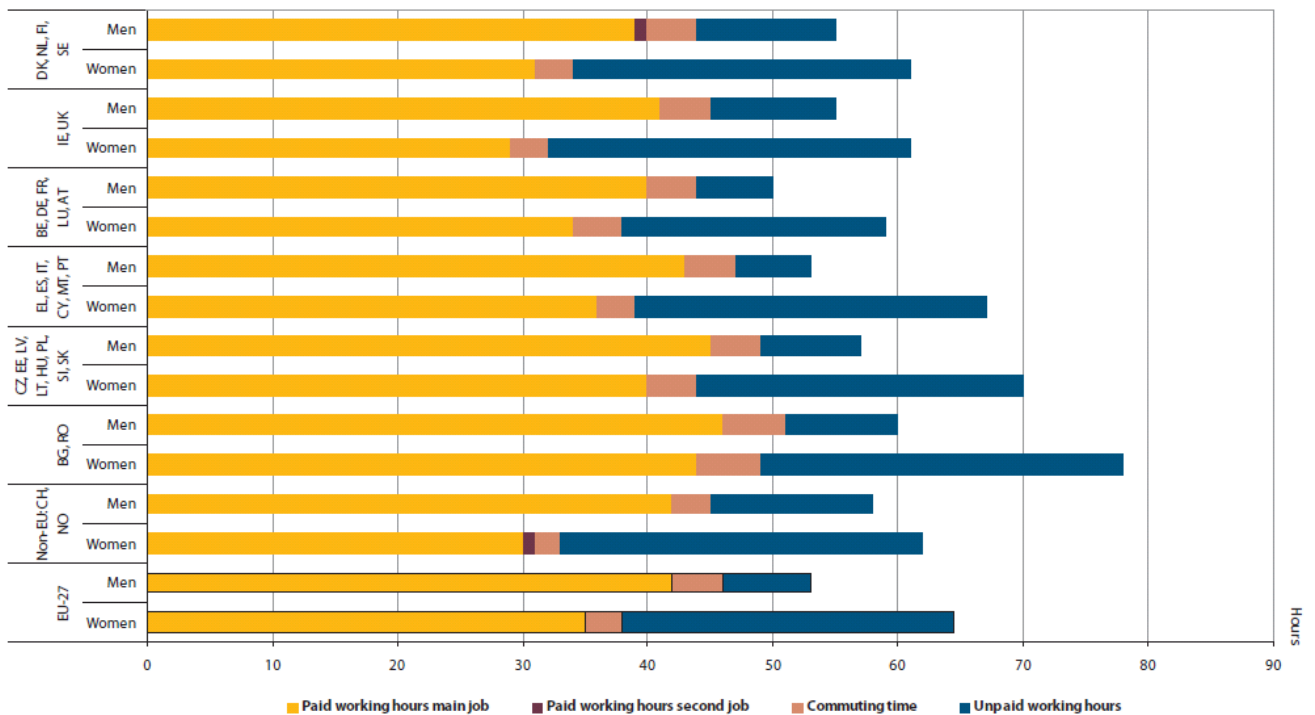


## 4.2. Gender, parenthood, paid and unpaid work

One of the most studied family research areas today is the labour market participation of women, especially of mothers with young children, and thus the reconciliation of family life, parenthood and paid work, and gendered structures and processes related to it. In this chapter, *paid* and *unpaid work* are differentiated and - within the latter category - distinction is made between *household duties* and *childrearing* and how these activities are shared by household members focusing on *heterosexual couples with children*. The three domains - paid work, household duties and childrearing - are strongly interrelated. This is not only so because the amount of time spent on one of these tasks will inevitably restrict the amount of time available for the others, but also because they are all underpinned by very similar factors: beliefs and values regarding gender roles, the structural environment of the families and individual characteristics.

Work-family balance and reconciliation of work and family life have been in the focus of scholars as well as European policy-makers for decades, and they are attached to a series of policy aims including gender equality, fertility rates, prevention of loss of human capital and (consequently) economic growth (Knijn & Smit, 2009). Work-life balance (or reconciliation) perspective focuses on state-policies as well as employers' measures to facilitate employment of individuals (especially women) with family commitments<sup>29</sup>. Besides the policy and labour market constraints, we take cultural aspects and individual preferences into account. Furthermore, we do not consider women's employment normatively but as one possible way of coping with families' needs, constraints and opportunities.

**Figure 15: Composite indicator of working time in hours, by country group and gender (2005)**



Note: The composite working hours indicator is made up of the weekly working hours, plus the average weekly working hours in jobs other than the main job, commuting time and the total weekly unpaid working hours, declared by male and female workers aged 15 or over.

Source: EWCS.

Source: Eurostat, 2009a

<sup>29</sup> Family and social care policy issues related to work and family reconciliation is discussed in Chapter 5.

There is a strong *gender aspect* involved in this topic. Paid as well as unpaid work is unequally distributed between men and women in each European society – although the extent of the differences varies considerably. Cultural traditions and social norms relating to gender roles shape individual attitudes. Despite the efforts taken by several European societies to create a policy environment that conform men and women equally, gender remains a substantial factor of the work-distributing behaviour in the labour market as well as in the household (see figure 15).

#### 4.2.1. Main trends and cross-national (dis)similarities in the division of paid work

The most marked change over the past decades in the area of work-division is the increasing level of female employment that - on the household-level - has led to the expansion of the two-earner model. Female participation in the labour force across the EU is constantly increasing in virtually all member states. Consequently, the gender-gap in the level of labour market activity is on a decrease – falling from 18.6% in 1997 to 13.7% in 2008 in the EU27 countries (Eurostat, 2009a). A slight break in this falling tendency and in the rate of decrease was provoked when Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, with their remarkably different past entered the Union. During their socialist decades, most of these countries achieved a female employment rate close to full employment. The high level of female activity dropped radically (most often together with men's employment) after the economic collapse in the early-1990s. In the following decade, it had its 'ups and downs' in the region (with varying size and varying patterns in the various countries) and only since the mid-2000s has a slightly increasing trend been observed in the CEE countries (E.g. Scharle, 2007).

Since men's labour market activity has remained largely stable during the last couple of decades, it is the change of female employment that has been provoking most of the changes. As an obvious consequence, household employment patterns have changed. The *male breadwinner model* is now being increasingly replaced by alternative models. Among these, however, the *dual full-time earner* is not the dominant one in most of the member states and so far, there is little evidence that it would take over the male-breadwinner model (Lewis *et al.*, 2008). Instead, a great variety of coexisting models can be observed with variations not only between but also within countries and within the life cycle of individual families. Overall, the presence of small children greatly increases the more gender-traditional arrangements. Various forms of the *modified male breadwinner model* exist, where one of the partners (typically the woman) works in a more limited number of hours. In the less affluent countries, even the *female-breadwinner pattern* is well known, supposedly due to severe labour market difficulties. The *dual earner-dual carer model* is a minority model even in countries (Scandinavia, for example) where citizens are highly supporting this normative pattern (Aboim, 2010: 101). The *dual earner-highly unequal pattern* is prevalent in many post-socialist countries (such as Hungary and Slovakia). In Switzerland, Western Germany and Spain the more traditional male earner-female carer model is the prevalent model. The so-called *one and half earner model* appears well above average in Switzerland, Belgium (Flanders), Western Germany, the UK, and Sweden, mostly countries where part-time female employment is more frequent.

#### 4.2.2. Key factors affecting the gender division of paid work

Choices between the possible models of employment are determined by a range of country-specific but also individual factors. The linkage between female employment and division of paid work between couples is obvious although there is no parity between the two. Four main sets of factors can be identified that are closely linked to women's employment rates and to

couples' strategies. These key sets of elements can be labelled as structural, cultural, economic, and individual factors (e.g. Haas *et al.*, 2006).

*Structural factors* include institutional arrangements that support or hinder female employment. Usually either the general welfare setting in a given country, or more specifically the impact of some public institutions, such as childcare facilities, parental leave system, financial support towards children etc. are considered (e.g. Gornick *et al.*, 1997; Szeleva & Polakowski, 2008; Van der Lippe & Van Dijk, 2002). Less attention has been paid to labour market institutions such as availability of part-time work, flexible working time arrangements, distance work etc. Among structural factors sometimes also *economic determinants*, such as national income and unemployment are included. Concerning economic affluence or income - measured either on the individual or on the national level - two competing arguments appear. The lack of sufficient income might force women to take up paid employment even if it is against their preferences or if other structural constraints are present – e.g. available childcare institutions are missing. This is called the economic need hypothesis. On the other hand, affluent countries are more likely to provide generous provisions for working mothers, and therefore we might expect women in such countries to be more active in the labour market (e.g. Van der Lippe, 2001; Uunk *et al.*, 2005). Available empirical evidence provides no clear conclusion on the role of economic affluence.

The set of *cultural factors* often appears as a set of influences competing with structural effects. Those include individual attitudes on the micro level or social norms and traditions on the macro level. Cross-national comparisons and country typologies that emphasise structural influences on gendered employment are contrasted with culturalist approaches that give foremost importance to “social values, norms and preferences that go hand in hand with a gender-specific division of labour” (Haas, 2005: 490). Cultural explanations can appear on either the micro or the macro level. In the first case a direct causality between an individual's attitudes and preferences on the one hand and her behaviour on the other is assumed and it is expected that women with more traditional gender roles are less likely to re-enter the labour market after her child is born (Uunk *et al.*, 2005). In a macro-level approach, it is expected that women's behaviour is influenced by the social norms and values shared in her wider social surrounding. Hakim's preference theory (2003) explicitly states that attitudinal factors, such as motivations, aspirations and preferences regarding work and family are more influential in shaping women's employment behaviour, than institutional factors. Hakim differentiates between work-centred, home-centred and adaptive women. While women belonging to one or the other extreme group give clear preference either to work or to family and let the other domain remain subordinated in her life, adaptive women - who in fact form the majority - adjust their strategies to the actual situation more flexibly. Consequently, this latter group of women can be expected to react to (changes in) public policy. Hakim has been widely criticised for underscoring the importance of structural constraints and for giving too much emphasis to the heterogeneity of female preferences. Nevertheless, her theory has remained highly influential and probed in several empirical studies.

In the most recent cross-sectional studies, structuralist and culturalist explanations tend to appear together as two competing but also complementing sets of influences that shape women's employment patterns. The direction of causality between the domains is however not clear. A stronger version of the culturalist approach would suggest that public policy is a reaction to public norms and values, since governments tend to respond to the expectations of the people and provide better support to reconcile work and childrearing if there is an explicit need for it. The other possibility would be that social norms and values respond to public policies and institutional arrangements influence people's views and attitudes (see e.g. Uunk *et al.*, 2005).

Finally, also a range of *individual characteristics* of the actor has to be taken into consideration. Most relevant are number and age of children. Labour supply theory suggests that out of the two parents the one with the higher earning potential - usually the male partner - will specialise in paid work. Consequently, usually the woman reduces the number of hours spent on paid work. Looking at it from a different angle, children raise the value of women's time spent away from paid work and lower the effective market wages since her decision to take up paid work would imply additional costs to be paid for alternative childcare (e.g. Gornick *et al.*, 1997). The resulting division of paid work between genders is then also reinforced by cultural norms that expect women, rather than men to take care of the children and men to support the family. There is a consensus in the literature that national variations in the extent to which a woman will reduce her involvement in paid work after childbirth is responsible for most of the cross-country variation of household employment patterns (Stier *et al.*, 2001). A range of studies has shown the tendency that mothers are less likely to participate in the labour market and even if they do so, they tend to work shorter hours than childless women do (Van der Lippe, 2001; Uunk *et al.*, 2005; Kangas & Rostgaard, 2007). In addition, other demographic and social characteristics of the individual (especially education) might play a role in shaping decision on labour market activity. While structural, cultural and economic influences are often considered as factors responsible for variations between the countries, individual influences are associated more with within-country variation in the gendered employment practices.

Possibilities of policy-makers to influence the gender division of paid work are limited by cultural factors as well as economic constraints and individual characteristics. In countries with a high level of policy support towards female employment, typically also social norms favour less traditional gender roles. Therefore, it is often not possible to tell whether policy changes could also be effective in a less supporting cultural environment. Economic constraints - most markedly in some of the CEE countries - do not only limit the resources available for supporting work-family balance but they might also restrict employment opportunities and therefore negatively influence female employment (Scharle, 2007). At the same time however, economic necessity might also force women to take up paid work – and this way improving female employment also against the individual preferences (Van der Lippe, 2001; Uunk *et al.*, 2005). Other individual characteristics also operate unrelated from policy interventions. In almost any policy setting, women with a higher education and better earning potential are more likely to take up paid jobs and also to make shorter career breaks when they have children than less educated women do (e.g. Vlasblom & Schippers, 2006; Kangas & Rostgaard, 2007).

#### 4.2.3. *The division of unpaid work*

Changes in the family structures and in the labour force participation described above present a serious challenge to conventional family management, domestic task allocation and the wellbeing of children. Women's increased labour force participation decrease their time to perform domestic work and put pressure on men to take on greater responsibilities in the household. The scale of these changes has however remained limited (e.g. Margherita, O'Dorchai & Bosch, 2009).

Although the gap in the number of hours men and women spend on *domestic work* has narrowed in the past decades, this is more due to women reducing their number of hours spent on such activities than to any significant changes in men's behaviour (Burchell *et al.*, 2007; Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Fuwa, 2004; Vannoy *et al.*, 1999). On average, women out of the eighteen European countries analysed in the Eurostat report (Aliaga, 2006) perform 66% of all domestic work. Employed women do less housework than non-employed women, but they still do household

work on a daily basis and they continue to take the (remarkably) bigger share of domestic work even in dual-earner families. There is consistent evidence across several studies for the gender division of household labour and for the gender segregation of domestic tasks. Studies also find cross-national proof of the gender segregation of domestic tasks. Men and women do different housework tasks inside the home, with women usually doing the routine chores (cleaning, laundry, ironing, washing) that typically cannot be postponed, and men more intermittent ones (cooking, childcare, car maintenance or repairs, emptying the trash) (Coltrane, 2000; Gaspar & Klinke, 2009; Eurostat, 2004; Fuwa, 2004). Some studies argue that each specific task is sex-typed (Gaspar & Klinke, 2009; Work changes gender, 2007).

Alongside the cross-national similarities in the gender distribution of domestic tasks, there are also considerable cross-national dissimilarities. The relative size of gender inequalities in the distribution of household tasks as well as the amount of change occurred during the last decades differs. Also, factors that affect the division of household labour vary across countries.

A substantial part of unpaid working hours is spent on childcare. There is a clear tendency for an increase of domestic working hours if women have children, particularly when the children are small (Aliaga & Winqvist, 2003; Eurostat, 2003). According to European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) data, women do the lion's share of childcare tasks in all countries considered (Eurostat, 2004 & 2009). The division of time spent on caring for children between men and women tends to be most equal in the Netherlands, Nordic countries (and also Switzerland), where women spend twice as much time on childcare tasks (around sixteen hours per week) compared to men (seven to eight hours per week). In all other country groups, men spend on average only four to five hours with their children. The largest gender gap in time spent on caring for children was noted in the Anglo-Saxon countries, with a difference of ten hours per week between women's (14.2 hours) and men's (4.1 hours) time spent on childcare tasks (Eurostat, 2009b).

However, dominant trends in the area of *childcare* seem to be remarkably different. Although employed women (obviously) spend less time with their children than housewives do, existing (but limited) research suggests that both employed and non-employed mothers have increased their childcare time during the past four decades (OECD, 2006). The literature provides evidence that fathers are more involved in childcare when mothers are employed, although mothers still provide more of the care. Furthermore, fathers' involvement in childrearing is slightly increasing – but it reaches highly varying degrees in the various countries as well as in different types of families (Fisher, McCulloch & Gershuny, 1999; Gauthier, Smeedeng & Furstenberg, 2004).

#### 4.2.4. Key factors affecting the gender division of domestic and parenting work

Unlike in the area of paid work and female employment, when determinants of the gender division of unpaid work are investigated theorists and empirical analysts put a greater emphasis on individual level explanations than on macro-level ones. Although structural factors are discussed, they are considered to impact by modifying the influence of individual factors.

While no one disputes that women generally do more housework than men, there are diverging views on the reasons behind this. There are *three dominating individual-level theories* on the division of household labour. The *time availability argument* states that the partner with the most available time will participate most in housework and childcare. This argument is based on the assumption that housework allocation is rationally made in accordance with time commitments of each partner (e.g. Becker, 1981). Accordingly, the partner with more demanding occupation

and higher number of paid work hours spends less time in household and on childcare tasks. Empirical results provide mixed support for this perspective (Burchell *et al.*, 2007; Gauthier *et al.*, 2004).

*The resource-power perspective* assumes that women's influence on family decision-making is limited by their usually lower resources. Since individuals within the family have conflicting interests, couples try to negotiate the allocation of time within the household to make the best deal based on self-interest (Brines, 1993). The person with more income and higher status will spend less time on housework and childcare (Coltrane, 2000). This approach focuses on the type and amount of economic and social resources - educational attainments, income, age and occupational status - that each person brings to the marriage or affiliation. The partner with more resources, higher income and level of education will bargain liberation from domestic chore responsibilities (Gaspar & Klinke, 2009) and will spend less time in housework and childcare. Empirical studies show that the division of household labour seems to be more equal when the gap between the relative socio-economic status of spouses narrows, because it increases women's comparative advantage in the market (Gaspar & Klinke, 2009; González *et al.*, 2009). The gender gap in incomes seems to be a contributing factor to the imbalance in the division of domestic labour. Studies find that a smaller gap between wife's and husband's earnings tends to balance the performance of housework (Gaspar & Klinke, 2009). Batalova and Cohen (2002) show that men do more domestic tasks in families where wives earn more than husbands do. Drobnič and Treas (2006) found that the theory is not supported for all income ranges, indicating that factors other than relative resources must also be taken into account. As for the share of childcare tasks, findings provide less support for the relative resources theory (Coverman, 1985).

