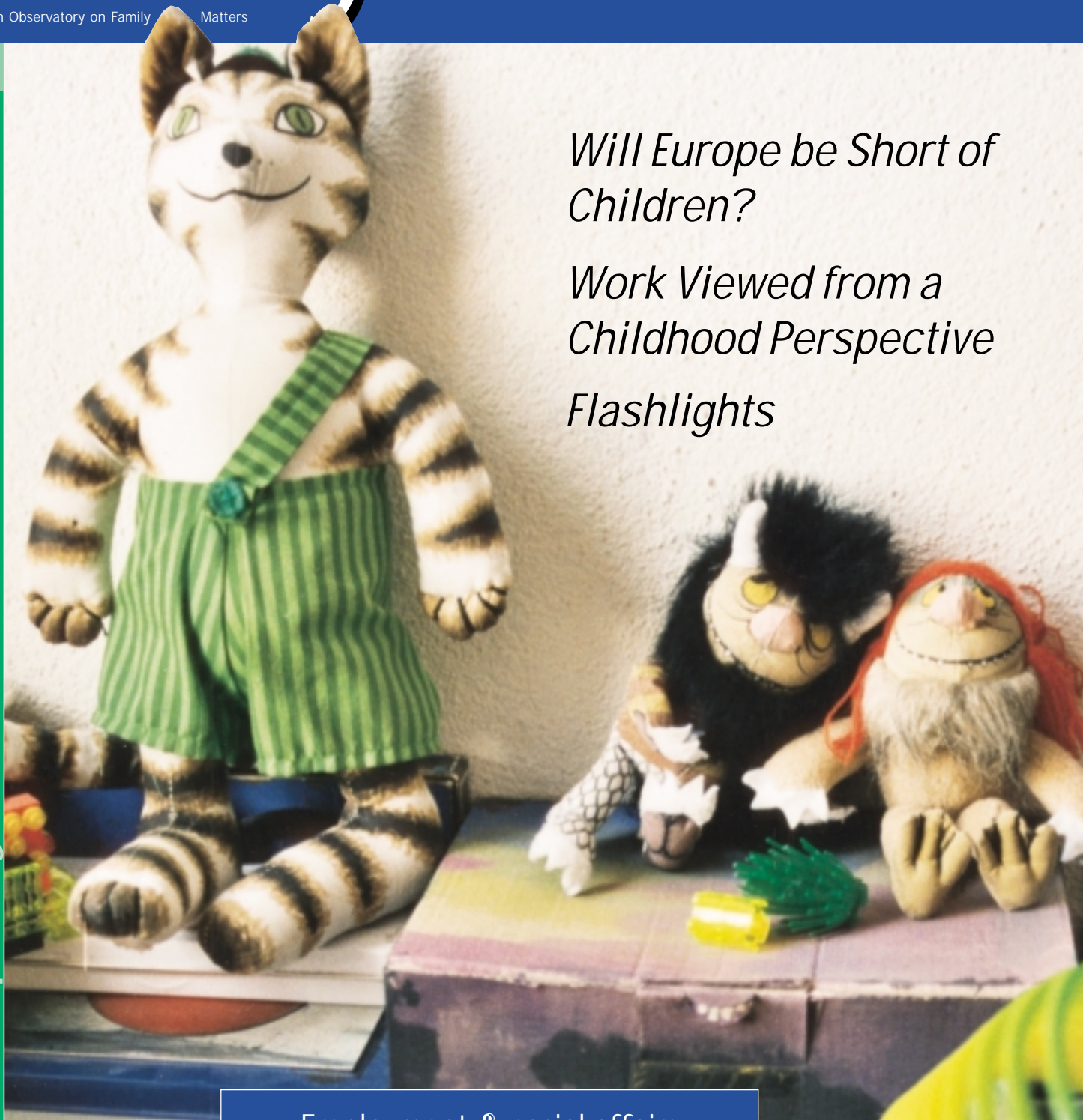


10th Anniversary

# Family Observer

European Observatory on Family Matters

Equality between women and men

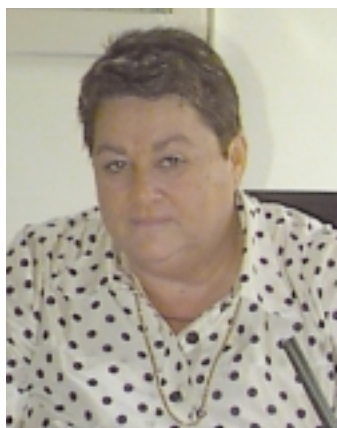


*Will Europe be Short of Children?*  
*Work Viewed from a Childhood Perspective*  
*Flashlights*

Employment & social affairs



European Commission



European society is changing. Couples, children, marriage, families, no longer occupy the same place in society that they used to. A declining birth-rate in almost all Member States of the Union, fewer marriages, more couples living together and children born out of wedlock and a rising divorce rate, this is the patchwork of features which today influence the family unit and, indeed, society as a whole. Interest about the situation of families and its implications for employment and social policy has long been expressed in different fora. Its distinguishing feature has been the growing conviction of the need for increased international co-operation on family issues as part of the global effort to

advance social progress and development.

Although the Community has no direct competence in the area of family policy, it has increasingly turned its attention to examining and understanding the social and economic implications of trends and change in society on families. Within the framework of its policy on equal opportunities for women and men, in particular, the Commission has undertaken several initiatives aiming at reconciling work and family life.