Several studies find that better educated men do more domestic work, while better-educated women do less (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Gaspar & Klinke, 2009; Pittman & Blanchard, 1996). The educational level of the husband however is not as important as that of the wife in determining the probability of more equal gender division of domestic work. The reason for this is that more educated wives spend less time doing housework, not because their husbands participate more in the domestic responsibilities (Ramos, 2005; Work changes gender, 2007). Several studies show (Gauthier *et al.*, 2004; Gronau, 1977; Leibowitz, 1974) that better educated parents tend to devote more time to childcare. Other studies find less support for the explanation power of the educational factor.

An important theoretical perspective is that of the *socialisation and gender role attitude explanation*, which suggests that husbands and wives perform household labour according to adopted values and beliefs about gender norms (Hiller, 1984; Fenstermaker & West, 2002). This theory suggests that housework allocation is a result of the symbolic differentials in gender relations (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Couples with egalitarian gender attitudes are expected to have more equal division of labour, while traditional couples would have a more gendered division of domestic work. According to the gender perspective, domestic work is "a symbolic enactment of gender relations" (Bianchi *et al.*, 2000: 194), rather than a trade off between time spent in unpaid and paid labour or a rational choice due to the maximisation of family utility. The doing gender approach states that the division of household labour in families involves the production and maintenance of gender itself (Berk, 1985; Ferree, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Many empirical studies from the last decades have found both men's and women's gender role attitudes as a predictor of the division of domestic labour in various countries (Coltrane, 2000; Davis & Greenstein, 2004; Shelton & John, 1996). Men with less traditional gender ideologies do a greater share of the household labour. These findings are confirmed in samples from Germany (Lavee & Katz, 2002), Sweden (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003), Great Britain

(Kan, 2008) as well as in several cross-national studies (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Davis, Greenstein & Marks, 2007; Fuwa, 2004).

Recent research suggests that the division of household labour depends on many interacting factors on different levels. According to the integrative perspective, individual behaviours can't be separated from the surrounding context and treated in isolation. More complex concepts should involve psychological, interpersonal, institutional, cultural and economic aspects. Despite the detailed arguments that have been presented, none of the explanations are strong enough to become an exclusive, determinable theory. Nevertheless, since contextual variables shape individual behaviours, a holistic approach taking the broader socio-economic and policy context into account, might contribute to the explanation of the management patterns of domestic work. State policies, economic development, the level of gender equality and characteristics of the welfare regime can all influence the division of housework (Batalova & Cohen, 2002; Hook, 2006; Fuwa, 2004; Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2007).

However, the division of unpaid work seems to be even more resistant to policy-interventions. Through the level of female employment, policy might have some influence on the gender distribution of housework. Policy interventions that promote gender equality in the labour market also increase gender equality within the household. Individual characteristics however play a decisive role in this process. Research has shown that only women with strong individual bargaining power and with modern gender attitudes can benefit from egalitarian welfare policies also within their families (Fuwa, 2004). Bargaining power in the negotiation process over household duties of a woman will be the greater, the higher her (relative) education and occupational prestige, and the smaller the gap between the income of herself and her partner (e.g. Coltrane, 2000).

#### 4.2.5. Country characteristics in gender division of paid and unpaid work

Despite the numerous criticisms it has provoked, the welfare regime typology of Esping-Andersen (1990, see also Chapter 5) remains the single most often applied starting point for empirical analysts when it comes to linking empirical evidence to country characteristics and identifying clusters across Europe. Several studies have shown that the classic trichotomy of social democratic, liberal, and conservative welfare regimes is efficient in explaining *some* of the between-country variations in the level of female employment as well as in the patterns of division of unpaid work. However, "exceptions" are numerous and additional explanations are needed in several cases.

As expected based on their gender equality policies that accommodate women's participation in paid work, *social democratic countries* in Europe (Sweden, Denmark and Finland) are indeed characterised by high level of female labour market participation together with a moderate child effect on women's participation rates. In these member states, the *dual full-time earner model* remains the most prevalent form of household strategies even when there are children in the family (Lewis, Campbell & Huerta, 2008). Wide spread support for reconciling work and family life include high level of childcare provision, a generous parental leave system – both of which promote female employment (e.g. Gupta, Smith & Verner, 2008; Haas, Steiber, Hartel & Wallace, 2006). Gender equality is integrated into family, social and labour market policy. Empirical studies find the availability of childcare particularly important in boosting female employment in the Nordic countries (e.g. Pettit & Hook, 2005; Uunk *et al.*, 2005). The (relative) gender-equality in the labour market is accompanied by relatively low inequality also in the division of unpaid work (Fuwa, 2004; Geist, 2005). This is not only because women in these

countries spend less time on domestic work, but also because their male partner takes a significant share – especially in childrearing. The Netherlands is remarkably different from other countries in this cluster. Full-time employment of mothers receives little institutional support here but part-time employment (of women and also men) is exceptionally frequent. These have clear consequences on female employment in general but also on mothers' employment in particular. After childbirth, not only a move towards part-time employment (and thus towards the modified male breadwinner model) but also to the traditional male breadwinner model is rather frequent – together resulting in a high level of child effect on female employment (Haas *et al.*, 2006; Lewis *et al.*, 2008; Uunk *et al.*, 2005).

The only *liberal* country in the EU is the UK. Not surprisingly, child-effect on women's employment is strong – even if major changes have taken place in the last decade. After childbirth a move not only towards the male breadwinner, but - with equal probability - also to the modified breadwinner model can be seen, and this latter effect remains pronounced even when children are school aged (Pettit & Hook, 2005). In the UK, gender-gap in unpaid work confirms the European average – shaping a category in-between the social-democratic and the conservative welfare regimes (Fuwa, 2004).

Greatest heterogeneity in household management patterns can be found within the cluster of *conservative regimes*. One would expect low level of female employment with a marked child-effect and the dominance of the male breadwinner model in these countries, combined with a markedly unequal division of household labour. Although these tendencies seem to hold when broad categories are discussed (e.g. Fuwa, 2004; Geist, 2005; Van der Lippe & Van Dijk, 2002), cross-country variations are remarkable. Most importantly, Portugal marks out with a high level of (full-time) female employment that hardly falls back with the presence of children in the family. Across the EU15, Portugal is the only country outside the Northern region where the dual full-time earner model remains in the majority among parents (Lewis *et al.*, 2008). Uunk *et al.* (2005) suggest that the small child effect in Portugal is likely to be due to the economic pressure on women to have a paid job, while others refer to the existence of a rudimentary welfare state, where female employment is considered to be the norm (Plantenga, Van Doorne & Huskies, 1992 cited by Van der Lippe & Van Dijk, 2002: 230). At the same time however, division of unpaid work is more in line with the conservative pattern in Portugal (Fuwa & Cohen, 2007; also Voicu, Voicu & Strapcova, 2009).

In other Southern European countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain female employment is lower and (in Greece and Spain) only around one third of couple-parents follow the dual full-time model (Lewis *et al.*, 2008). Clearly, these countries fit the conservative model better than Portugal. Findings on the division of domestic tasks also show rather traditional patterns (Aliaga, 2006; Fisher & Robinson, 2009; González, Jurado-Guerrero & Naldini, 2009; Voicu *et al.*, 2009). Still, variations between but also within countries are notable. Stier, Lewin-Epstein and Braun (2001) describe Italy as a conservative country with a high level of support towards mothers' employment where both a high level of continuous full-time employment and frequent long-term withdrawal from market work are present.

In Germany and Austria - conservative countries with an intermediate support towards women's employment (Stier *et al.*, 2001) - female employment is considerably higher and division of household duties is more equal than in the South European conservative countries, but size of the child effect is similarly large. This latter can be lead back to the (lack of) childcare institution (Jönsson & Letablier, 2005), but also to the economic affluence. Child effect is also relatively small in Belgium, which again is not unrelated to the wide-spread provision of childcare (Uunk



*et al.*, 2005). Extensive parental leave coupled by nearly universal childcare availability in France resulted in a modest child-effect (Pettit & Hook, 2005) – atypical for a conservative regime, but not surprising given the high level of support towards maternal work. Still, France seems to remain traditional in the division of household labour according to Crompton (2006a).

*Central and Eastern European countries* are not included in the classic typologies of welfare regimes. A widely used strategy in the empirical literature is to include CEE or post-socialist countries as a separate (fourth) cluster (see e.g. Fuwa, 2004; Van der Lippe, 2001). The post-socialist nature of these countries, together with certain similarities of the transition period do indeed make CEE countries a region very distinct from the group of the old member states. A long-tradition of full-time work for men and women, underpinned by the “official” socialist ideology as well as the economic necessity of the families to rely on two incomes might form the base of argument for clustering these countries together. Detailed analyses however point towards substantial between-country differences in the region as far as gendered behaviour patterns but also underlying structural and also cultural factors are concerned (Szeleva & Polakowski, 2008). Szeleva and Polakowski (2008) identified four distinct types of childcare policies (labelled as *implicit familialist*, *explicit familialist*, *comprehensive support* or *female mobilising*) across eight countries in the region taking the system of childcare provision as well as the parental leave system into account. The emerging description of the region shows not only diversity across the four regime types but also intense changes over time between the regimes within some of the countries. Studies in the division of unpaid work also point towards some dissimilarity within the region – although coherent consequences are difficult to draw. Nevertheless, most studies describe the region with a medium to relatively low level of gender-inequality in the field of household work (Fuwa, 2004; Fuwa & Cohen, 2007; Voicu *et al.*, 2009) – although the overall amount of time spent on such duties is big.

So far, no coherent typology of countries that would adequately reflect such diversity and would also help to reduce the complexity has emerged. Despite the lack of information on some particular member states and the limitations of exploring precise tendencies, we can conclude that *there is notable diversity across Europe and it is most likely to be increasing*. As far as the division of paid work is concerned, the dominance of the male-breadwinner solution has diminished but no prevailing model has emerged so far. Instead, a series of coexisting models are present with the *rather heterogeneous set of dual-earner solutions being the most frequent*, as the tendency of women’s increasing labour market participation is likely to continue. Moreover, the distribution of unpaid work only loosely correlates with the distribution of paid work and this leads to further variations in the possible models followed.

Furthermore, families do not make their choices for a lifetime but instead, they adapt their actual behaviour to their situation in the various phases of their life course. Variations are therefore numerous not only between but also within the individual countries of the EU. Nevertheless, since women continue to do the lion’s share of unpaid work and in the majority of the cases both partners do paid work, we can conclude that *the dual earner-female carer model is the most common one across Europe*.

### **4.3. Intergenerational relations in families**

Existing (comparative) research has mostly ignored multigenerational relations in families and concentrated on couple relations and relationship between parents and (young) children. Concerning generational relations, existing research has focused more on intergenerational

support patterns than on multi-generation households. Most of these studies are concentrating on intergenerational transfers of time and money and the existing differences between welfare regimes (e.g. Albertini, Kohli & Vogel, 2007). In social care research, there has been recent interest in studying how care and help are distributed within families between generations. Mainly informal help and care provided by adult children towards their old parents has been studied, but also to some extent the role of grandparents in providing care for their grandchildren, and help and financial assistance they provide for their adult children. Research results point to substantial difference between European countries.

Research on *multi-generation households* in Europe is not extensive, the database is mostly country-specific and varies in the extent of countries, and the time span considered. Even though many European research projects on intergenerational transfers and support exist, the knowledge about multi-generation households as families is rather scarce. One major finding so far is that European countries differ in the degree to which the “nuclearisation” of the family has occurred, i.e. the degree to which the older people live by themselves either as a couple or alone. The European Quality of Life Survey, conducted in 28 European countries in 2003, found that in Italy 25% of all people over the age of 65 still lived in a household with a child while more than 30% did so in Malta and Poland. In Hungary, Spain, Slovenia and Cyprus and Greece, still 20% of the older people were living in these family arrangements. In contrast, in Denmark, Sweden, France and Germany those households represent only less than 5% (Saraceno *et al.*, 2005: 17). Kalmijn and Saraceno (2008) point out that the presence of children in the household is not *per se* an indicator of care provided by the adult children. On the contrary, adult children may still be living in the parental household in order to receive financial and even caring support from their parents (Rossi 2009, 383). Undoubtedly, as parents get older, the balance at least in care giving may shift within the household (Kalmijn & Saraceno, 2008: 482).

Notably, only a small part of multi-generational households is due to the incidence of extended or multiple households, where more than one couple lives under the same roof. This incidence is minimal (around 2%) in “old EU15” countries, and only slightly higher in the Central and Southern European countries, where it lies around 10% (Kalmijn & Saraceno, 2008: 482). The studies at hand show that the attention focuses much more on intergenerational exchange relations between family members, who do not share a common household. In contrast, there is only little information on multi-generation households and the motives for this way of live on a European-wide level.

#### *4.3.1. Intergenerational family obligations and care relations*

Today, researchers are more and more interested in the division of care responsibilities/provision between family generations. Most often studied question is related to care for older people; how and to what extent adult children provide care for their old parents, but increasingly how grandparents/-mothers provide care for their grandchildren. Researchers have recognised that care relations exist both ways (also old parents can take care of their adult children) and can be mutual and mixed and related to the provision of formal care services.

*SOCCARE* project (see Kröger, 2004; also Kröger & Sipilä, 2005) studied social care arrangements in five different socio-economic and cultural environments that represented the variety of European welfare states (Finland, France, Italy, Portugal, and the UK). In relation to multi-generational, so-called “double front carer” families - that is families that face special challenges in confronting care responsibilities simultaneously of both children and of elderly relatives - the results showed that the emphasis is on the care for older family members, whereas

the care of children is generally described as less problematic and more “natural” (Kröger, 2004: 72-86). Families in Finland, France, and the UK used most often combinations of informal care and publicly provided formal care. Only Portuguese and Italian families used mostly third sector and private care facilities. The informal non-professional paid sector was found to be wide and varied in Italy, France, and Portugal, offering a range of types of assistance. In concerning the general organisation and control of the care arrangement, the family and in particular the main caregiver remains everywhere the most important resource. Sipilä and Kröger (2004) conclude that the results affirm the common belief that European social care cultures are diverse, but, on the other hand, they are not completely different.

According to Saraceno and Keck (2008), a number of studies have found, contrary to many stereotypes and common sense discourses, that intergenerational solidarity is alive and strongly reciprocal in all countries, both at the two and at the three generational level, with the middle generation in the “Janus position” (Hagestad & Herlofson, 2007) of redistributing both upwards (mostly care) and downwards (care and income). Both long-standing family cultures and welfare state arrangements affect the shape of this solidarity, as well as the overall social care package as a mix of family, volunteer, and public provisions available. However, Hagestad and Herlofson (2007: 345) have reminded that in fact cases of coinciding responsibilities for older parents and children at the same time are relatively rare. They refer to Dykstra’s (1997) overview of twelve European Union countries, showing that only 4% of men and 10% of women had overlapping responsibilities for young children and old parents who required care. In general, by the time parents are frail and need help, children have grown up. If competing needs arise, it is more likely to be between grandchildren and own old parents.

Corinne Igel *et al.* (2009) have studied what they define as intergenerational time transfers (or intergenerational solidarity patterns and support types between family members including provision of grandchild care by their grandparents) in 11 Western European countries. The authors make a distinction between help and care. They conclude that norms of responsibility and the institutional context are closely related to family support levels. In countries where support is seen as family responsibility, intergenerational help levels are low but care levels are high. Instead, in countries with developed social care sector help levels are high but care levels are low (also Brandt *et al.*, 2009).

Motel-Klingebiel *et al.* (2005) have studied whether formal services provided by the state “crowd out” (diminish) family care, encourages it, or create a mixed responsibility. The researchers (Motel-Klingebiel *et al.*, 2005) found no evidence of a substantial “crowding out” of family help. Instead, the results support the hypothesis of “mixed responsibility”, and suggest that in societies with well-developed service infrastructures, help from families and welfare state services act accumulatively, but that in familistic welfare regimes, similar combinations do not occur (*ibid.*: 863). This result, which is supported by some other studies on intergenerational care relations, could be seen as rather surprising and unexpected against the trend of “care going public” identified by many researchers (e.g. Anttonen *et al.*, 2003: 171-172). However, it becomes more understandable when different forms of care and its intensity are specified. In a case of more regular and demanding care services, “care going public”, its professionalisation and institutionalisation, seems to take place in the care for older people.

According to Hagestad and Herlofson (2007) co-longevity has greatly increased the duration of family ties. The parent-child relationship may last 6-7 decades and the grandparent-grandchild bond, 3-4 decades (*ibid.*: 341). According to them, there are two contrasting contexts to interpret differences between societies in intergenerational care relations (e.g. differences found between

Southern European and Nordic countries): culture and social policy. The culture argument refers to differences in family types and in the level of familism in countries, whereas the social policy argument concentrates on the interrelations between formal and informal care provision, differences in generosity of public provision and between the welfare state regimes. They (*ibid.*: 350) also criticise the current family research and policy of neglecting the fact that in today's ageing societies; adults typically spend decades when they are both parents and children. This separation of young and old families reflects institutional age segregation related to modern life-course organisation.

#### 4.3.2. *The role of grandparents*

In our societies, where life expectancy is extending and the health conditions of people have significantly improved, the figure of the grandparent is becoming more important for a range of reasons. Grandmothers and grandfathers are a resource for their children and their children's families (Walther *et al.*, 2009: Up2Youth project; Kröger, 2004).

In general terms, and more particularly in the context of the formation of new families, it is necessary to stress the role played in the majority of European countries by grandmothers (and grandfathers) as a support in the care of children, for example in the case of sickness or where public services are limited and where the economic resources available are not sufficient to pay for external services. Hank and Buber (2009) have investigated cross-national variations in grandparent-provided childcare as well as differences in characteristics of the providers and recipients of care in ten continental European countries. Across all countries, 58% of grandmothers and 49% of grandfathers provided some kind of care for a grandchild aged fifteen or younger during the last 12-month period. The lowest shares were found in Spain, Italy, and Switzerland, whereas the highest prevalence was in Sweden, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark. However, the order of countries changed remarkably, when the researchers made a distinction between regular care (almost weekly or more often) and occasional care. Sweden, Denmark, and France, had below-average levels of regular childcare by grandparents, whereas the respective share in Greece, Italy, and Spain was almost twice as high as in the Scandinavian countries. Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland had an average position. Among regular carers, the gender division of carers also changed with grandmothers having a more intensive involvement. In searching for explanations for the national differences in regular and occasional care, the authors suggest that the variation of childcare and female/maternal employment regimes offer as the most prominent explanation combined with cultural differences (*ibid.*: 60-69.).