Indeed, the challenge of achieving better reconciliation between these two aspects of everyday life is central to a whole range of social issues. Changes in the composition of labour force, new forms of work organisation, the restructuring of social protection, changes in the distribution of caring work between women and men, all these are issues whose bearing is crucial on families.

The Maternity Directive, the Parental Leave Directive, the Part Time Work Directive, the Recommendation on Childcare are all examples of the European Union's commitment

to supporting both women and men in their roles, both at work and within the family, while the Employment guidelines give an important impetus to the objective of reconciliation between work and family life. The social and political situation has undergone profound changes in the past decade in Europe. New family patterns and new concepts of the role of men and women have emerged. The European Union has an important role to play in identifying the similarities and differences in the ways that Member States react to these changes and also in stimulating Union-wide debate on the subject of the family, by encouraging Member States to share information and pool their experiences while, at the same time, respecting the principle of subsidiarity. This is exactly the task which the *Family Observer* is called on to accomplish, by serving as a platform for discussion and exchange of experience and ideas between Member States on family matters.

#### Odile Quintin

Acting Deputy Director General  
European Commission  
Directorate-General for Employment  
and Social Affairs

The publication of the *Family Observer* coincides with the 10th anniversary of the European Observatory on Family Matters. The importance of this institution should be duly acknowledged: Because family policy remains a national competence of the EU-Member States, it is all the more important to monitor and analyse developments affecting families and family policies on a Union-wide level. In the past few years, Europe has become increasingly aware of the family's social relevance. Looking at other countries can be instrumental for drawing the proper conclusions from the latest developments and for implementing up-to-date measures and new concepts on family policy. This not only applies to the challenge posed by a changing population but also to such issues as the need to find better ways of reconciling family and work in a dynamic European economy. What holds true for other issues addressed by family policies also applies here: When dealing with this topic, family politicians are

The *Family Observer* is a publication of the European Observatory on Family Matters. It is produced on behalf of the European Commission as part of the series "Employment and social affairs". The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs.

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

If you are interested in receiving the electronic newsletter "5mail" from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, please send an e-mail to [5mail@dg5.cec.be](mailto:5mail@dg5.cec.be). The newsletter is published on a regular basis in English, French and German.

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1999

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Printed in Belgium



Martin Bartenstein

well advised to pay special attention to the childhood perspective.

The European Observatory on Family Matters has been co-ordinated by the Austrian Institute for Family Studies since 1998. I take great satisfaction in passing on to the public the proven quality standards achieved by this Austrian research institute within the first five years of its existence. I hope you will find *Family Observer* interesting reading material.

Martin Bartenstein  
Minister of Family Affairs, Austria

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## Welcome to the Family Observer!

A new team and 15 national experts of the European Observatory on Family Matters have compiled this magazine for you. Short country reports, new scientific insights and an innovative layout should help you discover new approaches to the topic of family. To better achieve this end, we even invited artists to participate in a competition jointly organised with Lioba Reddeker, the Federal Curator of Arts in Austria. The winner has illustrated this issue with photos depicting a child's everyday life. In this way, we have tried to design the magazine so that it would not only focus on the perspective of adults, but also include that of children. This is intended to mirror everyday life, where the views of all family members must be accommodated.

In a European publication, the different levels of knowledge of a multivariate readership are a great challenge. Many are well

informed on the situation in their own country but might be a little less up-to-date about their neighbouring countries. With our brief country reports, we have tried to offer something for everybody. It would have been impossible to shed light over such a broad spectrum without the expertise of the Observatory's national experts. We take this opportunity to sincerely thank them for their collaboration and support.

We hope that the *Family Observer* will accomplish our aims and meet your expectations. Feel free to use the questionnaire on page 41 for your suggestions, wishes or comments. We are eagerly looking forward to your response!

Irene Kernthaler and  
Sylvia Trnka



# 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the European Observatory on Family Matters



Irene Kernthaler • Sylvia Trnka • Helmut Wintersberger

**W**ill Europe die out? How do Europeans want to organise their family life? Is there progress regarding equal opportunities for women and men? How does the relationship between the generations of young and old develop in Europe? Besides important economic issues, these questions are on the minds of the people building the common European house. All the Member States of the European Union are undergoing major demographic and socio-economic changes. It does not suffice to merely deplore or applaud these developments. Without wanting to interfere in the national affairs of Member States, the European Commission is interested in understanding and objectively dealing with the topic of family. To facilitate this task, it established a European

Observatory. It addresses such issues as the family's economic role, the significance of families for intergenerational solidarity, and the legitimate wish on the part of women to actively and unconditionally participate in the labour force. These questions are to be dealt with primarily by providing regular information on population developments as well as family-relevant data. In pursuit of this aim, national experts in all EU Member States routinely collect and analyse data on the structure of households, the development of birth rates, and women's share in the labour market. Yet it is not only the data that keep on changing. Even the term 'family' is disputed at the European level. All debates focus on the crucial question, "What actually constitutes a family?" Although it has been the subject of heated debates for years – especially at the political level – the problem does not pose itself as such for the