However, older people are not only grandparents of their grandchildren but they themselves are choosing ever more frequently (health permitting) to become active subjects in their own life, deciding autonomously how to spend their free time (now more abundant) and how to spend their money. In this new role, which involves a social and cultural re-engagement, grandparents are also capable of undertaking new projects (Leccardi, 2009a) even though quite clearly it is only possible when certain economic and cultural conditions are met to innovatively reorient the phase of life that opens up around the age of sixty (Friedan, 1993). Older people's projects and/or plans often revolve around travel and the possibility of discovering new places and cultures (Pronovost, 1992). That might involve the possibility of taking up again cultural and/or social interests that in previous years it was not possible to cultivate – for example, voluntary or charity work (Verbrugge *et al.*, 1996; Bickel & Lalive d'Épinay, 2001). Finally, in more extreme cases some of these “young oldies” actually decide to construct a new life for themselves, in spite of the presence of their children and grandchildren. In this case, the present becomes the

dimension of time to be invented, an extended present open to novelty and to the unexpected, which manifests itself in an authentic restructuring of people's biography (Facchini & Rampazi, 2009).

As pointed out by Facchini and Rampazi (2009), these subjects in the final phase of adult life live a further important phase of transition, marked essentially by a quest to bring to a completion their overall life project. While some have the opportunity to plan and to "invent a future", others essentially submit to the consequences of so-called "reflected uncertainty", namely that situation in which the effects of the biographical uncertainty of young people impacts on the life prospects of older people. In this case, old age does not represent so much a phase of potential new planning as a time for waiting in an uncertain social horizon. The first type of process, the commitment to bring to a completion one's overall life project, is founded on the increase in life expectancy. The second type of process relates above all to the prolonged period of transition from youth to adult life of their grandchildren (in some specific cases even of their children), which impact on the level of certainty of the grandparents.

#### **4.4. Genders, generations and family violence**

Violence in families is first of all a gender issue but also a generational issue (child abuse, elderly abuse). Violence within the family has been a concern over the last few decades in many areas of civil society and has become an important public concern of contemporary societies. Several International bodies (e.g. the European Commission, the United Nations, the World Health Organisation) have taken up the fight against violence to children, women and the elderly as one of the priorities of the international political agenda, leading several countries to implement legislation protecting victims of domestic violence and their fundamental rights.

Although systematic efforts have been made to identify and analyse violence in the family, it has been difficult to reach consensus regarding its definitions and theoretical boundaries. Several researchers have attempted to clarify definitions and operationalise concepts, but it has not been easy to obtain simple, organised, and clear results. The conceptual diversity of this field is a significant obstacle to comparisons, thereby resulting in substantially diverse perspectives, terminologies, methodologies, instruments and, most importantly, in different conclusions and subsequent actions. Another empirical problem is underreporting of violence. Estimates are often based on official reports, which tend to present lower numbers than real values (Knickerbocker & Heyman, 2007).

The majority of existing studies have focused on violence against women but also on violence against children and youth. Less research has been carried out on violence against men, elderly people, homosexuals and bisexuals, people with disabilities, and immigrant and minority women. Most of the research has been done at the national level reporting the incidence of violence but also policy measures taken in different countries. This chapter, however, is mainly based on studies with a comparative European perspective, which seem to be rather rare. McQuigg (2007) has written a report on family violence in different European countries from a human rights perspective analysing domestic violence situation in eleven Western European countries (Luxembourg, Sweden, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Ireland and Italy). He concluded that in general, the eleven countries in this survey had displayed mixed responses to the recommendations of the UN CEDAW Committee in relation to the issue of domestic violence. Certain countries, such as Luxembourg, Sweden and the Netherlands, appear to have adopted particularly positive approaches to solve the domestic

violence problem. However, the author also notes that it cannot be assumed that the measures taken by these countries were necessarily prompted by international human rights standards.

The report *State of European Research on the Prevalence of Interpersonal Violence and its impact on Health and Human Rights* (Martinez & Schrottle, 2006) compiles the findings of studies on interpersonal violence. The report is divided into five main topics: prevalence studies; assessment of the impact of interpersonal violence on the victim's health, interpersonal violence and violation of human rights, and future analyses of prevalence and health impact data.

The prevalence surveys reveal - across gender, age, race, socio-economic class, and cultural factors - high levels of physical, sexual and psychological interpersonal violence in all countries where such surveys have been conducted. However, the results of this analysis indicate that, at present, it is difficult to compare the prevalence rates of specific forms of interpersonal violence between different European countries as the existing studies have many important methodological differences.

The “gender violence” paradigm has dominated research on violence against women. It reduces all violence to two fundamentals: male abuse is used to maintain power over women, and female violence is defensive and used only for women's own protection. More recently, violence studies against women have mainly been based on two analytical models and measures. The first involves analysing solely violence perpetrated by males against females. This is the so-called unidirectional model, and has been adopted by important national and international organisations (e.g. the WHO, and countries such as Spain, France and Germany). It is a model, which assesses only violence against women. The second model (bidirectional), assesses violence perpetrated both by male against female and by female against male. Particularly from the mid-1990s, studies have begun to include other contexts where violence is also perpetrated against women (e.g. public space, workplace), and other types of perpetrators, beyond intimate partners (e.g. other relatives, acquaintances) (Martinez & Schrottle, 2006). However, most studies collect information on violence perpetrated by an intimate partner against the woman. Findings show physical, psychological and sexual violence prevalence in different contexts (but mainly in the domestic sphere) and in several countries. In some studies on violence against women, some data on violence against elder women, migrants, and ethnic minorities has been obtained. The majority of studies assess physical and sexual violence. Others include assessment of psychological violence, sexual harassment, and bullying. Psychological violence, until recently, was not a current research topic. This situation has changed, and several studies have become concerned about gathering information on the impact of this type of violence on the health and quality of life of victims. Researchers have also begun to explore the relation between different forms of victimisation over the life course, particularly regarding domestic violence and violence experienced in other relationships or contexts (e.g. work, school). Prevalence studies on a national level have been carried out in many EU countries.

*Female violence against men* remains a neglected area of study in the field of social sciences. A number of important questions regarding female violence remain unaddressed. Prevalence studies of violence against men in Europe are very scarce. Those that do exist focus on two basic lines of research: sexual violence perpetrated by women against men (Krahé, Scheinberger & Bieneck, 2003); and the way violence against men is socially represented, perceived and researched (*Research Group et al.*, 2004). More recent studies within the bidirectional model tend to develop longitudinal approaches (Archer, 2000 & 2002). Violence also occurs in homosexual couples; some studies show that it is as frequent as heterosexual violence (Krahé, 2000).

Since the 1990s, there have been a considerable number of prevalence studies on *violence against children and young people*. They focus mostly on sexual abuse, sexual harassment, parental violence and bullying in school. Despite the methodological differences between the several studies (study design, types and definitions of violence assessed, contexts where violence occurs), they all reveal relatively high prevalence rates of child abuse. However, prevalence is higher among girls than among boys, except for bullying.

Velleman *et al.* (2008) have studied domestic violence experienced by young people living in families with alcohol problems. The study was part of the European DAPHNE project. It involved ten EU countries (Germany, Austria, England, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Poland and Spain). The project was partly designed to collect information from a variety of European countries. Children affected by parental alcohol problems report having often lived under considerable stress for long periods, having to deal with family and parental environments where there was serious alcohol misuse, and serious domestic abuse, frequently moving into family violence. They experienced considerable levels of violence and aggression, including psychological aggression, which, as previous research has shown, can be as damaging to emotional development as physical violence. Findings show a complex interaction between gender, alcohol problems and child/spousal abuse.

Bussmann, Erthal and Schroth (2010) have accomplished a cross-national research project (five nation comparison) on the effect of banning corporal punishment in Europe. Several international studies have revealed that the prohibition of corporal punishment has contributed to the reduction of parental violence, greatly influencing the attitudes and behaviours of parents. Parents, who have been more exposed to parental violence themselves, used more violence on their children. This exposure is higher in countries where there was no prohibition of parental violence, such as France. This shows that existing conjugal violence is a risk factor for the adoption of violent educational styles. In countries where corporal punishment has been accompanied by formative and informational campaigns and long-term measures, the violence levels tend to be lower. Despite the differences between the analysed countries, a large majority of parents rejects violence and supports the idea that children should be educated without the use of corporal punishment.

There are very few studies on the prevalence of *violence against the older people* in Europe. Most of the existing research was carried out during the 1990s. This phenomenon was identified in late-1970s and early-1980s, mostly by health-care and social professionals. Research in this domain has focused on identifying risk factors for elder abuse. Research reveals that elder abuse by relatives exists, but its prevalence is relatively low (less than 11%) compared with other types of victimisation. Institutional abuse is even less known and assessed. This type of abuse benefited from some broader awareness because of UN's recognition of the problem as a Human Rights concern (United Nations, 2002).

To conclude, family violence can take on a number of forms: psychological, physical, economic and sexual. Family violence is still largely gender-based violence and there are specific groups at risk, such as low income and low educational households, children in large families and in families with alcohol problems, unemployed women with employed partner, women with higher educational levels than their spouse, women in the process of separating, pregnant women, immigrant women of uncertain legal status, families with alcohol problems, young women seeking abortion. A considerable number of prevalence studies reveal that domestic violence continues to be significant and still largely gender-based (mainly between conjugal partners but

also parent-child, adult-elderly person, boy/girlfriend, etc.). However, physical and psychological violence may be related to a large spectrum of factors: psychological and personality traits; nature and dynamics of conjugality; marital satisfaction; conjugal styles; domestic work; stress and conflicts; partner's (female or male) domination and control; feelings of insecurity or interpersonal and interrelational strategies for attracting the partner's attention.

#### 4.5. Conclusions

Gender and age are widely influencing the experiences and everyday life of family members in different life phases. This chapter is based on a life-course perspective, which enables to link individuals' biographies with social and historical change. The approach adopted here also involves a particular concern for the importance of gender differences. Within this general framework, some major trends can be identified:

- *transition processes of young people have changed with the prolonged presence of young people in their family of origin and couple formation taking place later;*
- *new representations of partnership and parenthood emerge among young people with transformations in gender roles and in male and female identities;*
- *the family of today is a negotiation and affection based family;*
- *the role of grandparents is important as providers of support to children and grandchildren;*
- *the most marked change in the field of division of paid work is the increasing level of female employment;*
- *the gender gap in unpaid domestic work has narrowed somewhat due to women reducing their number of hours instead of any significant changes in men's behaviour;*
- *both employed and non-employed mothers have increased their childcare time and fathers' involvement in childrearing is slightly increasing;*
- *the male breadwinner model is being increasingly replaced by alternative models with "dual earner-female carer" model becoming the most wide-spread in Europe;*
- *family violence is still largely gender based violence and there are specific groups at risk.*

The growing differentiation and pluralisation of social structures, as the pluralisation of the life styles of individuals, impacts on the family by way of the passage from a single model of the family to a plurality of models. The multiplicity of family models and family relations in Europe may be considered an expression of the cultural pluralism that characterises contemporary society, in which there coexist different ways both of giving meaning to the family and of understanding individual happiness and the life of the couple. Consequently, the modalities of passing through the various developmental processes that constitute the course of family life have been transformed. The final picture that emerges of these changes is far more intricate, colourful and multi-faceted than the one that prevailed twenty or thirty years ago. This new reality, however, also expands the potential spheres of contradiction (and ambivalence) in family life.

Co-longevity has greatly increased the duration of family ties (Hagestad & Herlofson, 2007), which increases the importance of intergenerational relations within families. In today's ageing societies, adults typically spend decades when they are both parents and children. There is a variety of ways of spending one's old age and family life of older people should be taken into account in policies and research. Separation of young and old families (and ignorance towards



the latter) reflects institutional age segregation related to modern life-course organisation. Future research should orient towards examining the various generations present on the family scene, the interactions they have with each other and the effects of these on the life of young adults, adults and old people – as well as on the family as a whole.

Even if new representations of partnership and parenthood emerge among young people, in numerical terms, these changes seem to be rather slow and gender division turns to be more traditional after the birth of the first child. Research in the field would definitely benefit from a gender perspective analysing transition processes of women and men (e.g. transition to motherhood and fatherhood), especially taking the men's perspective more into account. Although cross-country (and within country) differences are remarkable and changes are constantly on their way, some basic patterns of family life remain intact in Europe. Most importantly, the division of paid, but especially of unpaid work continues to be gendered. The dual carer-dual earner society remains a theoretical concept in most of Europe. Instead, the dual earner-female carer setting seems to become the modality – although with significant variations, especially as far as the amount of women's paid and unpaid working hours are concerned.

Generally, as shown in this review, women spend less time in the labour market, they are more likely to take part-time jobs and have more career breaks than men do. At the same time they still hold the main responsibility for housework as well as for child-rearing. These gender-gaps in unpaid work decrease in size but do not diminish when and where partners spend a similar amount of time in the labour market. This is important because the most marked change over the past decades in the area of work-division is the increasing level of female employment. Although the rate of growth was slowed down with the accession of the new member states, the main trend remained unchanged.

In dealing with the high level of complexity, research in the field has so far been more successful in identifying key factors that promote certain types of arrangements within families. Both in the field of paid and unpaid work, three main sets of factors are discussed and tested in the relevant research strand. Among the structural factors, instruments of family policy - especially parental leave policies and the system of childcare - has been identified as having a major influence on female employment. Their capacity however is found to be limited by economic constraints, but to some extent also by cultural factors (individual attitudes and also social norms). Individual characteristics of the actor, most notably women's education, and income but also her attitudes have been shown to be more important in shaping the gender division of unpaid work, while the impact of policy interventions seems to be more indirect in this area.

## 5. Family policies and social care policies in Europe

This chapter focuses on research concerning family policies and social care policies within EU member states from a comparative perspective. In many European countries, these policies have gained increasing importance. Part of the explanation is the increased political awareness of challenges discussed in previous chapters: decreasing birth rates, population ageing, diversification of family forms, and the weakening of the male breadwinner/female carer model.

*Family policies* are integrated within a larger social policy context (Ferrarini, 2006: 5) and connected with “welfare regimes”. Traditionally, this policy area is also considerably normative, and highly ideologised; family policies are linked to basic assumptions about the role of the family in society (Kaufmann, 2000: 424) and to what is defined to be or ought to be a family (Lüscher, 1999: 8). Family policies can be defined as an “amalgam of policies directed at families with children and aimed at increasing their level of wellbeing” (Gauthier, 1999). This definition acknowledges the fact that family policy is, like hardly any other policy, a crosscutting issue (Gerlach, 2010: 168), which may include “topics as varied as employment, transport, food, and education policies” (Gauthier, 2002: 456). It poses a challenge to international comparisons of family policy and amplifies the need of clear conceptualisations. When family-affecting state interventions are explicitly launched, they are usually driven by one or several of the following motives (Kaufmann, 2000: 426-428):

- *institutional motives: to preserve the family as an institution of its own right, often linked with conservative policy and a traditional family model;*
- *demographic motives: gained importance in the context of demographic changes, e.g. measures to increase birth rates or diminish abortions;*
- *economic motives: 1) to stress the family’s importance for human-capital-building and balance its benefits performed for society; 2) more recently also to emphasise the economic functionality (e.g. strengthening the workforce via childcare);*
- *socio-political motives: to compensate direct and opportunity costs of family responsibilities (e.g. caretaking, income losses) and to fight poverty;*
- *gender equality motive: to remove economic and social disadvantages esp. for women; more recently also measures to reach a more gender-equal share of family and employment tasks and set special incentives for fathers;*
- *children’s welfare motive: to provide the framework for public provision of children’s needs (incl. socialisation inside and outside the family).*

Policy-makers have a range of different instruments at their disposal, which can be distinguished as 1) regulation, 2) information and 3) financing, including taxes, benefits in cash and in kind (Blum & Schubert, 2009: 85). *Regulation* includes family law (e.g. marriage, adoption, divorce, child support), job protective leaves from employment, equal opportunity laws. *Information* might mean family support programmes, benchmarking and performance indicators. *Financing* includes financing of childcare, parental leave payments, child/family allowances, social insurances, family taxation, and housing allowances.

*Social care policy* is in many ways linked to family policy, but includes not only childcare but also care for older people and other forms of adult care. It has since the mid-1990s transformed from a marginal to core issue in social policy and in social research (Anttonen & Sointu, 2006: 4). Social care has many dimensions, which makes this research field broad and complex. In this report, the concept of social care is adopted from the EC funded SOCCARE project, which used

it as an integrated concept, meaning that social care is defined as the assistance and surveillance provided in order to help children or adults with the activities of their daily lives. Social care can be paid or unpaid work provided by professionals or non-professionals, and it can take place within the public as well as the private sphere. Formal service provision from public, commercial and voluntary organisations, as well as informal care from family members, relatives and others, are here included within social care (Kröger, 2004: 3). In this report, existing research on social care and social services is reviewed from the perspective of families and family members. The focus is in the care needs of families and family members but also in families as care providers.

Ever since the groundbreaking publication of *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* by Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990), the entrenched approach of clustering welfare states in order to facilitate systematic comparisons, was established as the predominant strand of comparative social policy research. He analysed social policies in 18 countries and used the indicators de-commodification, social stratification, and interplay of state, market, and family in social provision<sup>30</sup>. Esping-Andersen arrived at the well known threefold typology: the liberal, the conservative, and the social-democratic welfare state regime, which has since then been widely used also in comparing family policies in different (European) countries despite the criticism directed towards it. Feminist criticism has argued that this typology neglect gender-specific problems of the welfare states (especially social care issues) as well as the family's role in welfare provision (Orloff, 1993; Daly, 1994; O'Connor, 1996). Consequently, alternative typologies have been developed, which focus on these issues (e.g. Lewis & Ostner, 1994). Esping-Andersen (1999: 51) answered to feminist critique by adding the distinction between familialistic and defamilialising welfare states, concepts originally developed by Lister (1994), defining defamilialisation as “the degree to which households' welfare and caring responsibilities are relaxed either via welfare state provision or via market provision” (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 61). The distinction will be used in this report to assess the directions of family policy and social care policy changes in the EU member states, even if these concepts should be treated with caution<sup>31</sup>.

### 5.1. State family policies in Europe

In many European countries, family policies have become a major area of reform. However, institutions, norms, and regulatory frameworks substantially limit the scope of action for policy-makers and shape future policies. Thus in the following, the traditional characteristics of the different family policy systems will be shortly described, and contrasted with institutional or regulatory changes (see Hantrais, 2004; Cizek & Richter, 2004; Ostner & Schmitt, 2008; Appleton & Byrne, 2003; Saxonberg & Sirovatka, 2006; Boele-Wölki, 2007; Vlaardingerbroek, 2002; Council of Europe Family Database, 2009; MISSOC).

European Union regulations have influence on national family policies. For example, following the 1996 Council Directive on parental leave (96/34/EC), *all* member states had to change their existing law (Falkner *et al.*, 2002). Vlaardingerbroek (2002) points out how common law caused

<sup>30</sup> De-commodification is the extent to which individuals can maintain a normal standard of living regardless of their market performance (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 86), e.g. by old age pensions. Social stratification measures in how far the welfare state itself actively orders social relations, e.g. by income-related benefits.

<sup>31</sup> Empirically, it is “more a matter of degree than of an ‘either-or’” between the two (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 51). Furthermore, it is arguably not even desirable for a welfare system to be *purely* familialistic or defamilialising. This argument becomes clearer in consideration of the distinction between positive and negative de- or (re)familialisation (Ostner, 2003). While negative measures constrain the spectrum of possible ways of living, positive measures increase choices and reconciliation of work and family life (Leitner *et al.*, 2004: 17).

a harmonisation of national family laws and a common trend towards a more flexible and open system of family relations. Due to its limited responsibilities, the EU mostly addresses family policy via the open method of coordination (OMC). While there is a growing literature analysing the EU reconciliation/family policy (Weiss, 2000; Lewis, 2006; Ahrens, 2008), only very few studies exist on the influence of the EU on national family policies (Lindén, 2009). A number of recent studies (e.g. Giullari & Lewis, 2005; Knijn & Smit, 2009) critically discuss an economic bias of EU reconciliation policies and its strong focus on defamilialisation. Many studies acknowledge that the OMC approach is in accordance with the high national diversity.

Family policies of the *Nordic countries* have been heavily influenced by the Protestant church and left wing governments. They became gradually focused on gender equality, reconciliation, and female labour market integration through defamilialising policies (Ferrarini, 2003). Nordic family policies aim at promoting the interests of individuals rather than of families as units (Hantrais, 2004: 133), and have no institutionalised family policies with designated ministries (except in Denmark, where the “Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs” was created in 2004). None of the Nordic countries mentions the family in their constitutions. With regard to family law, the Nordic countries are particularly advanced in putting unmarried cohabiting couples on a par with marriage (Hantrais, 2004: 113). Legal rights of same-sex couples and their families have also increased in recent decade allowing them, in most respects, the same legal status as marriage (Eydal & Kröger, 2010: 14). They also pay particular attention to the wellbeing of children (Ostner & Schmitt, 2008), and e.g. early introduced joint custody after divorce and promote it as a rule. Legal family obligations are very weak and individual citizens assumed. Family allowances are tax-funded. Governmental-NGO co-operation is strong in Nordic family policies (Appleton & Byrne, 2003: 212).

Family policies of the *continental countries* have been heavily influenced by the Catholic Church and the subsidiarity principle; also being the ideological foundation for Christian-democratic parties (Borchorst, 1994). Family policies are traditionally characterised by male breadwinner/female carer norms. In countries with Bismarckian earnings-related social security schemes (esp. Austria, Germany), social protection of “women and children may still be dependent on marriage and family relationships” (Hantrais, 2004: 117). Austria, Germany and Luxembourg have long-standing traditions of designated family ministries, and France and Belgium have maybe the most explicit and consistent family policies across Europe (Hantrais, 2004: 138). Several continental welfare systems prescribe a state protection of the family in their constitutions (France, Germany, Luxembourg). Regarding family law, some countries followed the Nordic example regarding equal treatment of non-married couples, and the majority of countries introduced same-sex registration schemes (e.g. France with its 1999 *pacte civil de solidarité*) (Boele-Wölki, 2007). Family allowances are typically mixed-funded from contributions and taxes. Governmental-NGO co-operation is ambivalent in many continental countries: while the civil society sector has a strong role in policy implementation (cf. subsidiarity principle), its role in agenda setting and policy formulation is quite weak (Appleton & Byrne, 2003).

The *Anglo-American countries* (Ireland, Malta, and the UK) share common ground in weak state intervention, need-oriented support, and high role of the market, but differ in others. Malta and Ireland have stronger familialist traditions than the UK. Ireland prescribes family protection in its constitution and has a designated ministry for family policies. Also with regard to family law, divorce was made legal in Ireland only in 1996 (Hantrais, 2004: 110), and is still illegal in Malta (as the only EU country). At large, family relationships are not strictly regulated in the liberal systems – but neither are duties of the state, leading to a heavy reliance on the private and

voluntary sectors (Hantrais, 2004: 129). Since social welfare is in individual responsibility and the benefits directed at means-tested minimum coverage, family policy is not explicit and comprehensive, but part of general welfare policies, like antipoverty programmes or social housing (Rüling & Kassner, 2007: 22). Family allowances are tax-funded in Ireland and the UK, while Malta, being a hybrid case in several respects, exhibits mixed-funding. Governmental-NGO co-operation is less integrated than in the Nordic countries, but e.g. in the UK with family policy developing into a more specific policy in the 1990s, some civil society organisation were called on by the state for expertise and have since then been quite tightly integrated (Appleton & Byrne, 2003).

The *Mediterranean countries* share similarities with the continental systems in male breadwinner/female carer traditions and Catholic influences. With regard to family law, the Mediterranean countries legally assign mutual obligations to the extended family, and the state only supports, when these sources are exhausted (Hantrais, 2004: 129). State duties to protect the family are prescribed in the national constitutions of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Authority, however, is often delegated to the local and regional level, leading to regional discrepancies (Hantrais, 2004: 144). The overall approach is rather fragmentary; e.g. in no Mediterranean country a designated ministry for family policy exists, but in 2006 Italy created a coordinating Department for Family Policies. Spain makes a case for institutional and legal reforms: under the social-liberal coalition in 2005, it eased the divorce law and took the lead regarding civil unions (Bertelsmann, 2008). Portugal only de facto recognises same-sex partnerships (without registration) (Boele-Wölki, 2007). Regarding family allowances, the Mediterranean countries have taken different paths, but are sharing their low level. Governmental-NGO co-operation is weak and, in the context of a rather uncoordinated policy approach, NGOs do not contribute to policy formulation, with some exceptions (Appleton & Byrne, 2003).

The *post-socialist countries* make most interesting cases, since they repeatedly reached “fundamental junctures” and implemented dramatic institutional shifts: Before WWII, the Central European Countries in particular were based on the conservative Bismarckian model and their family policies showed all signs of familialism. Then with restructuring since the 1990s, following an employment-centred, universal welfare provision during the socialist era, some features exhibit path-dependence from this time (Trumm & Ainsaar, 2009: 154), while predominantly there is institutional redesign. Case studies have shown that all former communist countries - to differing degree - quit the path of defamilialisation and “tried to reintroduce the traditional familisation regime [...] as they move back toward the path of re-familisation” (Saxonberg & Sirovatka, 2006: 186; Hantrais, 2004). Some countries implemented implicit negative re-familialisation, others explicit positive re-familialisation. Some constitutions mention protection of the family (Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland). Designated ministries exist in Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and in Latvia (MISSOC, 2008; Cunska & Muravska, 2009). Legal obligations of extended families are strong, while state duties are weak and no explicit or coherent family policies exist. Regarding same-sex partnerships, only Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have such legislation (Boele-Wölki, 2007). Family allowances are tax-funded but underfunded. Governmental-NGO co-operation is affected by the communist times, and by the Catholic Church often holding a monopoly over NGOs after its collapse. Co-operation is developing, but faces obstacles as the preoccupation with economics and the “legacy of social dissatisfaction with state intervention in family life” (Appleton & Byrne, 2003: 217).

## 5.2. Childcare policies

Most widely studied topic in relation to family policies and social care has been childcare arrangements and policies (so called policy packages, e.g. Lister *et al.*, 2007: 119-130) including parental leave schemes, cash benefits, and (publicly provided) day care services. This theme include research concerning the division of labour and responsibilities between families (parents/mothers) and the state, but also gender division within families in childcare<sup>32</sup> (e.g. Gerhard & Weckwert, 2001; Gerhard *et al.*, 2005; Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006; Crompton *et al.*, 2007; Lister *et al.*, 2007; Lewis *et al.*, 2008).

There are several reasons for the popularity of this topic. First, childcare and motherhood has been one of the main issues in feminist (social policy) research and childcare has been seen as an issue of gender equality. Secondly, during the 2000s increasing the employment rate of women and gender equality in working life have been important political aims in many European countries, and in the EU. This has motivated and promoted research in this topic (see e.g. Giullari & Lewis, 2005: 3-4; Plantenga *et al.*, 2008; Plantenga & Remery, 2009; about gender equality Webster, 2007).

### 5.2.1. Leave policies

Already at the end of the ninetieth-century some European countries developed limited maternity leave and corresponding pay schemes (Gauthier, 2000: 3), which were intended to protect the health of the mother and the newborn child. A substantial improvement in the maternity leave systems in Europe was made during the 1960s and 1970s. The Nordic countries adopted a more gender egalitarian perspective and transformed maternity leave into a gender-neutral parental leave. The reforms in most other countries were less extensive, but included at least the expansion of periods of maternity leave and the increase of payment.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, there has been a significant growth and diversification of *leave policies* throughout Europe. Besides maternity leave, most of the Northern and central European countries have adopted some system of parental leave – fostered in southern Europe one decade later in the 1990s (Gauthier, 1996: 77). Today, the period of *maternity leave* varies from 14 to 20 weeks with earnings-related payment between 70% and 100% (Moss & Deven, 2009: 82). *Paternity leave* entitles fathers to take a short leave immediately after the birth of a child. Interestingly, Portugal is the only country making paternity leave obligatory. Usually, paternity leave periods vary from two to ten days, with earnings-related payment on the same basis as in maternity leave.

*Parental leave* is available equally for mothers and fathers. It can be structured either as a non-transferable individual right with an equal amount of leave or as a family right, which parents can divide between themselves. According to the EU Parental Leave Directive, all member states must provide at least three months parental leave per parent. This directive does not specify further requirements regarding payment or flexibility (Moss & Deven, 2009: 84). Concerning the length of parental leave, there is a wide range within Europe. Nevertheless, countries can be clustered into those providing about nine to fifteen months and those providing up to three years (Table 3). In many countries, the payment is earnings-related, pitched either at more than 50% of earnings or at full earnings with a maximum ceiling. By contrast, in several other countries the parental leave benefit is paid at flat rate, low earnings-related rate, means-tested or for only part of the leave period. Several countries additionally have developed *childcare leaves* between one

<sup>32</sup> Gender division in childcare in families was discussed in Chapter 4.

and three years following the maternity or parental leave period. Parental and childcare leave are creating a continuous period, sometimes with different conditions concerning payment. Furthermore, nearly all European countries offer at least unpaid time off to *care for a sick child*. Referring to the EU parental leave directive as a legal basis, there is a statutory leave entitlement for urgent family reasons in cases of sickness or accident. In general, this type of leave is rather unspecified.

In recent years, more academic and political attention has been paid to options that family policies offer for men in childcare (e.g. Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006; O'Brien, 2009; Hobson & Fahlén, 2009). O'Brien (2009) has compared fathers' patterns of leave-taking across 24, mostly European countries between 2003 and 2007. Main dimensions used in her analysis are leave duration and level of income replacement. O'Brien (2009: 194) has clustered these "father-sensitive leave models" as follows:

- 1) *extended father-care leave with high-income replacement (Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Quebec, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden);*
- 2) *short father-leave with high-income replacement (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands);*
- 3) *short/minimalist father-care leave, with low/no income replacement (Australia, Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and United Kingdom);*
- 4) *no statutory father-care sensitive parental leave (United States).*

Her results suggest that fathers' use of statutory leave is greatest when high-income replacement (50% or more) is combined with extended duration (more than fourteen days). Father-targeted schemes heighten usage. In the 1990s - with the Nordic countries as path-breakers - a few countries have adopted an extended paternity leave for fathers only (*father's quota*). This was the policy response on the very low share of parental leave use by men, intending to increase the involvement of fathers in childcare and to facilitate gender equality on the labour market.

At the end of the 1990s, most European countries had developed a range of different types of leave for working parents and others with care responsibilities. The trend of increasing leave time was accompanied by the expansion of part-time work. With the Nordic countries being pioneers again, in several countries working parents gained rights to reduce working time (Morgan, 2008: 3). Leave policies have been an area of great dynamics over the past decades. The expansion of leave arrangements in almost all European countries reflects economic and demographic motives of policy-makers as well as the political pressures on governments to support parents in balancing work and family life (Morgan, 2008). Table 3 summarises the existing leave entitlements within EU27 (Moss & Deven, 2009).

In research on childcare and reconciliation of work and family life there has been a heavy emphasis on the role of the welfare state, in the options that are officially available for the parents. However, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2007) emphasise the role of companies, employers, and organisational culture in the workplaces in how parents are able to use the options available. The authors conclude that the factors shaping the take-up patterns of parental leave include the financial and legal conditions of the statutory parental leave system, the prevailing gender division of labour, access to measures aimed at reconciling work and family life (such as the provision of public childcare services and opportunities for reduced working hours). Furthermore, it is also highly important whether parental leave is accepted and supported within the organisational culture, as well as the

establishment's human resources practices, and labour market conditions with regard to wage levels, job security, and unemployment (European Foundation, 2007: 6).

**Table 3: Leave arrangements across Europe**

Countries		statutory leave entitlements					
		maternity leave	paternity leave	parental leave	entitlement: Family/Individual	total post-natal leave per family (months)	leave for sick children
Nordic	Denmark	+++	+++	+++	F	11	x
	Finland	+++	+++	+++	F	37.5 [fn]	x [fn]
	Norway	(+++) [fn]	+	+++	F/I	36.5	+++ [+]
	Sweden	(+++) [fn]	+++	+++	F/I	36.5 (16.5) [fn]	+++
Continental	Austria	+++	x	++ [*]	F	24	+++ [+]
	Belgium	+++	+++	++	I	9.5	+
	France	+++	+++	++ [*][fn]	F	36.5	+ [+]
	Germany	+++	x	+++ [*]	F	36 (16)	+++
	Luxembourg						
	Netherlands	+++	+++	++	I	14.5 (2.5)	+++ [+]
Anglo-American	Ireland	++	x	+	I	16	+++ [+]
	Malta						
	UK	++	++	+	I	18 (9)	+
Mediterranean	Cyprus						
	Greece [fn] a	++	+++	+	I	15 (8)	+ [+]
	b	+++	x	+	I	48 (3) [fn]	x
	Italy	+++	x	++	I	13,5	+
	Portugal	(+++) [fn]	+++	++	I	36.5 (12.5) [fn]	+++ [+]
	Spain [fn]	+++	+++	+	I	36 (3.5)	+++
Post-Socialist	Bulgaria						
	Czech Republic	+++	x	++ [*][fn]	I	36	+++
	Estonia	+++	+++	++ [*]	F	36.5	x
	Hungary	+++	+++	+++ [fn]	F	36	+++
	Latvia						
	Lithuania						
	Poland	+++	x	++	F	36	+++ [+]
	Romania						
	Slovakia						
Slovenia	+++	++	+++	I	14 (11.5)	+++ [+]	

Source: Own illustration of Moss & Deven, 2009

**Key:**

x: not statutory entitlement;

+: statutory entitlement, but unpaid;

++: statutory entitlement, paid either at low flat-rate or earnings-related at less than 50% of earnings or not universal or for less than the full period of leave;

+++ : statutory entitlement, paid to all parents at more than 50% of earnings;

( ): brackets indicate that there is not a *designated* "maternity leave", but leave is available for women to take immediately before and after childbirth;

\*: payment is made to all parents with a young child whether or not they are taking leave;

F: family entitlement;

I: individual entitlement;

F/I: some period family entitlement and some period individual entitlement;

[+]: additional leave entitlements covering not only children but also other family members and/or situations of serious illness;

Unbracketed numbers indicate total length of leave available to a family;

Bracketed numbers indicate length of leave that receives some payment;



[fn] country footnotes:

**Czech Republic:** parental leave may be taken until child is three years old – benefit is paid until child is four.

**Finland:** total post-natal leave includes period of low paid childcare leave. All employees have access to leave to care for a sick child, with length and payment determined by collective agreements.

**France:** parental leave payment to parents with one child only made until six months after the end of maternity leave.

**Germany:** parental leave payment up to max. of 28 months; remainder of three year leave period unpaid.

**Greece:** a = private sector employees; b = public sector employees. Women employees in both sectors can consolidate an entitlement to work reduced hours into a full-time leave of up to 3¾ months in the private sector and 9 months in the public sector. This extra leave option is not included in the total post-natal leave shown in the Table, which shows leave available to two-parent family where both parents work in same sector.

**Hungary:** for insured parents, leave is paid at 70% of earnings until child's third birthday, then at flat-rate; only mother is entitled to use in child's first year. Either parent in a family with three or more children may take leave during the period between the third and the eighth birthday of the youngest child.