Observatory. Studies have shown great diversity in the individual concepts of what makes up a family. When asked about her family, a child said that her divorced mother's new partner was not part of the family, but the dog and cat were. The experts working for the Observatory stick to the pragmatic solution of not defining what constitutes a family, but rather of describing and analysing it in line with the respective problems. As family policies may be based on different motivations, political measures having an impact on families also vary greatly within the European Union. Yet these different motives are hardly ever made explicit. This explains why family politicians of different national states use the same words in their meetings, though the terms denote completely different things. Facilitating mutual understanding by providing information and

knowledge is one of the Observatory's main tasks. The German sociologist Franz Xaver Kaufmann distinguishes seven different types of motives underlying family policies in Europe:

- The *family-as-institution rationale*: The family is an institution of intrinsic value, based on the model of the nuclear family.
- The *population rationale*: The family secures progeny; pro-birth policies are often based on this reasoning.
- The *economic rationale*: Here the focus is on the family's economic contributions to education, housework, caring for relatives, etc.
- The *society rationale*: Transcending economic considerations, the focus is on the family's contribution to all spheres of society.
- The *social rationale*: Here the focus is on the financial disadvantages caused by child-related expenses and the—at



### Co-ordination Team of the European Observatory on Family Matters

**Paloma Fernández de la Hoz** (equal opportunities; Catholic Academy of Social Sciences and Austrian Institute for Family Studies)

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**Helmut Wintersberger** (children's issues, head of coordination team; Austrian Institute for Family Studies)

least partial—renunciation of remunerative work. Proponents of this reasoning demand that these disadvantages be compensated.

- *The feminist/female rationale:* On the one hand, this reasoning shows that financial disadvantages tend to hit women only. On the other hand, the focus is on the equality of women and men with regard to work both within the family and at the workplace.
- *The children rationale:* Here the focus is on the child's well-being.

**F**rance, with its *alliance nationale* in pursuit of a pro-birth family policy already a century old, is a pioneer for an explicit family policy. Within the European Union, France currently is second only to Ireland in high birth rates. Belgium and Luxembourg also have centrally organised family

policies. In Scandinavia, family policy is integrated into social policy, and thus very equality-conscious. The German-speaking countries attach great importance to the topic of the family as such. In Germany, the protection of the family is even laid down in the Constitution, though the country has failed to develop a firm political will for a sustainable family policy. The Anglo-Saxon countries outrightly reject the idea of a family policy but do want to guarantee a minimal subsistence existence to particularly disadvantaged groups. In southern Europe, family policies are a rather new development connected to recent changes in society.

In his 1996 synthesis of national family policies, John Ditch, co-ordinator of the Observatory from 1994 to 1997, pinpoints the challenge posed to Europe by the family topic: "The prosperity of all member states of the European Union cannot be contradicted and is confirmed by economic indicators. When

compared with the economies in transition the individual economies of the EU are prosperous and successful. But there can be no room for self-congratulation and complacency: too many children experience lives of misery and deprivation because their parents lack employment; too many families live in sub-standard accommodation; too many fathers see too little of their partners and their children because they are working too many hours; too many women are excluded from the labour force, or held back within it; too many parents struggle with the precarious and sometimes irreconcilable demands of employment and family life; too many relationships break down in sadness and despair because too many demands have been made of the partners: in turn, the cost to those individuals, their children and wider society are too great to tolerate with indifference and equanimity."

**W**e are facing a strong tension between unprecedented technological and economic progress on the one hand, and the precarious situation of many families and individual family members on the other hand. One could compare this tension with a human being whose muscles and cognitive intelligence have grown in the course of evolution, while personal development has stagnated or even receded at the emotional and relationship level. In the modernisation process, the resources and margins of action have considerably expanded for private enterprises and public administrations; but this definitely does not apply to families and households in any comparable way. It certainly cannot be denied that the position of households as consumers was particularly strengthened, in the interest of

economic development. However, their overall importance for production and reproduction is hardly ever perceived. At the beginning of the 1990s, the focus was on the distorted competition between a public sector developed in the post-war period and the private economy. At the threshold to the 21st century, we have to ask ourselves, "Isn't there yet another serious distortion, namely in the competition between the two formal sectors—the market and the state on the one hand, and households and families on the other?" It is a well-known fact that the financial compensation for and social recognition of activities rendered both in the public sector and in the private

economy are markedly higher than those for activities carried out within the family. Nobody will deny that caring for children and the elderly is both socially necessary and valuable. We may therefore conclude that the family is seriously disadvantaged when it comes to competing with public institutions and private companies. Studying these disadvantages and identifying ways to overcome them could be one of the priorities of the European Observatory in the next few years.

The European Observatory was mentioned for the first time about ten years ago in Communication COM (89) 363 final of 8 August 1989, adopted by the Commission. The subsequent conclusions of the

Council of Ministers responsible for Family Affairs, meeting within the Council on 29 September 1989, led to the establishment of the European Observatory.

From an organisational point of view, the Observatory's network has seen a number of changes in the past decade. In part, these can be attributed to the fact that the European Union was expanded to include new Member States; in part, they are due to natural fluctuations in the network of national experts. In addition, the co-ordination team undergoes rotation at more or less regular intervals. In the first year, the

Observatory was co-ordinated from the Institut de l'Enfance et de la Famille in Paris. From 1990 to 1994, the Catholic University of Leuven was in charge of the Observatory, which was subsequently co-ordinated by the Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York until 1997.

The last decade has shown that the focus on family policies is too narrow. Because many other areas also play a role, the mandate of the European Observatory was expanded in 1999. This is also reflected in its new name: the former "European Observatory on National Family Policies" is now called the "European Observatory on Family Matters".