**Italy:** parental leave is six months per parent, but total leave per family cannot exceed ten months.

**Norway:** there is no separate maternity leave; part of parental leave is reserved for women before and after birth.

**Portugal:** "maternity leave" has been replaced by "initial parental leave". Total postnatal leave includes period of unpaid leave after parental leave.

**Spain:** women employees can consolidate an entitlement to work reduced hours into a full-time leave of up to four weeks. This extra leave option is not included in the total post-natal leave shown in the Table.

**Sweden:** there is no separate maternity leave; part of the 480 days of paid parental leave is reserved for women. Each parent is entitled to take parental leave until a child is 18 months; but the 480 days of paid leave can be taken until a child is eight years.

### 5.2.2. *Childcare services*

Formal childcare has been the most crucial reform area of family policies in the EU during the last years, being increasingly regarded a vital work-family reconciliation element that contributes to multiple goals e.g. female employment, gender equality, birth rates, early education. An important impetus was certainly the Barcelona European Council 2002, where important targets for the quantitative improvement of childcare provisions were adopted<sup>33</sup>. Other drivers were the OECD's research, such as *PISA*, *Starting Strong*, and *Babies and Bosses*, which pointed out the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Childcare provisions in the EU countries differ substantially with regard to coverage rates, affordability, quality etc. (e.g. Plantenga & Remery, 2005 & 2009; Da Roit & Sabatinelli, 2007; OECD, 2007a; Eurostat, 2009c; Lohmann *et al.*, 2009). In their report based on Eurostat statistical information and national reports, Plantenga and Remery (2009: 54-55) summarise "In the age category 0-2 years, the use of formal childcare arrangements varies from 73% in Denmark to only 2% in the Czech Republic and Poland. It appears that seven EU member states (Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and United Kingdom) have already met the Barcelona target." The use of formal care arrangements increases with the age of children. The authors also emphasise quality and affordability of the services, and remind for the need of day care for school age children, which is something that the EU does not specifically target. They continue that when comparing and interpreting the national figures, the use of childcare facilities does not show directly whether demands are fully met.

Lone mothers especially are vulnerable both financially and in combining employment and childcare. While the use of both formal and informal childcare is mainly driven by the available formal arrangements, social networks fulfil an important complementary role (Raeymaeckers *et*

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<sup>33</sup> The Barcelona summit (2002) agreed on the goals of providing, by 2010, childcare to at least 33% of children under 3 years of age and to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age in each EU Member State.

*al.*, 2008: 127). Formal childcare provisions have their limitations in all the countries, including countries that have rather generous public childcare provision (Kröger, forthcoming).

Childcare services for under three year olds are particularly developed in the Nordic countries. Conversely, deficient formal systems with less than 10% of under three year olds can be found in post-socialist Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, but also in Austria and Malta. Care systems for children from the age of three to mandatory school age are everywhere more expanded. Regarding opening hours, part-time exceeds full-time care especially in Austria, Germany, Netherlands, but also Ireland, Malta and UK – revealing also institutional traditions and cultural norms. Overall, full-time care is more common for the older age group than the younger one.

In childcare provision, there has been a heavy emphasis on quantity, but issue that is even more important is the *quality of childcare services*. While in national studies qualitative information has been vital (e.g. parents' satisfaction with services), quantifiable data like staff-child ratios or education of nursery school teachers has been used in international comparisons (Lohmann *et al.*, 2009: 72). Regarding staff-child ratios, there are again considerable differences throughout Europe: for the under three -group, some countries as Denmark (1:3) or UK (1:3) show an acknowledged staff-child ratio, while others as Italy (1:7 to 1:10) or Germany (1:6.4) exhibit non-favourable proportions. Similar diversity exists with regard to the educational level of childminders and pre-school teachers. Particularly low educational levels seem to exist in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. Furthermore, they criticise the considerable gender imbalances in the childcare staff (see also OECD, 2006). Moreover, staff qualification tends to differ between different childcare institutions within countries, and private childminders usually have a significantly lower level of education (Plantenga & Remery, 2009: 45).

Both quantity and quality of childcare relate to national policy priorities, one indicator for which is social expenditure on childcare (Lohmann *et al.*, 2009: 70). While Nordic countries and the UK spend more on the 0-2 year olds than the three to school age group, allocation in many countries is the opposite (esp. Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia). Furthermore, it can be observed that the Nordic countries and France spending more than 0.9% of their GDP on childcare raise the EU27 average (0.57%), while particularly low spenders are Austria, Ireland, Greece and Poland. Low spenders can be found in all family policy systems and counter-examples exist as well.

From a policy process point of view, the reforms and expansionary or retrenchment measures as well as policy challenges conducted over the last years are important. Plantenga and Remery (2009) show a move to higher coverage in many European countries. They state that while the Nordic countries, Belgium, France, and Slovenia have a high level of availability and direct efforts at enhancements, the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany are clearly moving towards a fuller coverage of childcare services (Plantenga & Remery, 2009: 58). Thus, there is an overall trend of defamilialisation through formal childcare expansion, from which a number of (mainly CEE) countries have to be excluded.

However, Central and Eastern European countries do not form a unified cluster. Szeleva and Polakowski (2008) have studied the patterns of childcare in the new member countries of the EU in Central and Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) during the period 1989-2004. They demonstrate the existence of cross-country variation of childcare policies within the region showing that instead of a unified tendency towards familialisation of policies, many of the post-communist countries followed

different paths of familialisation while some of them strengthened the defamilialising components of their policies. They distinguish between four policy-types: implicit familialism (Poland) and explicit familialism (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia), comprehensive support (Lithuania and Hungary) and female mobilising (into labour market) (Estonia and Latvia).

The dominating trend of defamilialisation is also elsewhere accompanied by another trend, which Mahon (2002) detected for France and Finland and called “new familialism”. Its emphasis is on parental choice (Mahon, 2002: 350) and the primary policy instrument to achieve this is home care allowances. Both Finland and France introduced such flat-rate allowances in the mid-1980s, Norway (1998) followed and recently Sweden (2008) and Germany (from 2013). There is also severe criticism towards home care allowances for preventing female employment, and minimising equality of educational opportunities (OECD, 2007a). Saraceno and Keck (2008: 61) argue that public financial support may strengthen, incentive, or allow familialisation of care responsibilities, and remind that the forms that public support may take are not gender neutral (e.g. payments for care are likely to strengthen gender divisions more than services). Still, care allowances could together with measures of positive defamilialisation increase parental choice. The challenge is how to rebalance time, money and services (Plantenga & Remery, 2009: 60) into a consistent system opening up different opportunities according to individual circumstances and preferences.

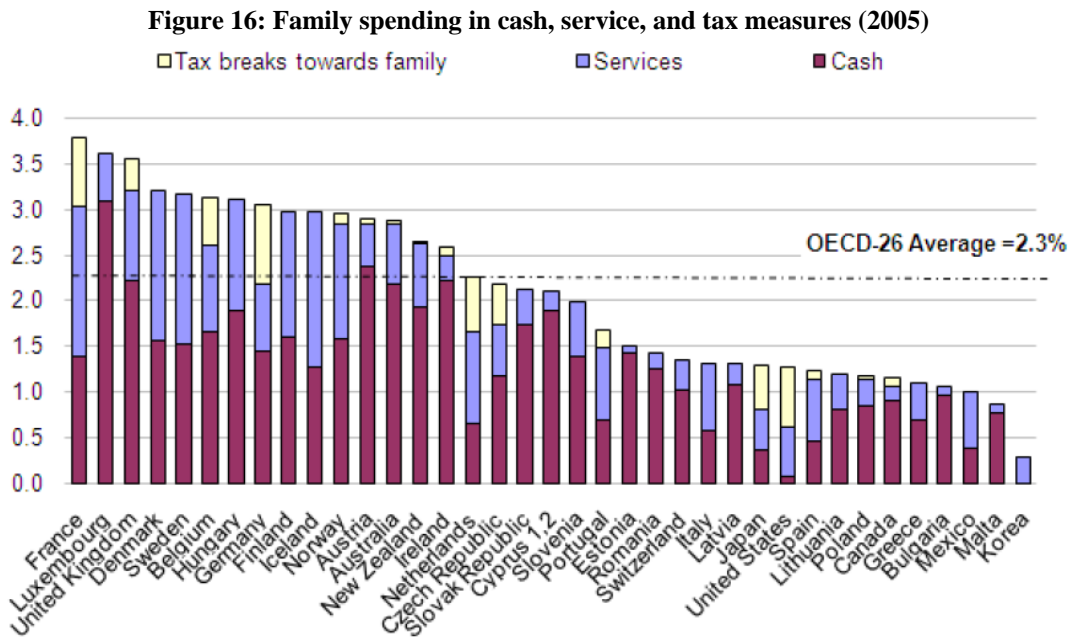
Statutory entitlements to childcare get slowly but surely on national policy agendas. Finland is the only EU country with a legal right to all children under school age (OECD, 2007a: 160). Other Nordic countries, but also Germany and the UK, have followed to the same direction (Dörfler, 2007; Plantenga & Remery, 2009: 40). Often, however, the right is only to part-time care. Some countries have not only introduced a right to childcare, but also made the last pre-school year compulsory and free of charge. This has been e.g. the case in Austria, Poland, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Hungary (Eurostat, 2009d).

Regarding explanations for the varying childcare situations and expansions, Jensen (2009) has identified two different curriculum traditions and is able to show that countries belonging to the so-called readiness-for-school-curriculum tradition have expanded their provision considerably more than countries belonging to the socialpedagogical-curriculum tradition. He argues that the former conceptually matches the political preference for generation of human capital and investment in future labour force. Following the same argumentation, Lister (2008) criticises the new welfare policy paradigm, where children are seen as profitable investment for the future and in human capital. In this model, the quality of childhood itself is largely overlooked and childcare and education policies are more oriented towards employment priorities - current and future - than towards children’s wellbeing here and now.

Most comparative studies on childcare concentrate on the question of reconciliation of work and family life, especially for mothers with young children. Plantenga *et al.* (2008: 42-43) make an important critical comment that care services are not only services for working parents but good, high-quality services are services for children. According to them, effective childcare strategy should not be about quantity but also, or even primarily, about quality of services addressing needs of children, parents, families, and communities. They should not just be seen from the economic perspective. Also in comparative childcare research, the perspective and needs of children should be addressed when studying childcare arrangements in different European countries and the EU childcare and employment policy.

### 5.3. Cash and tax benefits for families

Cash and tax benefits for families primarily follow economic and socio-political family policy motives: families perform valuable benefits for society and have higher costs, lower earnings capacities (due to care obligations) and often higher poverty risks than households without children (Lohmann *et al.*, 2009: 78). International comparisons of family benefits can be divided into expenditure-based and family-type studies (Gauthier, 1999). In general, the data basis on family tax benefits is poorer than that on cash benefits.



Source: OECD Family Database, 2009a; in per cent of GDP

OECD (2009a) provides information on the family spending proportions of cash, services, or tax measures (Figure 16). Most countries spend more in cash benefits than in services or tax benefits; though the “growth of in-kind benefits has outpaced the growth of cash benefits in several countries and the role of tax benefits is growing” (Gabel & Kamerman, 2006: 261). Countries clearly privilege either public childcare, leave policies, or cash and tax benefits, rather than offer mixed support (De Henau *et al.*, 2006). Cash benefits are in the majority of countries the (financially) most important family policy measures. The OECD Family Database distinguishes child/family allowances, parental leave payments, support for single parents, and public childcare support through earmarked payments to parents. Families also profit from social insurances or housing benefits, but these are not directly regarded as family policy measures.

*Child/family allowances* exist in practically every EU country (Plantenga & Remery, 2005: 67), while their levels vary considerably. Gauthier (2005; also Gabel & Kamerman, 2006) finds that during the 1990s, in most countries family cash benefits expenditures as a per cent of GDP decreased: only Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey spent more in 1998 than in 1993. Especially for the CEE countries, there were downward trends in the years immediately following the collapse of the socialist regimes, but a gradual restoration has taken place since then. Between 2000 and 2005, public expenditures on family cash benefits increased in eight countries (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and UK). In five countries, they remained rather stable (Austria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Sweden),

while in six countries they were retrenched (Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Netherlands, Poland)<sup>34</sup>.

In some countries, family allowances are paid as a universal benefit, in others depending on income, age or number of children. In five EU countries, eligibility is based on employment (and not residence), and thus excludes parts of the population. Nine countries grant family allowances only after income-testing, five of these are Mediterranean and four post-socialist countries. Bahle (2008: 109) concludes that in the Southern countries income testing constitutes a policy principle, while in the post-socialist ones it is rather because of scarce resources. Family allowances targeted to the number of children are present in a slight majority of 16 countries; among them representatives of all family policy systems. This criterion can reflect pronatalist motives (e.g. France), but also the fact that families with many children have higher relative costs. Those countries, which have benefits varying by both age and number of children, are all “family policy pioneers, [...] have long histories of family allowances [and] except for the Netherlands, they are predominantly Catholic.” (Bahle, 2008: 209). In the majority of OECD countries, family policies target poorer families. Financial assistance for families with low earnings (up to 25% of average earnings) is at least twice as high a proportion of household income as for families at twice-average earnings (OECD, 2007a: 76).

Tax credits are often not incorporated in cross-national analyses. Historically, the first forms of family allowances in European countries were introduced in the post-war period as so called “housewife bonuses” reflecting and reinforcing single-earner family norms (Dingeldey, 2001: 656). With rising female labour market participation since the mid-1970s, separate taxation was introduced in some countries (e.g. Sweden), while others kept joint taxation systems (e.g. Germany). Nineteen OECD countries had separate income taxation of spouses in 2006, while joint taxation or options for it existed in eleven countries (OECD, 2008b). Child-related tax allowances exist in practically every EU country (Plantenga & Remery, 2005: 67), but they are diverse and hard to compare due to data problems.

Adema (2009) points out that in most OECD countries net payments to governments are smaller for families with children than for similar households without children; though it ranges from very high differences in Austria or Hungary to quite small ones in Poland. However, this generosity is not necessarily reflected in positive outcomes (e.g. higher birth rates or lower poverty rates), for this “crucially depends on the extent to which tax/benefits systems give parents financial incentives to work and help them combine work and care commitments” (Adema, 2009: 193). Lohmann *et al.* (2009: 86) conclude that dual-earner couples have smaller tax rates in almost all EU countries – and significantly so in Austria, Finland, Greece and Hungary. Almost all countries either support an equal division of paid labour in families or show neutrality in the taxation of single-earner and dual-earner couples (Lohmann *et al.*, 2009: 92).

### 5.3.1. *The role of social transfers in tackling poverty*

Several studies have developed comparative analyses on the role of welfare regimes and their family policies in reducing poverty<sup>35</sup>. During the 1990s, the poverty rate increased in most EU countries and in many instances for vulnerable groups; an exception was the older people. Means-tested benefits assumed growing importance in alleviating poverty, but reforms also produced diversity in the safety nets across Europe (Sainsbury & Morissens, 2002).

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<sup>34</sup> OECD SOCX data.

<sup>35</sup> See also Chapter 3 on poverty of families.

Fouarge and Layte (2005) argue that welfare regimes strongly influence long-term poverty. Overall, the countries of the social democratic type display lower rates of poverty. The next highest rates are found in the countries of the corporatist type. In countries belonging to the residual and liberal welfare regimes, poverty is not only higher but it is also recurrent and persistent. The performance of regimes in tackling income poverty turns out to be rather different from their performance in tackling resource deprivation. Looking at the difference across regime types it became clear that deprivation poverty tends to be more prevalent in Southern and Liberal regimes and less so in Corporatist and Social-Democratic regimes. Nonetheless, most of the variance is not explained by country or regime type differences but by common structural factors like the needs of the household, the human capital of its members, the turnover, and dynamics on the labour market and the distribution of permanent income. Particularly interesting is the large contribution of socio-economic status variables to explaining deprivation, which reflects the traditional impact of class, education, and employment status (Fouarge & Muffels, 2009).

Some studies have focused on Central and Eastern European countries. Förster and Tóth (2001) suggest that social transfers in general, and family benefits in particular, made a significant contribution to reducing child poverty in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. However, reduction rates decreased between the early and the late-1990s. Cerami (2003) argues that welfare institutions have played, and will probably continue to play, a crucial role in limiting the negative effects of income and social inequality. They have helped to reduce not only the negative repercussions of the economic crisis, but have also helped to maintain a sense of public responsibility and solidarity, and thus reinforced social cohesion. Although access to these benefits is no guarantee of leaving poverty, social transfers significantly improve the economic conditions of families in need. Without their existence, Central and Eastern European societies would not only be more unequal but also more atomised and disaggregated societies. This might seriously damage further reforms or the democratisation process itself.

The impact of welfare policies on child poverty has merited specific attention in recent research. Chen and Corak (2005) point out that family and demographic forces play only a limited role in determining changes in child poverty rates. Instead, labour market and the government sector are the sources of the major forces determining the direction of change in child poverty. The European Task-Force on Child Poverty and Child Wellbeing (2008) sought to assess the impact of social transfers on child poverty. The countries with the lowest child poverty rates are clearly those that spend most on social benefits (excluding pensions). However, a number of countries with similar wealth and similar shares of GDP invested in social benefits achieve very different child poverty rates (e.g. the UK and Belgium vs. Austria or the Netherlands). On average in the EU, social transfers other than pensions reduce the risk of poverty for children by 44%. The impact of social transfers is higher on child poverty than on overall poverty in most EU countries. In the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, social transfers reduce the risk of poverty for children by more than 60%. Only France and Austria show similar results. The countries in which benefits have the strongest impact in reducing child poverty are those in which expenditures are specifically identified as family benefits.

#### **5.4. Social care for older people**

A large number of comparisons have been done since the 1990s in the field of social care services for older people (see Kröger, 2001: 11-23). However, care for older people is often studied in the framework of health/medical rather than of social care or family policy, or instead of a broader and more multidisciplinary framework. In this chapter, the focus is in the care for

older people lays on home/family based care and services, and on the role of families as providers of care and support. Research concerning institutional care for older people is not included, if it is not referring to the role of families.

One of the most extensive EC funded research projects on family care for older people is “Services for Supporting Family Carers of Elderly People in Europe” (*EUROFAMCARE*). It has provided a European review of the situation of family carers of older people in relation to the existence, familiarity, availability, use, and acceptability of supporting services (see *EUROFAMCARE*, 2006; Mestheneos & Triantafillou, 2005; also Lamura *et al.*, 2008).

According to its results, the reasons for family carers to provide care are most often physical illness, disability or other dependency of the old person. Emotional bonds constitute the principle motivation for providing care followed by a sense of duty, personal sense of obligation or having no other alternatives. The findings show that women were predominantly both the main carers and the main older person cared for. Nearly 50% of carers were adult children of the cared-for old person, although there was national variation in this. Researchers described family care as a dynamic but long-term commitment. What comes to financial implications, family carers had less than average disposable income because of caring. This is the result of co-payment for services and a reduction in employment (*EUROFAMCARE*, 2006: 4-14).

The project also studied informal and formal support for family carers and the old people cared for. Social networks were associated with lower levels of carer stress and burden. Less than one third of family carers had used a support service but of the cared-for old persons, a vast majority (94%) used at least one care service in the previous six months, highest percentages were in Sweden, Italy, and Denmark, lowest in Greece. In all countries, services had problems in distribution, especially in rural areas, and in covering hours when carer may be working. Users and non-users of care services saw the bureaucratic and complex procedures to get access, high financial costs, lack of information on available support, low quality, inadequate coverage, and the refusal of the old person to accept existing services as the main barriers for service use (*ibid.*).

Several researchers have studied the ways in which formal care services and informal care combine<sup>36</sup>. For example, Motel-Klingebiel *et al.*, (2005) have studied whether formal services provided by the state “crowd out” (diminish) family care, encourage it, or create mixed responsibilities. They found no evidence of a substantial “crowding out” of family help. Instead, the results support the hypothesis of “mixed responsibility” and suggest that in societies with well-developed service infrastructures, help from families and welfare state services act accumulatively, but that in familistic welfare regimes, similar combinations do not occur (*ibid.*: 863). This result, which is supported by several other studies on intergenerational care relations, could be seen as rather surprising and unexpected against the trend of “care going public” identified by many researchers (e.g. Anttonen *et al.*, 2003: 171-172). However, it becomes more understandable when different forms of care and its intensity are specified. In a case of more regular and demanding care services, “care going public”, its professionalisation and institutionalisation, seems to take place in the care for older people.

There are also analyses exploring changes that have taken place over time in care policies and provision in different countries. Simonazzi (2009) has studied how different countries have tried to reduce increasing social and economic costs of the care for the older people, simultaneously trying to ensure both the quantity and quality of care. Her starting point is four different elderly

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<sup>36</sup> Intergenerational care relations in families are also discussed in Chapter 4.

care regimes in the EU at the late-1990s, which she has named as Northern Europe Beveridge-oriented (Sweden, UK, Ireland, Denmark, Finland), Continental Europe Bismarck-oriented (Germany, Austria, France, Luxembourg), Mediterranean (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal), and Central-Eastern European (Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria) regimes (Table 4).

In the search for cost effectiveness/reduction Simonazzi (2009) has observed a convergence in how the care market is organised. According to her, all countries are moving towards home care, private provision and cash transfers. She argues that the way in which care for older people is provided and financed entails considerable differences in the creation of a formal care market. Secondly, national employment models shape the features of the care labour market, affecting the quantity and quality of care labour supply, the extent of the care labour shortage, and the degree of dependence on migrant carers. Her comparative analysis show how these two factors combine to shape the characteristics of elderly care regimes, and their differing capacity to meet increasing demand for care either by using native workers or, alternatively, by turning to immigrant workers in order to cope with labour shortages.

**Table 4: Elderly care regimes in the EU, at the end of the 1990s**

Country groups	Northern Europe Beveridge-oriented	Continental Europe Bismarck-oriented	Mediterranean	Central-Eastern European
Characteristics	State responsibility for dependency through social and health services funded from general taxation	Dependency as a new form of risk, to be covered through a new form of insurance or universal cover	Based on a principle of social assistance	Families legally or implicitly bound to care
Countries (selection)	Sweden, UK, Ireland, Denmark, Finland	Germany, Austria, France, Luxembourg	Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal	Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria

*Source:* European Commission (1999); National Reports.

**Source: Simonazzi, 2009: 214**

Several researchers (e.g. Behning, 2005; Pavolini & Ranci, 2008) have suggested that in all over Europe, in spite of national differences, there are at least two similar and simultaneous trends in social care for older people: first, privatisation and marketisation of formal, professional care, and on the other hand (re-)familialisation of care either with or without financial compensation. Thus, the role of public provision of social care services for older people seems to be diminishing.

One of the major issues and trends in many countries in care for old and disabled people (but also in childcare) has been payments for informal care, so called “cash-for-care” schemes (Evers *et al.*, 1994; Ungerson, 1995). Rummery (2009) has analysed gender implications of these schemes; whether it means increasing care burden for women. According to her analysis, these schemes “... appear to fall into three groups: schemes whereby some protection against the potential negative gender-effects of the policy is offered by the relatively high degree of formalisation (France and the Netherlands); schemes whereby some degree of protection against abuse is offered by a degree of scrutiny and limits on paying family members, but the high degree of discretion and variability in operation offer the potential for some negative gendered impacts (the UK and the USA); and schemes whereby existing significant gender inequalities are likely to be exacerbated by the low levels of state governance (Austria and Italy).” (Rummery, 2009: 646). She concludes that the most positive outcomes for women, but also for disabled and older people would appear to be in the most formalised schemes.



Based on the findings of SOCCARE project, Sipilä and Kröger (2004) conclude that European social care cultures are diverse but not completely different. They underline the importance of formal care services to needy families. They also remind that formal social care services are strongly intertwined with informal care. From the viewpoint of families, service organisations should never be isolated institutions but flexible and capable of meeting specific human needs in individual ways. Furthermore, the idea of quality care is immediately associated with the availability of sufficient time. Carers need to be able to combine working and caring, both simultaneously and sequentially. When neither working life nor services are flexible enough, the flexibility is ultimately taken from informal sources, mainly from women. Both formal and informal care is essential and practically always, there is a need to integrate both at the level of everyday family life (Sipilä & Kröger, 2004: 562-564; also Kröger, 2004: 100).

To conclude, care for older people is mainly discussed in very different terms from childcare issues using concepts such as “integrated care” (how to combine health and social care services) and “long-term care” (see e.g. Huber *et al.*, 2008). It is also analysed under the concept of intergenerational care relations, analysing to what extent adult children provide care and help for their older parents as informal care forms a crucial part in the care for older people. Usually social care has been studied from the perspective of the care provider, whether it is an individual (professional carer or family member), organisation, or the state, and the perspective of older people themselves have been ignored. According to Anttonen and Sointu (2006: 80-81) important issues in care for older people in the future are institutional care and its organisation, quantity and quality of home care services, and support for the care provided by family members and other informal carers. Furthermore, the coordination, planning, and follow-up of the service packages are important questions. It is also important to recognise not only care needs and services of older people but also other forms of adult care.

### **5.5. Social welfare services for children and families**

In this report, *social welfare services for families* are differentiated from social care services, paying special attention to services for children and families with special needs or in special, demanding life situations (e.g. interventions and services such as family support, parenting education, child welfare/child protection, social services for children with special needs, and for family members with disabilities). Width and indefiniteness of both the practical field and definition of social welfare services is probably one of the reasons why there are only very few cross-national studies available. Furthermore, these needs and services only meet a more limited number (and often a more marginalised group) of people compared with childcare or social care for older people, and are thus politically and academically less interesting.

The Council of Europe (2009) Committee of Experts on Social Policy for Families and Children developed in 2008-09 a comprehensive questionnaire on national family policies and collected information from 40 European countries, which form a large database with detailed quantitative and qualitative data. There are two sections relevant to welfare services for families and children titled: *Policies for dealing with family stress and difficulty*; and *Policies aimed at strengthening family life and personal development for parents and children*. First one of these covers issues concerning violence in families, services helping family members to deal with problems (e.g. counselling services), child protection (legislative situation and the power of authorities in removing parental authority). The latter section covers issues of parental education and support (parenting programmes/parental counselling/training sessions) and possible obligations to attend

parenting programmes in cases of vulnerability (e. g. abused children, domestic violence, adolescent pregnant women, parents serving prison sentences, etc.). However, this data has not been systematically analysed but only a brief summary is provided on these sections (Council of Europe, 2009: 59-60). That already shows the great variety and complexity of these programmes, service provision, actions taken, and terminology used in this field in different countries. Still, the authors conclude that policies aiming at strengthening family life are an increasingly significant issue across the majority of European countries (*ibid.*: 59-60). There has been increasing concerns over changes in family structures and life and parents' competence to take care of their children and thus, interest in family support in its different forms (see e.g. Kuronen & Lahtinen, 2010; also Walker, 2002).

Child welfare services and child protection seem to be the area where there is an increasing interest in cross-national comparisons but existing research is done mainly in a small number of countries (e.g. Hetherington, 1998; Hetherington *et al.*, 1997; Blomberg *et al.*, 2010; Soydan *et al.*, 2005). What is interesting is that quite many of these studies have been done in (and between) the Nordic countries.

One of the pioneering and widest comparative studies in this area is Hetherington's and her colleagues' research (1998; Hetherington *et al.*, 1997) on the working practices of child protection social workers. The study included six nations (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and the UK) and eight child protection systems. As a general conclusion, the researchers summarise that the phrase "child protection" is given a wider meaning in continental Europe, and refer to matters such as employment legislation, protecting children against exploitation, and the protection of children outside the family rather more than within the family. They argue that in England - compared to continental Europe - children are primarily protected from their parents whereas elsewhere protecting children is a broader social issue.

Many of these cross-national studies concentrate on working practices of social workers in child welfare (e.g. Blomberg *et al.*, 2010; Forsberg & Vagli, 2006; Križ & Skivenes, 2010; Soydan *et al.*, 2005), multi-professional co-operation (Glad, 2006), or on specific working methods like family group conference (Heino, 2009). Hardly any research is available on how children and parents experience the services provided, whether they receive help, or concerning the outcomes of the services provided.

Soydan and his research team (2005) have also studied child welfare social work practices and assessment processes comparing Denmark, UK, Sweden, Germany, and the US (Texas) in 1999-2003. A special emphasis was in the child's place in the process, in multiprofessional co-operation, and in how social workers work with service users from ethnic minority groups. The researchers conclude for example that the interventions differ between educational and psychological focus. In all countries, there is a lack of common understanding about when to use serious interventions, such as removing a child from the home, and there are no shared national or international concepts for different efforts and interventions. Although there are international agreements about children's right to be heard and looked upon as full worthy citizens, they were not seen in these cases, especially young children (Soydan *et al.*, 2005: 42-47).

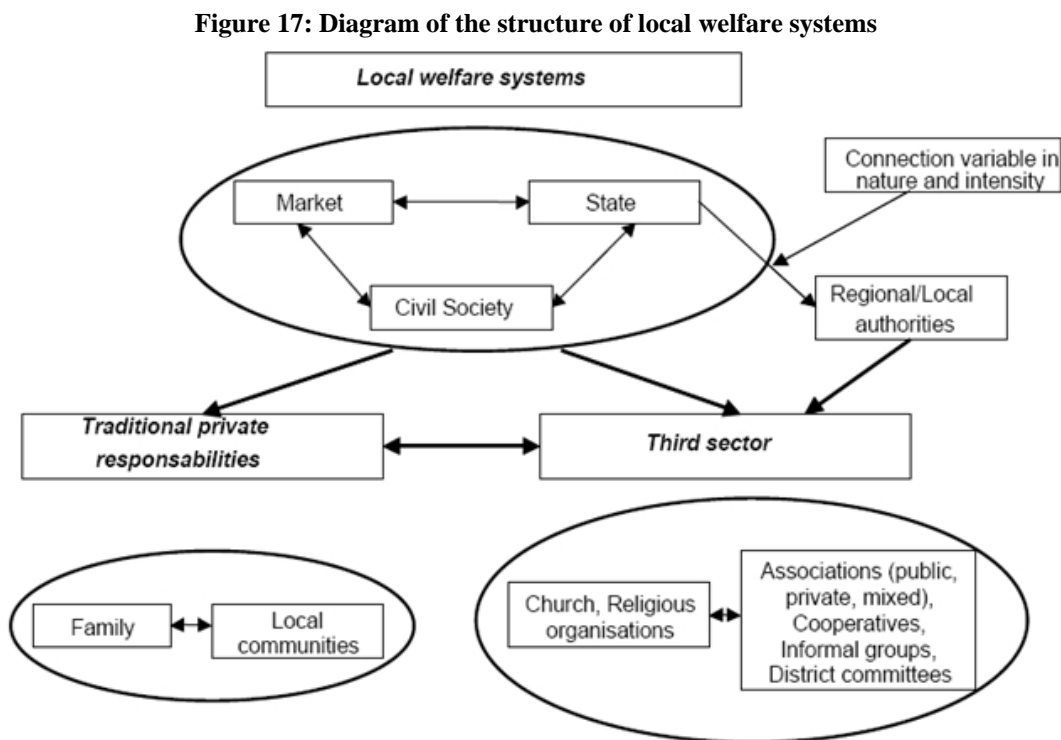
To summarise, it is difficult to find comparative research on social welfare services for children and families with special needs or in special challenging life situations. There were no cross-national studies found concerning needs of and services for children (or adults) with disabilities and their families. The field most often studied is child welfare /child protection and to some extent family support. These studies cover a small number of countries, but still, they provide

interesting and important views into national and cultural differences in the role of professionals, service systems, and the state in the lives of families in situations that require more targeted support and intervention than what is possible with social care services. Lack of comparative research in this field is certainly a major gap in existing research on social care and social services for families.

## 5.6. Local family policies

Often family policies and services for families are implemented at the local level and thus there is local variation in services provision. Policies at the local level are however much more difficult to study in cross-nationally than national policies and service provision. Furthermore, at the local level the role of NGOs is important in complementing public services and providing support for families in almost all European countries (Council of Europe, 2009: 59).

Mingione and Oberti have observed that “local systems must be evaluated in terms of a varied mix of institutional and individual actors where diversity and complexity play an increasingly important role within the development of active policies, based on partnership implementation and on shared responsibility between providers and recipients” (Mingione & Oberti, 2003). They have provided the following figure (Figure 17) on the structure of local welfare systems.



Source: Mingione & Oberti, 2003

Different national welfare systems are far from being harmonised and thus lead to many different opportunities for developing local welfare policies. In countries such as France or the UK, there are many “local interventions” promoted by the State. In other countries, such as Germany, Italy, or Spain, local policies are directly promoted by Regions, or even Municipalities in a more flexible context. It is particularly because of this budgetary and administrative responsibility of the local government that one may speak of a distinct “local welfare state” (Wollmann, 2004) or of “welfare municipalities” (Kröger, 1997). The “local welfare state” is realised in Germany and

Sweden, while in UK and France, due to different reasons (political ones in the UK, “territorial” ones in France) the welfare system is highly centralised. The comparison among different local welfare systems highlights also the involvement and responsibility of non-public (voluntary as well as private) organisations and groups (Wollmann, 2004).

Involvement of the community in the local welfare creation has been declared fundamental in a 2004 European transnational project *Equal-Tempora* on work-life balance and care. According to it, services have to be “near to persons, families and their living environment”, also according to the principle of subsidiarity. In the provision of local welfare services “different actors have to participate in a concerted manner in the implementation of the local welfare services (different local administrative institutions, social players, professional, community, family)” (*Equal Tempora 2*, 2004: 14). Although there are almost no comparative studies on local policies for families (see however Kröger, 1997), the local level of welfare and political intervention in building new family policies has gained more recognition stated in the recent ESF Paper *Partnership for more Family-Friendly living and working conditions*. “European Structural Fund projects are now seeking the way to meet Lisbon targets and family policies are therefore seen in the context of enhancing employment and gender equality, starting specifically from the local level, where families and companies are.” (European Commission, 2008d: 9).

The renewed interest in the local level is also linked to the interest in the so-called *Good Practice Model* that is an analysis on local projects from different nations and on different topics, to highlight the variety of approaches and experiences in local family policies. The European Alliance for Families (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) has therefore developed a platform for exchange of views and experiences on family friendly policies. The European Alliance for Families has developed a database on good practices, in which projects are presented, trying to build a sort of family mainstreaming in local family policies.

## 5.7. Conclusions

The diversity of European welfare systems and family policies exceeds existing country categories and welfare regime typologies. Most researchers today agree that the main differences in family policies and social care policies can be found between Southern and Northern parts of Europe, but there is no agreement on whether these can be called as separate regimes. There is also significant national variation within these categories; even within the Nordic countries that are usually classified as a joint Nordic model (see e.g. Mahon, 2002; Rauch, 2007). Furthermore, in these comparisons and classifications most recent EU member states are usually missing (mostly Central and Eastern European Countries). Still, there are some indicators that European countries turn more similar in their social care systems and family policies, and in what comes to the problems related to them. There is a need for a more up to date and reliable family policy typology. Such a typology, however, cannot be “carved in stone”, but must pay attention to dynamics, policy changes, and, in the consequence, changing country positions and/or clusters.