## ÖIF The Austrian Institute for Family Studies

*The Austrian Institute for Family Studies is an independent, non-profit organisation for the interdisciplinary, scientific and application-oriented analysis of the diversity and changes in familial relationships and structures from the perspective of children, women and men.*

### Projects and Areas of Research

#### FFS '96 – Individual Life Histories of Family and Working Conditions

For the first time in Austria, the Family and Fertility Survey (FFS) provides parallel biographies for 6,500 women and men. (In collaboration with the UN-ECE and 20 other countries.)

#### FAMSIM

The development of a prototype microsimulation model, based on FFS '96 data, to project and evaluate various measures in the field of family policy, is supported by the European Union.

#### Reconciling Family and Work

In 1995, a broad survey was conducted of types, costs and the financing of child care in Austria. In 1997, the Institute was asked to conduct a feasibility study on a general child-care voucher model that could be used either to pay for external child day care or for a parent to stay at home with the child. Another project studied the range and the impact of tele-commuting and home offices on family relations in Austria.

#### Prevention

Based on the model "Working Group: Parents-Teachers-Pupils: Partners in Sexual Education" which has been successfully applied

for ten years, training courses for moderators have been organised, and materials for teachers and pupils have been prepared.

#### Migration

Using actual court cases, traditional family patterns of immigrants to Austria are analysed.

#### Other Projects

Establishing a system to document and observe the socio-economic situation of families in Austria.

#### Services

The Institute maintains an information network in the field of family studies, including relevant organisations, individuals, databases, books and journals. Its own database contains up-to-date information from several sources, including the Austrian Statistical Office, Eurostat, the FFS '96 (for several countries) and is available to all interested parties.

#### Public Relations and Communication

The newsletter 'beziehungsweise' appears biweekly and provides easy access to important results of international and national family studies. It is an attempt to contribute to a better-informed discussion on the highly emotional topic of family issues.

#### Funding

The Institute is financed by projects commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family, the family departments of the Austrian Bundesländer, the European Union, Procter & Gamble and other institutions and companies.





# Will Europe be Short of Children?

## Population projections

Europe's population is ageing. In 20 years from now, this will be obvious not only on the park benches, but also on the labour market.

Wolfgang Lutz

Europe—often called the 'old continent'—truly deserves this name. The mean age of the European population is higher than that of any other region in the world, and it gets older year by year. In exact figures, the population of the European Union ages by 2.5 months each year or by two years each decade. This trend is likely to continue well into the next century. The proportion of the population below age 20 is likely to decline further. It will decrease from more than 23 percent to 19 percent, while the proportion of those above 60 will increase from 21 percent to 34 percent. Simultaneously, the mean age of the European

population, which presently is around 39 years, is likely to reach 45 years by 2030. Why does the mean age of the population increase less rapidly than the individual age of each one of us, which of course rises by one year annually? The difference between individual ageing and population ageing is that, in a population, new members at the very youngest age are being added every year. This is why we speak of population renewal or reproduction. Demographers measure reproduction rates as a key to understanding future population dynamics. At the individual level, there is no reproduction: Even our own children cannot perpetuate our individual life. On the societal level, it is evident that children

guarantee the survival and further evolution of the population. In a population closed to migration, the laws of population dynamics clearly indicate that, if reproduction is below the so-called replacement level (and life expectancy has an upper limit), a population is heading for significant population ageing, population decline, and ultimately for extinction. The lower the level of reproduction as measured by fertility rates, the faster this process is. However, with possible extinction still centuries away and significant population declines not yet foreseen for the next half century, the main reason for concern for Europe over the next few centuries is population ageing.



Who Really Cares How Old We'll All Get?

Like any other population, the European population is not an amorphous and homogeneous mass. It is structured according





to several important criteria. In Europe, we often refer to factors such as linguistic, cultural and national divides; but we sometimes tend to forget about the two most fundamental structures of any population, namely age and gender. Gender has recently received increasing attention, and most governments—as well as the European Commission—created special bodies to promote equal opportunities for

women and men. The age dimension has not yet received similar attention. For this reason, a number of European symposia recently focused on this issue (among them, “A Society for All Ages”, organised by DGV and the Austrian EU Presidency in Vienna in October 1998).

Why should one be interested in age? At the individual level, this sounds like a silly question.

Whether you are one year old, 10 years old, 40 years old or 80 years old is the most important determinant of how you feel and live, what you do and what you still expect from life. It is directly related to the process of socialisation, development of skills, body strength, maturing and, last not least, the remaining average life expectancy. On the level of society, this question is less obvious. Does it make any

difference whether half of the population is below age 15, as we see it in some developing countries, or whether half of the population is above age 40, as is already the case in several European countries? It is clear that it makes a difference regarding the demand for schools and homes for the elderly. It is also evident that it significantly affects the balance of payments in a ‘pay-as-you-go’

pension system in which those who are gainfully employed today pay for those who are entitled to retirement benefits. It is also expected to have significant implications for the labour market, and some fear that an older labour force will affect productivity in a negative way. And one may even go beyond economics and speculate about changing cultural

assumes a gain in life expectancy at birth of about three years over a period of 20 years. However, there is increasing scientific uncertainty about the limits to human longevity and, consequently, about the future gains yet to be expected. In contrast to the traditionally dominant view that we are already very close to such a limit (actually, the assumed

that of grandchildren, etc. For this reason, relatively small changes in fertility may have very significant consequences for the size and age structure of the future population. Despite its significance, we know rather little about the future trends of fertility in Europe.

The developments since the Second World War do not help us to anticipate the future trend: During the so-called 'baby-boom' of the early 1960s, most Western European countries had period fertility rates of above 2.5 children per woman. This was followed by a rapid fertility decline during the 1970s, bringing the Western European average down to about 1.6. Since then we have seen diverging trends, typically at levels well below replacement fertility. The most significant fertility declines were found in Mediterranean countries, with Italy and Spain having below 1.2 children per woman. There are also significant regional differences within countries. A further uncertainty is due to the fact that it is not clear to what degree these trends are caused by 'timing' changes, i.e. a postponement of births, and to

which extent they reflect the lifetime fertility of younger generations of European women (see box: Cohort and Period Fertility).

**Migration** is the most volatile of the three demographic components. The number of people entering or leaving a country can change from one year to the next due to political events or the enforcement of new legislation. The past ten years witnessed great ups and downs in European migration levels. The problem with projecting migration trends is not only the difficulty of foreseeing such political events, but also the fact that net migration is the result of two partly independent streams (migration in and migration out) which depend on the conditions in the sending as well as in the receiving countries.

A Greying European Labour Force: Probabilistic Population Projections for the European Union

Probabilistic projections are a rather recent methodological development of IIASA, the International Institute for

"Having children is defined as work."

preferences and changes in political power due to the changing age composition of those who have the right to vote come election time.

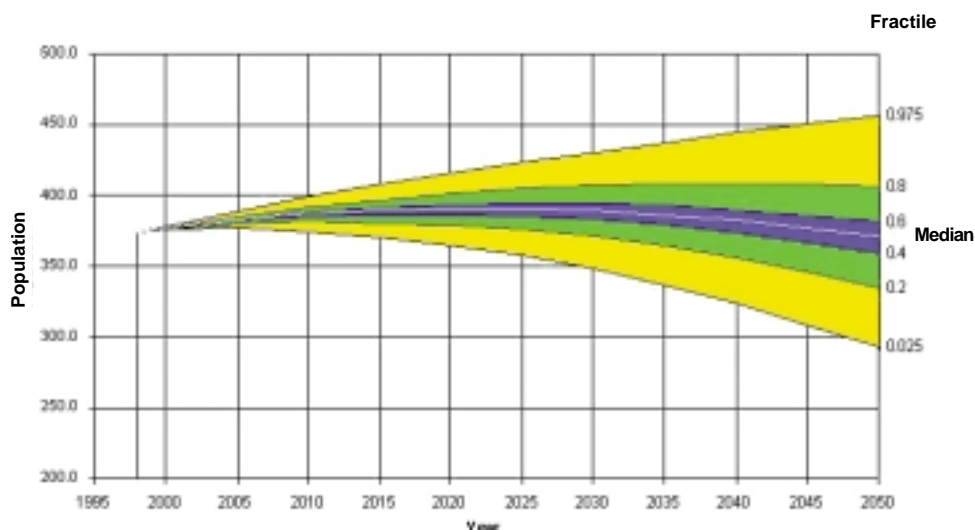
Are Birth, Death and Migration Interlinked?

The size and age structures of future populations are determined by the present age structure and future trends in the three basic demographic components: i.e. fertility (birth rate), mortality (death rate) and migration. The fact that there are only three factors to be considered in population projection does not necessarily make the task easier, because the projection of each factor is difficult and associated with uncertainties. Even the future of **mortality** has recently become more uncertain, though it is traditionally considered the most stable demographic trend and has shown steady improvements over the years. Over the last 50 years, life expectancy in Western Europe has increased by about ten years, implying an average gain of two years per decade. In its medium projection, Eurostat

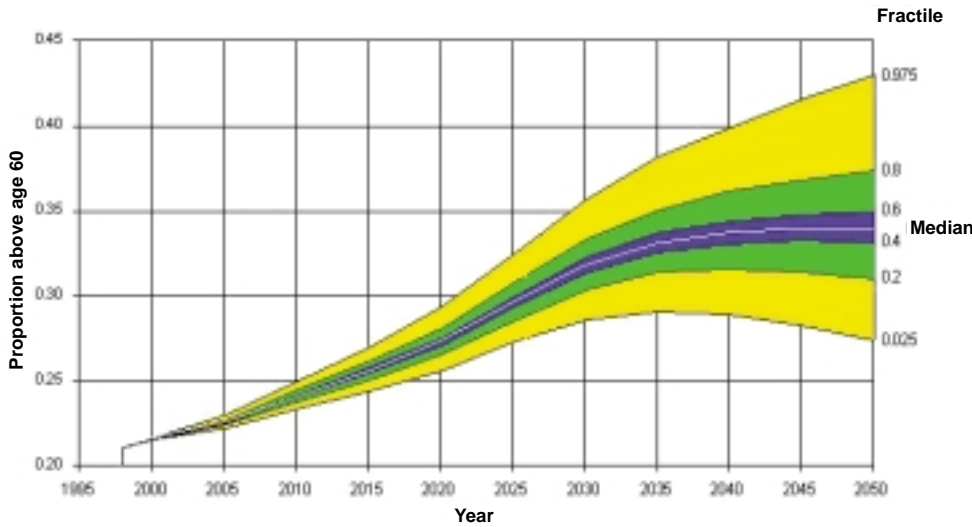
limits are being constantly moved upward by projectors as real gains surpass their expectations), alternative views suggest that such limits (if they exist at all) might be well above hundred years.