In family policies and social care policies in the European, national and local levels, some major trends can be identified:

- *the field of family policies has gained increasing importance and expansion during the recent years and while traditionally only few countries had explicit family policies and designated family ministries, there is a trend of growing institutionalisation;*

- *in terms of re- and defamilialisation in family and care policies across Europe, a mixture of re- and defamilialising measures can be identified;*
- *leave policies have in many countries aimed at activating fathers and reaching a more equal share of employment and family responsibilities between both parents;*
- *childcare services have been one of the most important family policy issues and reform areas and especially in this field, the trend of “care going public”, defamilialisation, institutionalisation and professionalisation of care work and services is likely to continue;*
- *social care remains a combination of formal and informal care where the role of families and especially women in families is remarkable in providing care for children, old people and other dependent family members;*
- *globalisation and internationalisation of care with its various forms and consequences will be one of the future trends e.g. care relations cross national borders, global care chains and transnational care, increasing numbers of migrant care workers both in formal and informal care work, and international market of care services;*
- *growing importance of local governments with more responsibilities and autonomy regarding many politically relevant issues for family policies and service provision;*
- *increasing role of local NGOs and networks of different actors (e.g. public sector, NGOs, private companies and families themselves);*
- *increasing intercultural dimension of the local communities facing the challenges linked to migration.*

The expansion of childcare facilities is high on the agenda in many European countries, and so is the expansion or reduction of child/family allowances and parental leave policies, often including elements of “active fathering”. Care issues seem to leave behind social benefits in family policy agenda even if those have crucial importance e.g. in reducing poverty and diminishing social inequalities. A common trend all across Europe - although to differing degrees and with different policy preferences - is reconciliation and work-life balance. It seems quite evident that even if the ageing of population has been recognised as one of the biggest future challenges all over Europe, childcare will remain in the core of policy. That is because it is so closely related to the needs of the economy, labour market, and gender equality policy (see e.g. Mahon, 2002; Haataja, 2005; Leira & Saraceno, 2008: 14-16; León, 2009; Knijn & Smit, 2009). The main emphasis has been on the coverage levels of childcare services that would allow the reconciliation of work and family life. There are some indications that the educational aims and contents of formal childcare services will gain more political interest in the future (e.g. Jensen, 2009). This new kind of an interest in children and childhood can be seen a part of the “politicisation of childhood”, meaning increasing public interest and intervention into problems of children and parents, new social risks, early childhood education and care, child poverty, childcare as investment into future, and social capital perspective (e.g. Jensen, 2008).

All over Europe, the field of childcare can be described as “care going public” (e.g. Anttonen & Sipilä, 2005; Geissler & Pfau-Effinger, 2005). This trend is less clear in social care for older people, where the trend seem to be more twofold: on the one hand privatisation and marketisation of formal, professional care, and on the other, (re-)familialisation of care either with or without financial compensation. In several countries, there has been a move towards “direct payments” or “personal budgets”. These changes represent a tendency where the user of care services is given considerably more say on the way her/his needs are being met (see e.g. Glasby & Littlechild, 2009). Social care, both childcare and care for older people and other adults, remains a combination of formal and informal care where the role of families and especially women in families is still remarkable. This raises an increasing political and academic

interest in different combinations of formal and informal care including intergenerational care relations. Several researchers have been interested in whether formal care replaces (crowd-out) informal care or whether those rather complement (crowd-in) each other. There seem to be no strong evidence for the crowding-out hypothesis (e.g. Brandt *et al.*, 2009).

In addition to the state, there are other important actors, local governments, NGOs, and especially companies and employers with their occupational family policies, which are of major importance for the reconciliation of work and family life (e.g. family-friendly working hours, workplace childcare facilities). On these policies, there are almost no international comparisons (except the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007).

Globalisation and internationalisation with its various forms and consequences is becoming more and more important issue in the future also in family and social care policies. It means that care relations cross national borders in the forms of global care chains and transnational care, and in increasing numbers of migrant workers both in formal and informal care work. Furthermore, it means that caring is increasingly becoming an international business where multinational companies are providing care services (Anttonen *et al.*, 2009). The EU is now both in its policy and research funding investing on migration issues, but relations between family policy, care, gender and migration are not yet clearly emphasised (see *Moving Europe: EU research on migration and policy needs*, 2009).

## 6. Gaps in existing research

This report is substantially divided into four main themes and research areas:

- 1) *family structures, forms and demographic processes;*
- 2) *current conditions of European families;*
- 3) *genders and generations in families;*
- 4) *family policies and social care policies in Europe.*

This chapter points out major gaps in existing comparative research in these fields based on the Existential Field Reports written by the partners of the FAMILYPLATFORM project. These research gaps are divided into substantial and methodological gaps. The former are discussed first.

The first general notion is that in all the fields the existing research is rather nuclear family oriented largely ignoring the increasing diversity in family forms and family relations, except when studying statistically changes in family structures, and even then, data and research on more recent and rare family types are missing. Existing research has concentrated on families with young children widely ignoring other stages of family life and the life-course approach, which is highly important in family research. Moreover, most of the research does not recognise that family is a dynamic entity, but implicitly assumes that family forms are static. From this point of view the family should be seen also as a result of partnership and childbearing processes, from the life course development of all its members (including children). Thus, future research should recognise *the dynamic character* of families, and should be able to understand these dynamics, *the transitions* within traditional and new types of family forms. We need also more research about the daily and biographical practices of “doing family” (in relation to new family forms, new forms of intergenerational solidarity and interactions between family members).

Secondly, existing research is adult centred and children’s perspective (and views of old people) into their family life, policies and services are largely missing, which is certainly one of the major challenges for future research. Overall, experiences of families and individual family members within families and as policy “targets” and service users are largely ignored in existing research, e.g. perspective of old people in social care research. What is also emphasised in many of the Existential Field Reports is the need for more research on the changing role of men in families (e.g. men as fathers and carers, as members of migrant families, as victims of family violence).

What comes to *family structures, forms and demographic processes* (Chapter 2), knowledge on fertility and demographic trends has been most extensive in terms of the availability of indicators as well as the countries and time span covered. We also know quite a lot about the major changes and trends in family structures (e.g. changes in marriage, birth, and divorce rates, numbers of lone parent families across Europe etc.). Still, the *consequences of the increasing life expectancies* and the *causes of low fertility* should be analysed further. The increasing life expectancy point to the problems of households of older people, to loneliness, coping with decreasing biological, physical and psychological resources, and to the need for care, suitable environment etc. Macro-social reasons and individual rights also points to the research of developments of childbearing behavior. The sustainability of the social system is questioned by

the low fertility; therefore it is essential to understand the processes behind them. From an individual perspective, the growing gap between the intentions and reality should be studied, especially when low fertility has tangible negative consequences.

Future research should also focus more strongly of the *causes and consequences of family dynamics* (change). Regarding the *causes*, structural and individual factors should be considered. Among structural factors, institutional arrangement, family related policies, labor market, housing, the unequal distribution of resources should be considered. Regarding individual factors, value orientations, attitudes, happiness should be studied further. Considering *consequences* also both the material and immaterial dimension should be understood. These are such as material situation, time pressures, satisfaction, mental health, etc.

So called “new and rare” family types are understudied and data available is very fragmentary. For example, both the quality and quantity of data on gay and lesbian (rainbow) families differs highly between the European countries. Similarly, even though many European research projects exist on intergenerational transfers and support, the knowledge about multi-generation households as a specific family form and arrangement is rather scarce. Patchwork/reconstituted families are another central and increasing family form that has been much debated in political and public discourse, but comparative research and data are virtually non-existing at the European level. Living apart together and commuter families are relatively new research subjects in Europe. Again, the database is fragmentary, partly because it is rather difficult to collect (statistical) data from families that do not share common household and because of the fact that they are not stable phenomena. This is the case also with divorced and reconstituted families keeping in mind that in those situations, family members (especially children) have family relations both within and outside the household. Increasing mobility within and between countries (incl. migration outside Europe) will make different family forms and arrangements issue that is even more crucial in (comparative) family research.

This first state of the art on new and rare family types in Europe clearly points out that broader and more specific research is crucially needed. We should know more about choices people make in their family life, but also about social and economic forces and processes that might enforce people to certain decisions and arrangements. We would also need to know more about the decision-making processes in family formation of different kinds. Moreover, we need more in dept knowledge of how people live as families in different family forms, and of different family cultures. More research is also needed of the consequences of changes in family structures and arrangements both at the macro and micro levels. There is a lack of comparative longitudinal studies on the dissolution of couple relationships. Research on divorce has focused on the economic consequences on ex-partners (in particular on women), especially concerning the risk of falling into poverty. There are very few comparative studies concerning changes in the relations within and outside the family in situations of marital instability. For example, about the consequences of parents’ divorce/separation for the children economically, legally, socially and psychologically, and how parents organise their post-divorce family life and parenthood as sharing of parenthood after divorce has become the current ideal in many European countries. In addition, life course perspective into family life is important to take into account with more focus on different cultural and ethnic groups, values, behaviour, and political issues.

***Current conditions of European families*** (Chapter 3) cover a variety of topics from housing and physical living environment into migration, from poverty into influence of media and technology in family life. What connects these themes is the question of social inequality, which penetrates all the themes. Analysis of social inequalities and class structures in European societies has not



been high on the research agenda over the past decade. More research is needed on how social inequality impacts on family life and how it is reproduced within the family.

Given the major role of the family in the reproduction and transmission of social inequality, it is essential to have more information on social inequalities and social mobility; how they are evolving in European societies and what are the best measures to be used in order to capture and describe social inequalities today (income, education, occupational status, social mobility life chances, etc.). Secondly, there is very little research comparing types of family interactions and functioning; how they relate to social and economic inequalities across the different EU countries. A third research gap is related to the lack of research on the inequality “strategies” and “processes” whereby families reproduce as well as deepen social advantage. Given the overriding importance of educational attainment, it would be important to focus in greater depth on the nexus between families’ inequality strategies and their relationship to the educational context and systems (including childcare and pre-schooling), in the EU countries. It is also important to recognise the differences between families and children living in rural or peripheral and urban areas in terms of education levels, educational opportunities, and attainment. Review of existing research points to the need to take into account the complexity and non-linearity of the connections between social determinants and family life.

What comes to *families and poverty*, the dominant focus in comparative research on income poverty provides a very specific outlook, ignoring the experience of poverty and how it affects family life and individuals within families (e.g. loss of dignity, choice, and control; limited access to social capital and to assets of other kinds; poor health; poor housing; few opportunities; and an uncertain future). Social analysis of families and poverty would also benefit from a reinforcement of the household/family as a unit of analysis. This does not imply that the individual should no longer be the main unit of reference, otherwise the risk of rendering invisible the specific vulnerabilities of specific groups (e.g. children) within families would increase. However, it would be extremely important to go into greater depth in the analysis of the individual in the context of a particular household/family. Furthermore, there should be more research on the origins, experiences, or consequences of poverty and material deprivation within families. Production and transmission of poverty and material deprivation should deserve particular attention in future research.

*Housing, neighbourhood, and physical environment* are closely linked with questions of social inequality. It would be also important to study those components of living environment as a whole as they are closely connected and influential in the everyday life of families. Even though there has been European research projects dealing with living environment, most of them have been done before the enlargement of the EU excluding a large proportion of countries, and do not connect with a family perspective. There are also differences not only between but also within countries e.g. between urban and rural areas having their own specific problems. This should gain more attention in future research with specific commitment on the development of the local communities in different areas.

Research on *immigration* in Europe is extensive and plural. Gaps in current research are still many; here we take up especially those referring to family and integration issues. Many of the research gaps identified above also concerns migrant families but in addition, there are specific questions to be mentioned. It may be argued that family migration has been much less studied than other related issues.

The changing patterns of international migration at the turn of the century add further challenges for future research. New forms of mobility are becoming common (incl. work-related migration

within the EU, student migration and retirement migration, female-led migration), surpassing the traditional settlement migration known until recently. Areas also deserving better scrutiny are the impact of family reunification on immigrants' strategies (settlement, integration, and participation); the impact of specific legislation on family life; the consequences of recent policy restrictions for family reunification and formation; and the use of irregular channels by family members for immigration and integration. At the family level, more research is needed on immigrant families and changes resulting from migration. Some of them are related to family strategies, e.g. the role of families in migration decisions; the constraints exerted by the economic and policy framework on collective strategies; and the role of the family in promoting the overall integration of its members. Others are related to family structures (e.g. transnational families, marriage migration and mixed marriages), and the impact on couple relationships and children. Finally, changes within the family resulting from immigration should also be further analysed (incl. the role of migrant men in families and changes in masculinity). With regard to the second generation, research is needed especially on educational performance, mobility within the labour market; and the impact of irregular immigrants' conditions over their children's life chances.

Based on a review of the available research linking *family wellbeing and media environments*, there are some recommendations for the future research. Research in this area needs to better converge family studies literature within sociology and media and communications literature. Much of the research done so far is from media and communications studies, although all questions at the heart of family priorities (generational communication, parenting, child-raising practices, and relationships within the family) are intensely mediated questions. While a number of projects on media consumption have been conducted, more research is needed on a pan-European comparative level. Rather little is known concerning different age groups, especially the media consumption of older people. While media use, especially digital media use of young people, is being heavily researched, little research distinguishes or compares "youth" or "children" by age and other sociological variables. Furthermore, findings across Europe on social class, ethnicity, and cultural differences remain scarce in terms of media literacy, education, and civic participation. There is little research taking into account media environments as a whole and produces results on the entire media diets of individuals and families. More research is also required on the opportunities, skills, and risks related to media and new technology, and how these are divided between social classes and educational levels in society.

***Genders and generations in families*** (Chapter 4) is also a wide research area, which has mainly concentrated on the gender division of paid and unpaid work in families and reconciliation of work and family life. These studies have assumed, explicitly or implicitly, a heterosexual couple with young children and thus, there is urgent need to study these issues also in other family phases (e.g. families with school age children), family types, and situations. Family research and labour market research should be better linked, and the role of the labour market, companies and employers should be analysed in relation to the decision-making within families. Also links between economic constrains and family decisions are important in future research. Furthermore, research would be needed not only about the division of paid and unpaid work but also about the division of resources in families.

*Gender* is highly influential in partnering and parenting and gendered practices within families seem to change very slowly. Still, we can talk about "new parenthood" and a more active role of men in families can be recognised. Thus, we would need research from a male perspective on partnership, parenting and caring work within families, on the "child effect" on men in paid

work, and concerning (de-)gendering strategies of young parents, who struggle with or adapt to the re-traditionalisation of gender roles after the birth of the first child.

In general, *transitions to parenthood* still seem to be a white spot, especially in comparative research, and future research should concentrate on illuminating the decision-making processes, including practices and self-concepts of young women and men in the process of becoming (or not) mothers and fathers. This means exploring simultaneously different transitions and trajectories, situated within multi-faceted contexts, and how they intersect, e.g. educational trajectories, transitions into parenthood, youth cultural transitions, gender transitions, developments in important policy contexts etc. Obviously, this calls for interdisciplinary approaches, as well as for a perspective on intersecting social inequalities according to gender, ethnicity, educational levels etc. Research on transitions into parenthood has to bring together macro-, meso- and micro levels of research. There is need for multi-level approach and research design, that integrates the individual/household level, (national) policy level and company/work organisational level.

What comes to *generations* within families, the recent focus has been on the care relations between generations, but further research is also needed in this area. However, generational relations are not only a care issues. There is a need for future research on the relations between parents and children, young people and their parents, especially concerning the trend that young people are leaving home later than before and its consequences to their transitions to adulthood, on the role of grandparents, and on multigenerational family as a family form.

*Violence in families* is highly gendered but also a generational issue. It is important to implement cross-national comparative prevalence studies in order to compare particular features of violence against women, men, children, and older people. There is little research studying the experience of family violence, and the types of families and social conditions associated with violence; there is a need for more in-depth knowledge on the meanings of violence for victims and perpetrators for a better understanding of the contexts of violence. There are still very few studies on violence against older people in Europe, and on how violence is related to family and care relations. It is also important to analyse the impact of different legislations and specific policies and interventions in reducing (or not) family violence.

***Family policies and social care policies in Europe*** (Chapter 5) have been studied more than other family related issues on the European comparative level. That is most likely because of the crucial political and economic importance of these policies on the labour market, work-family reconciliation, and on gender equality. Probably, it is also easier to gather data from policy level phenomena rather than issues and processes at the family level.

The diversity of family policy measures poses the challenge to comparative research while systems and situations are often very country-specific. Furthermore, because of the crosscutting character of family policy and the impact of other policies on families, family dimension in the whole policy-making process (e.g. employment, health, urban development) should be further studied. For example, housing policy has not been considered as a family policy issue in comparative research even if in many countries it has a crucial importance. Thus, research on the connections of family policies with other (social) policy measures and family mainstreaming would be fruitful. As in other fields of family research, different family types (e.g. same-sex couples and their families, reconstituted families) and different family stages (e.g. families with school age children, families of older people) should be recognised in family policy research.

In political terms, there are three important fields and questions: countries learning from each other, reactions to the current economic crisis, and responding to future challenges. Learning from each other depends on understanding why a certain measure was introduced in another place, why it worked there or why it did not – also negative lessons are helpful. With regard to the current economic crisis, it is important to research the (long-term) consequences for national family policies. An area interesting for policy-makers is international benchmarking: often, only international comparison can show, how family-friendly a country is in a specific area, e.g. childcare or cash benefits. Another field of interest is of course the situation of families, their current and future challenges. For this, family policy reporting in the member states is important. Furthermore, the evaluation of policies has gained more importance; but the necessary tools to investigate the effects of a certain policy are underdeveloped in many countries (Hantrais, 2009: 56). An important question for policy analysis is not only what governments do but also why they do it. This is however, even more difficult to analyse. For example, why did some countries obviously manage to modernise their family policies and adapt them to current challenges, while others seem not willing or able to do so? More in-depth, qualitative comparisons are needed to understand and explain the family policy reforms and the policy processes.

Furthermore, in addition to the state, the inclusion of other important family policy actors is highly relevant in comparative research. This concerns the role of NGOs, local family policies, and occupational family policies, which is of major importance for the reconciliation of work and family life (e.g. family-friendly working hours, workplace childcare facilities, organisational cultures). As regarding to local policies, a new methodological elaboration of the Good Practice Policy model would be useful; an evaluation system is needed to define and share good practices.

A further challenge for future research is to improve the understanding of the implications of social inequalities for policy-making. If the structure of occupational and educational derived class inequalities remains unchanged, then economic support and cash benefits for families is not likely to change the shape of social inequalities between families. Thus, it is also important to study other policies important for addressing family-related class inequalities. Research on the impact of current family policies on gender and social inequalities across and within families, including the use and take-up of entitlements and benefits by families from different social groupings, would also help to improve evidence-based policy-making.