In a longer-time perspective, **fertility** is the most influential of the three demographic components. Changes in fertility have an impact not only on the number of children but also on

Figure 1: EU, Total Population



**Figure 2: European Union**



Applied Systems Analysis in Austria, which recently published the first of these projections for the European Union. In substance, it is largely based on the assumptions produced by Eurostat; the median is indeed identical with Eurostat's baseline scenario.

Figure 1 depicts the probabilistic projections for the total population of the 15 EU Member States up to 2050. The median of these projections shows a slight increase from the currently 375 million inhabitants of the EU to slightly above 380 millions in 2015, followed by a moderate decrease to 345 millions by 2050. The figure also shows the ranges of the estimated uncertainty distribution. The inner 20 percent are depicted in black, while the shaded area denotes the inner 60 percent.

Very different from this rather unexciting chart of the total population size is that corresponding to the proportion above age 60 (Figure 2). Here, the uncertainty is not whether it will increase or decrease, but by how much the proportion of the elderly will increase. Presently, 21 percent of Europe's

population are above age 60. This proportion will certainly rise over the coming decades: The increase is programmed in today's age structure. In other words, it can be considered virtually certain that the proportion of the European population above age 60 will grow by 8–12 percentage points or to about 1.5 times of its current level. This is a very significant increase by any standard. The new thing about these probabilistic projections is that they cannot simply be dismissed as 'horror scenarios'

of unknown probability as the increase is practically certain up to 2030.

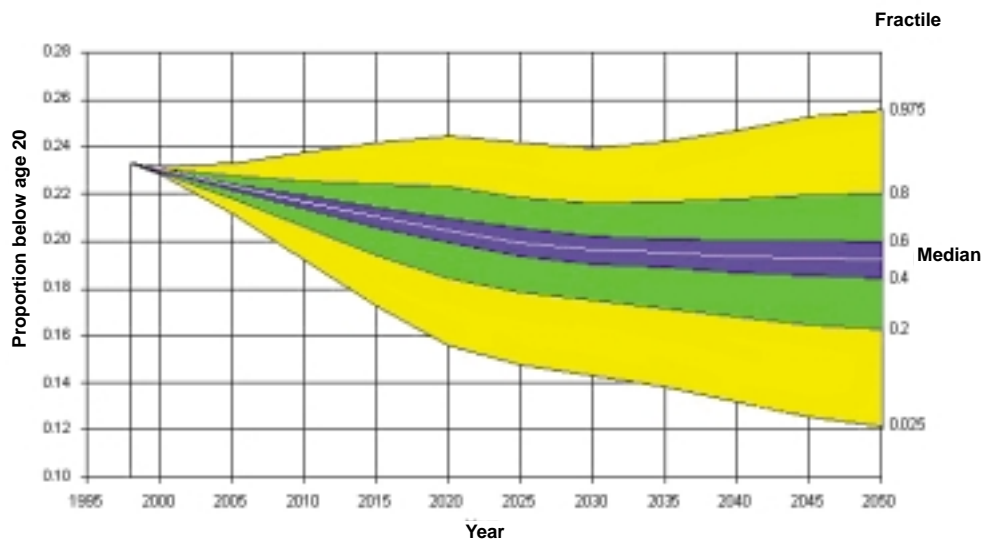
The proportion of the population below age 20 (Figure 3) is expected to further decline over the coming decades, but does not directly mirror the development of the proportion of the elderly. Yet there is a probability of more than 85 percent that the proportion of children and teenagers in Europe will decline. In the median case, it could decline from the present 23 percent to

less than 20 percent; but in more extreme cases, it could go below 15 percent.

A combination of these two trends results in a significant and virtually certain increase in the mean age of the European population from a present mean age of 39.3 years to between 44 and 47 years by 2030, and between 42 and 52 years by 2050. The median is expected to increase to around 46 years. It is important to note that these data also indicate significant changes in the age pattern of the working-age population. The average age of the working-age population (20–64 years) is expected to increase from 40.5 years to 43 years as early as 2020. Expressed in yet a different way, the proportion of persons aged 50–60 will increase significantly, while that of the younger work force aged 20–29 will decline strongly.

Pension systems based on the transfer across different age groups will be faced with yet another significant challenge. Figure 4 plots the so-called old-age dependency ratio, which is commonly defined as the population above age 60 divided

**Figure 3: European Union**





by the population aged 20–60. Although the ratio does not reflect the true ratio of beneficiaries to contributors in the social security system, it still is an important indicator of the underlying demographic dynamics. At present, this ratio is around 38 percent, i.e. there are still almost three working-age persons for one person above age 60. By 2040, this ratio is likely to almost double to more than 70 percent. As early as 2018, there will only be two working-age people for one person above age 60. In view of this knowledge, it is irresponsible to limit the time horizon of any policy reform to 2015 or even 2010, because we already know that an even more significant increase is due thereafter in connection with the retirement of the baby-boom generation.

The probabilistic projections show that the range of uncertainty is amazingly small over the coming decades. This implies that there are good, hard data even for longer-term reforms. In this context, politicians certainly cannot blame scientists for supplying only ambiguous and uncertain information.

For various reasons including aspects such as cultural homogeneity, migration is an unlikely determinant to remedy the presumed ageing problem. It was shown that even quantitatively massive immigration does not make much difference in terms of long-term population ageing (assuming that migrants immediately adopt European fertility levels). An annual migration gain of one million would increase the total population of Western Europe by 13 percent (505 millions) by 2050 as opposed to a three percent decline (433 millions) in case of no migration. Yet it would only reduce the increase in the proportion above age 60 from 17.8 percentage points to 15.7 percentage points. The main reason for this weak effect is that migrants get older and join the population above age 60 (unless they return to their country of origin).

Slower improvements in mortality and especially in life expectancy in old age would have a three times stronger effect on the proportion above age 60 than would massive immigration. Yet these factors are very unlikely candidates for targeted government policies. In

fact, political measures such as the changes recently introduced in Eastern Europe caused a stagnation in the improvement of mortality—a side effect definitely undesired. This leaves fertility as the only serious candidate for possible government policies to influence the demographic ageing trend.

## What Determines Future Fertility Levels?

Fertility levels in most European countries have reached historical lows during the 1990s. In the majority of EU Member States, period fertility levels are around two thirds of replacement level or even lower. It is an open question whether this is only a temporary phenomenon caused by a delay of childbearing to higher ages, a new steady state (see box: Cohort and Period Fertility), or whether fertility might even continue to decline further.

## Arguments Suggesting a Further Decline in Fertility

### Trend towards Individualisation

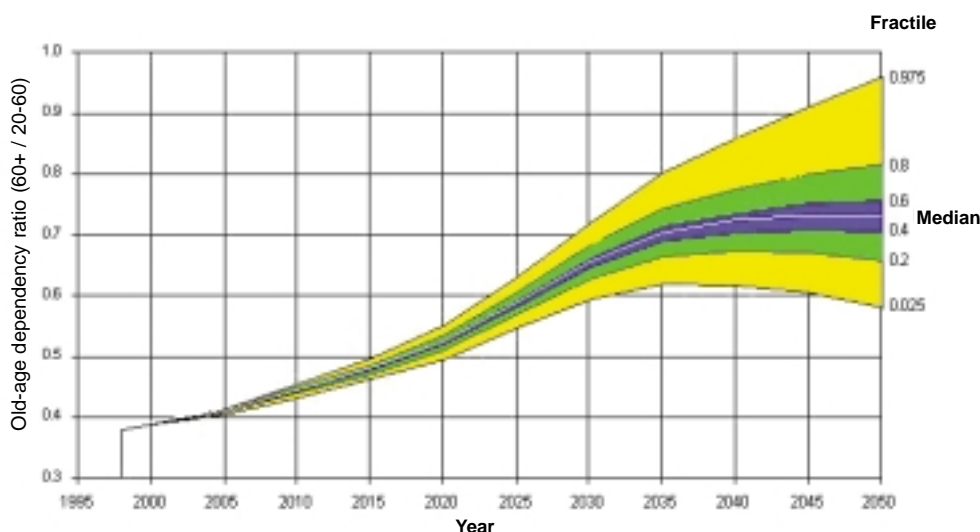
The individualisation typical of the society of the 20th century has been studied by a large number of sociologists. One psychological aspect of this trend is of special interest: Women and men are increasingly reluctant to make decisions that have long-term consequences and clearly limit their future freedom of choice. The decision to have a child predetermines many options for the following two decades, and makes second thoughts impossible once the child has been born.

### Independent Women

One recent trend that has often been singled out as a dominating feature of societal change is women's increasing economic independence. Over recent decades, female labour-force participation has steadily increased in virtually all industrialised countries. The increase has been strongest in Scandinavia, where labour-force participation is almost universal among adult women below age 50. Female activity rates in North America are not much lower. In Italy, female labour-force participation increased by more than one third in the 1980s. This fundamental change in women's economic activity is obviously connected to changing reproductive patterns. Increasing economic independence of women also tends to result in a postponement of marriage, which typically is associated with lower fertility.

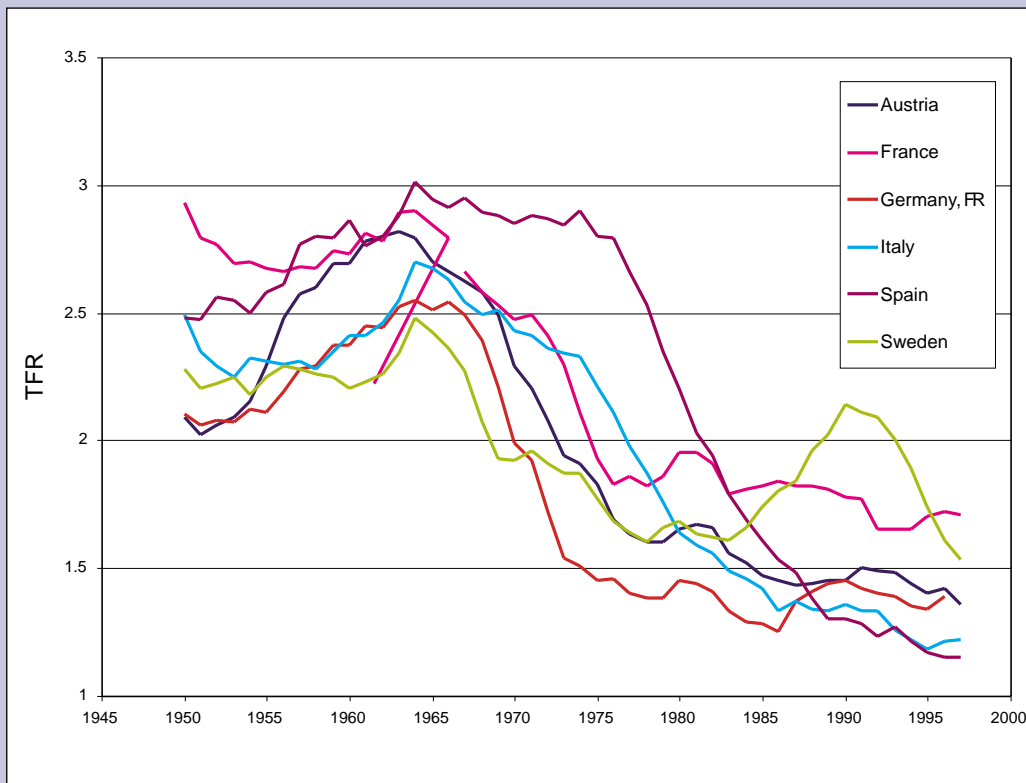
One must, however, be cautious in pointing out female economic activity as a major determinant of declining fertility. It may also