What comes to the existing gaps in comparative social care and social services research, privately (commercially) provided care is still largely ignored in comparative studies, even if its importance is clearly increasing. In the care of older people administrative, organisational, and professional boundaries, especially between health and social care still make it difficult to study the whole range of services, and even research in this field diverges between disciplines. One of the future issues is certainly the use of technology both in formal and informal care. Furthermore, outcomes of services and care policies are highly important to study. There is also need for more comparative local studies and recognition of local actors and local differences in social care and social services. On the other hand, there is a need to study globalisation of care (e.g. transnational relations of care), to put Europe in the world, but also the role of EU; what does EU integration mean for care policies and for service provision.

Informal care and the role of families are crucial and should be studied more as the overwhelming majority of care is (and probably will be) provided in families. It is important to notice that reconciliation of work and care is not only a childcare issue, but should include adult care. For example, spousal care and men as caregivers are widely ignored in existing research.

Abuse in care relations is still an understudied issue. Furthermore, family members are not only care providers but also decision-makers concerning formal care arrangements and purchasers of private services. There is very little comparative research on social care for family members with disabilities, both children and adults. Furthermore, lack of comparative research in the field of social welfare services for children and families is certainly a major gap in existing research. Research would also be needed on care inequalities, e.g. who has access to services, care rich and care poor individuals and households, variations depending on life situations. A further important issue is the consequences of formal support of informal care (e.g. cash-for-care - schemes). What have been widely missing in existing research are the perspectives of the care receivers and service users themselves, and what kind of expectations citizens have towards care and how these expectations will change in the future.

In addition to substantial gaps in existing research, most of the Existential Field Reports pointed out *gaps in methodology and data* in European comparative research. Within the field of cross-national, comparative research, there are different methodological orientations as can be found also from this research review. The main division goes between macro-level multi-national comparisons using quantitative data and micro-level, small-scale studies using qualitative or mixed methods. Most of the large multi-national projects reviewed in this report have used either national statistical information, statistics provided by Eurostat, and/or large multinational surveys and databases, such as The European Community Household Panel (ECHP)<sup>37</sup>, Gender and Generations Surveys<sup>38</sup> (GGP), Survey of Health and Retirement of Europe<sup>39</sup> (SHARE), and the European Social Survey<sup>40</sup> (ESS). Even if the situation has been improved in last decade, the need for comparative, harmonised, and often longitudinal data has been identified in most of the reports, as well as the need for more in-depth qualitative research.

Conducting research on families is often a difficult endeavour, especially when undertaken on an international scale. Family life and related processes make up a rather intimate sphere of life, which is only to a limited extent accessible to either social survey research or administrative data collection. Data restriction laws might legitimately protect the integrity of the family, but at the same time make it difficult to arrive at a representative overview of relevant family forms and processes. In comparative family research, the mere *number* of available indicators thus often is inherently restricted.

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<sup>37</sup> *The European Community Household Panel* (ECHP) is a panel survey in which a sample of households and persons have been interviewed year after year. These interviews cover a wide range of topics concerning living conditions. They include detailed income information, financial situation in a wider sense, working life, housing situation, social relations, health, and biographical information of the interviewed. The total duration of the ECHP was 8 years, running from 1994-2001 (8 waves).

<sup>38</sup> *Generations and Gender Survey* is a panel survey from the member countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It consists of a nationally representative sample of 18-79 year-old resident population in each participating country with at least three panel waves and an interval of three years between each wave. The contextual databases are designed to complement micro-level survey data with macro-level information on policies and aggregate indicators.

<sup>39</sup> *The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe* (SHARE) is a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel database of micro data on health, socio-economic status and social and family networks of more than 45,000 individuals aged 50 or over. 11 countries contributed data to the 2004 SHARE baseline study. The second wave of data collection took place in 2006-07. The survey's third wave collected detailed retrospective life histories in sixteen countries in 2008-09 (see <http://www.share-project.org/>).

<sup>40</sup> *The European Social Survey* (the ESS) is an academically driven social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. Now preparing for its fifth round, the survey covers more than 30 nations and employs the most rigorous methodologies. A repeat cross-sectional survey, it has been funded through the European Commission's Framework Programmes, the European Science Foundation and national funding bodies in each country.

Most survey and administrative analyses largely focus on the household as the main statistical unit. More differentiated family relationships, e.g. those in commuter families, patchwork families or in divorced families, are often difficult to grasp. Family relationships that go beyond the mere household unit thus remain a “blind spot” in contemporary family research, and new methodologies and data collection methods should be developed to get a hold of the flexibility of family forms and relations. Only very few surveys specifically focus on the family unit, and often they are not repeated at regular intervals and thus are inadequate to establish meaningful time series.

Even if indicators are available, cross-national comparability of data on families frequently proves to be a problem due to the frequent need to employ data from different statistical sources. Administrative data initially often originates from various nation-specific statistical offices that frequently differ in the definition of central terms and concepts due to the application of different “statistical traditions”. In data gathering and collection even the seemingly straightforward categories, e.g. such as women’s involvement in paid work might be measured in a range of different ways, and even more the definition and measurement of unpaid work is varying. Survey research, e.g. through direct interview with respondents on a representative scale, occasionally represents a methodological alternative to overcome these restrictions of administrative data, but this form of data collection again is inherently faced with own problems, such as desired response behaviour or difficulties in access to specific target groups. There would be a need for oversampling with some specific groups (e.g. immigrant families). Even if on an international scale, data are available using similar or cross-nationally comparable concepts; their *availability* might differ significantly between countries as well as between time periods. This problem is especially pronounced for the new member states of the Central and Eastern Europe, where data are not or only scarcely available for the period before the system transformation in the 1990s.

One of the problems in existing comparative research is the *country coverage*. Overall, some countries have been more popular than others in the existing European comparative research, while other countries are understudied. Today, large survey-based studies already cover a large number of member states (often twenty or more), but in more detailed and focused comparisons there are still some “favourite” countries like Germany, the UK, Sweden, France, quite often also the Netherlands, Italy and Spain. Often the countries studied have been chosen to represent some welfare (or care) regime typology (usually Esping-Andersen’s), which have been shown in this review to be rather inaccurate starting point for country selection because of the diversity and exceptions within the country clusters. Regional comparisons are mostly based on geographical closeness: Northern Europe, Southern Europe/ Mediterranean countries, Western Europe/ old member states, and Eastern Europe/ CEE countries/ new member states. The last group is covered the least, especially in those studies dated before the enlargement of European Union in 2005. These kinds of groupings seem to have varying usefulness, depending on the issues studied. For example, for economic issues and housing the groups based on geography are useful since differences between regions are evident and countries in each group have quite a lot in common. Such groups are however not very helpful e.g. in comparing family policy systems.

What comes to *availability of data in specific issues*, unpaid work and time use in families provide an example. Main methods of collecting information about household labour have been survey questions and time diaries, but other methods such as qualitative in-depth interviews, direct observations, and discourse analyses have also been used. Low cost and high response rates are the main advantages of survey instruments. However, in different time use surveys (e.g. European Social Survey (ESS), European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) or the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)), direct questions vary considerably in their

wording. Time diaries provide an alternative instrument (e.g. Harmonised European Time Use Survey, Multinational Time Use Study – HETUS). Despite some drawbacks, like low response rates, and the problems of accounting for parallel activities time diary methodology provides reliable estimates of time use patterns in households. Because time-use survey (TUS) methods have not been harmonised for a long time, nationally produced data are not comparable. Eurostat started to support projects with the goal to harmonise time use statistics in the EU in the early 1990s and was mandated to develop guidelines for Harmonised European Time Use Surveys (HETUS) in order to ensure that the surveys of the member states are comparable. Most recent guidelines were published in 2009 (Eurostat, 2009b). Most European national statistical institutes have taken them into account since the late-1990s. Some countries, however, differ from the recommendations to a varying degree, national time use surveys are therefore only comparable to a certain level. Currently the online HETUS database contains comparable data from fifteen countries.

The variety of ways domestic work is measured limits the comparability of the results of different studies. Research in the field of both paid work and unpaid work could benefit from applying longitudinal survey data. Such information however is rare. The only comparative research programme that makes an effort towards this end is the Generations and Gender Programme<sup>41</sup> with several EU member states producing panel survey data on demographic but also social developments – including information on the division of work. The great variability of methods and approaches applied puts serious restrictions also on establishing trends over time. Findings from two or more distinct studies, carried out on data from different points of time are rarely comparable. Only a very small number of comparative studies exist that attempt to explore changes over time.

There are slightly different problems in studying specific groups of individuals or families e.g. immigrant families. Again, there is a need for more complete and comparative data. Concepts and sources vary, and several areas are badly captured. Beyond the description of some major variables, an in-depth comparative study of immigrants' characteristics, families and the second generation is barely possible under the current datasets. Longitudinal studies, which enable us to understand the mobility experience, are also generally not available.

One of the problems with the existing databases is that the data available is not necessarily suited to the specific research interests, and such data gets old rather quickly, especially what comes to family policies or formal service systems in individual countries. Quite often comparative studies rely on national expert reports from individual countries, expertise of the research team and/or previous research available. Methodological problem with these kinds of data sources is first of all its reliability and coverage. Expert reports might vary depending on who the expert is. There might be also problems in finding previous research and other written documents, especially from smaller language areas.

Above, mainly problems with large databases and quantitative comparative studies have been discussed. There is also need more qualitative comparative research that would allow analysing e.g. decision-making processes within families and perspectives of individual family members to provide more inside view of the family life. Many research questions concerning families and family policies cannot be answered by using quantitative methodology. In the field of family policy research, qualitative designs allow investigating specificities of individual cases while keeping the comparative advantages. Meso (or even micro) level analyses are much less

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<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/pau/ggp/Welcome.html>.

frequent, though they have many insights to offer. In policy analysis, more in-depth, qualitative comparisons are needed to understand and explain policy reforms and processes, i.e. speaking in terms of the policy cycle: how problems are defined, the political agenda set, policies formulated, the political decisions made and implemented, possibly evaluated and finally either terminated or re-formulated. Small-scale qualitative comparisons can also advance theory building while large-scale comparisons mainly test existing theories.



## 7. Conclusions

Findings of the Existential Field Reports provide a heterogeneous picture of European families and family policies with regional, national, and local variations, as presented in the existing comparative research since the mid-1990s. Still, some general conclusions and major trends can be drawn.

Most prominently, the overall size of families has declined, following a general decline in total fertility rates. This development has taken place all over Europe since the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, decisions for both marriage and family formation have shifted to ever-later ages. The presence of young people within the family of origin has prolonged. This is connected to so-called extended adolescence, with increased importance of individualised and personalised media and communication technologies in the lives of young people. Due to the postponement of family decisions, fertility rates all over Europe lie below the “net production level” of around 2.1. In some countries, fertility levels are even below 1.5. The aging of population is closely related to this and effects on all generations.

The importance of marriage as a social institution has declined. Especially in the Northern Europe, *marriage and family formation have become decoupled*, as an increasing share of children is born out-of-wedlock. Europe is also facing decreasing marriage rates, increasing divorce rates and conjugal instability, and increasing rates of remarriages – in other words, increasing diversity on family forms and family relations. Consequently, a variety of different alternative family types is weakening the idea of a standard “nuclear family model”. However, couples still often institutionalise their relationship after the birth of the first child. Besides, European couples still intend to have at least two children. Therefore, it is possible to claim that in most European countries the nuclear family model still makes up the prevailing form of family life, and the dominant idea of a “proper” family. Of special concern should be - if we think of family policy - the rising number of lone-parent families, which are mostly families of lone mothers with their children, considering their high risk of poverty as existing research has shown the current and future consequences especially for children growing up in poor families.

Not by accident, sociologists have characterised current cultural and societal condition with concepts such as *individualisation, subjectivisation of norms, and the erosion of the so-called normal biography*. Quite often media, with its new representations of family models, identities, and authority models, has a connection to both the growing individualism and the rise of new kinds of social worlds. It is a well-known fact that children’s use of the internet and other modern media products continues to grow, and education systems from primary school through university are increasingly reliant on digital culture and modern information and communication technology. The voice of authority no longer resides merely in the spheres of industrial time traditions, such as the school or the family. In family research and on a larger scale in the whole sociological theory, it is believed that *there is a slow but sure erosion of both the traditional form of work, based on full-time employment, clear-cut occupational assignments, and career pattern over the lifecycle, and the traditional nuclear family, as a self-evident model and the only right way of being a family*.

Despite the existence of some general trends across Europe mentioned above, we are still observing a large variety of different, nationally or regionally specific patterns. Opposing cases are represented by the Nordic countries, on the one hand, with their considerable move away

from traditional family model, and Southern European countries on the other hand, where family patterns are still much in line with the traditional model.

The most marked change in the field of division of paid work is the increasing level of female employment. Female participation at the labour force across the EU is constantly increasing in virtually each member state. Therefore, the male-breadwinner model is being increasingly replaced by alternative models. The most powerful challenger is the two full-time earner model, but it is not yet and probably will not be the dominant one in the near future. In addition, a great variety of coexisting models can be observed, even a female-breadwinner patterns is not completely unknown. Therefore, it is possible to argue that although the dominance of the male-breadwinner solution has diminished, no prevailing model has emerged so far.

The increasing level of female employment is connected to some re-arrangements in the division of domestic work at home, though we can see only limited changes. Employed women do less housework than non-employed women do, but in overall women continue to take a remarkably bigger share of domestic work even in dual-earner families. Therefore, it is possible to say that some basic patterns of family management have remained intact in Europe, although again, cross-country differences are remarkable and changes are constantly in motion. Most importantly, the division of paid and especially unpaid work continues to be gendered. Furthermore, it seems to be quite resistant to policy interventions.

There are also some changes in the field of parenting and care. The existing research provides evidence that there are new representations of parenthood especially among young people. The crisis of the father as the authority of the family has led to new models of fatherhood, and there are signs of a new motherhood as well. EU policy is also interested in fathers as carers and is encouraging men's caring role and fatherhood. In this sense, we can talk about "father-sensitive" policies. However, it appears that a conservative vision of gender roles still prevails and the actual distribution of domestic work still penalises women. Traditions are still strong in this sense. The "dual carer-dual earner" society seems to remain an empty or only a theoretical concept in most of the Europe and the "dual earner/one and a half earner-female carer" models are the most common ones across European Union.

We can recognise some changes in family life and in family relations, such as the new role of grandparents as supporters of their children and grandchildren, the growing meaning of new representations of parenthood, and the modern family as a negotiation and affection based family. Still this new reality, if it can even be called "new", has its contradictions and ambivalences.

European countries have broadly valued social equality and solidarity. However, in contemporary thinking, it has been argued that the question of social equality has become more problematic and complex. The classic social structure - peasants, working-class, middle-class, upper class - has given way to a heterogeneous divisions and the traditional concept of social class is not any more seen very useful in social sciences. Social inequalities are not anymore clearly and solely class based. Instead of a class society, social scientists more often talk about individualisation, agency, biographical choice, reflexivity, and diversity. This does not mean that the social fabric in Europe has become or is becoming uniform or that social inequality would be decreasing.

In the new complex social structure there are at least two distinctive trends, on the one hand a growing uniformity of life-styles (caused by consumption and the media), and on the other, the

emergence of a dual, polarised society. The winner is a professionally mobile and qualified “super-class”, including most middle-class people. It seems, according to the existing research, that middle-class families, if they have two earners, well-educated parents, and no more than two children, have all possibilities of making a good living. Perhaps even the contemporary family policy in the European Union favours these families. Educational expansion we are witnessing in the EU, advantages couples with higher education and allow them to give their children more resources, cultural and social capital. The loser is a poorly integrated “underclass” including a majority of non-EU immigrant people, unemployed people, and unskilled people. Their families are vulnerable to economic hardship, poor housing, health, educational opportunities and attainment, and social mobility.

In many European countries, family policies have gained tremendous importance in recent years. Reasons for this are certainly the increased awareness of the challenges of family life and family relations, decrease in fertility rates and ageing of the population, labour shortage caused by these demographic trends, and thus questions concerning childcare, and reconstruction processes of welfare states, just to mention few.

Childcare services have been one of the most important family policy issue and reform areas during the last years, including leave policies and activation of fathers. It seems that the Nordic countries act here as pioneers. In most countries, there are trends of expansion of childcare services. EU policy strongly promotes the labour market participation of women and mothers and therefore public childcare provision. An important or even a general trend has been named by many researchers as “*care goes public*” or “*defamilisation*” of childcare. This means institutionalisation and professionalisation of care, especially in the field of childcare and early childhood education. It is important to notice that also educational aims have recently gained more attention. Still, social care remains a combination of formal and informal care. More research should be directed to different forms of informal care, including growing globalisation of care. The role of families and especially women in families is and will be remarkable in providing care for children, old people, and other adults needing care. In spite of strong defamilialising processes, there are also trends of re-familialisation, especially in adult care.

Increasing number of European countries has established family ministries emphasising the growing importance of family (policy) issues. However, institutionalisation does not necessarily mean strengthening of the welfare state. Without doubt, its role is crucial, but there are other important actors, such as the third sector, NGOs, and the civil society, the market and private sector, labour market actors, and families themselves.

For the time being, there are 27 member states in the EU. There are differences and variations between countries and within countries. Europe is rich in differences. On the other hand, based on the existential field reports, there are certain general trends discussed above, some weak and some stronger, running through all European Union countries. We are probably heading into more similarities in many areas of family life, family relations, and family policy. Often asked question against existing empirical findings pointing at diversity is, if it is still possible to identify country clusters or welfare regimes. To some extent, it is possible to recognise the division into three regimes; liberal, conservative, and social-democratic identified by Esping-Andersen, or a more nuanced division into five regions; Nordic (or Northern) countries, Southern (sometimes Mediterranean) countries, Continental countries, the UK, and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Although these groupings work in some respects, there are always exceptions and “however”. Most researchers agree that the main differences can be found between Southern and Northern parts of Europe, other countries locating in-between.

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