Figure 4: European Union



## Cohort and Period Fertility

There are two ways to measure the level of a population's fertility. The first method refers to cohorts, i.e. groups of women born in the same year who have already completed their reproductive career. These rates can be measured empirically and do not include an estimate component. The disadvantage of this method is that one must wait until these women reach age 40–45. For this reason, the data are of historical interest only, as most births happened around 20 years earlier. The second method measures period fertility and gives up-to-date information. In this case, all age-specific fertility rates observed in one year (e.g. in 1998) are added up. The resulting total fertility rate (TFR) gives the mean number of children of a hypothetical group of women who experience the age-specific fertility rates as measured in 1998 throughout their lives. The graph shows the trends in these periodic rates in selected countries.



The two different ways of measuring fertility may lead to somewhat different interpretations of the recent declines in birth rates. The most recent cohort fertility measures refer to cohorts born before 1955, who had most of their children in the 1970s. These figures are somewhat higher than the period rates for the 1990s. The drawback of period rates is that they exaggerate short-term fluctuations and changes in the age pattern of fertility: An increase in the mean age of childbearing by just 0.1 years (corresponding to a postponement by one year of ten percent of the women) leads to a ten percent decline in the period fertility rate in that year. Since the mean age of childbearing is on the rise in most European countries, the currently very low period rates may be partly explained by this phenomenon

be that the lower number of desired children motivates women not to stay at home but rather to enter the labour force, or there may be another driving

force behind both trends. The latter possibility is supported by evidence from several countries experiencing improvements in fertility rates despite very high

and still increasing female labour-force participation. The key question in this multifaceted issue seems to be: How can women (and men) in the future

combine parenthood with participation in the labour market?

*Flexible Partnerships*  
Marital stability has declined in all industrialised countries. Part of the reason for this phenomenon clearly lies in women's increasing economic independence. Women are no longer economically forced to stay in an unsatisfactory union if they earn an independent income. Whatever the social and psychological reasons may be, the chances of a young couple staying together for 20 years—the minimum time required to raise a child—are slimmer than they were in the past.

Increasing evidence from empirical studies shows that the separation of parents actually does more harm to children than had been assumed in the past. Responsible prospective parents may therefore decide not to have children if they are not absolutely sure about the stability of their partnership. This may be a very important factor in the decisions of couples living in consensual unions, which seem to be much less stable than marital unions. One possible counter-argument would be that remarriage (or formation of new non-marital unions) might actually be an incentive to have an additional child to strengthen the relationship with the new partner.

### *Children 'Endanger' Consumption and Leisure*

Commentators often mention the increasing consumerism as an underlying cause for the recent decline in fertility. The argument is that people would rather invest in pleasures for themselves than in children: They would rather buy a new

car than have another child; they would rather spend their time watching TV than changing nappies. Children are considered work and not fun. In earlier times, couples had to work harder and longer to earn a living and still found the time to have many children. The extra leisure time couples have today is not being spent on having children. Having children is defined as work.

Whether childbearing, and especially childrearing, will become favoured leisure-time activities of women and men

industrialised societies. Demographers often distinguish between timing failure (early pregnancy) and quantum failure (unwanted pregnancy). Both could be reduced by more efficient contraceptive use: For the latter, this would clearly imply lower fertility; for the former, this would theoretically have no effect on fertility.

Currently, we are still far from having a perfect contraceptive that requires no effort to use and has no negative side effects. An increasing number of women

“Economically independent women tend to delay childbearing to higher ages.”

will depend on the trade-offs between fun and burden. Some European cities already have more dogs than children. In these areas, the work-fun balance obviously is more favourable for pets, which require less commitment and in the worst case can always be given away. This argument clearly suggests that unless the burden of having children is diminished or the rewards of having children are enhanced, the balance for childbearing will continue to be negative.

*Unreliable Contraception*  
The final argument in this series is less concerned with changing values but is at a more mechanical level. It is an empirical fact that a significant number of pregnancies are unplanned in all

report being tired of using the pill. Yet sterilisation is not acceptable to all women and men (especially in continental Europe) because of its irreversibility. A hypothetical, perfect contraceptive without any side effects, which is taken once and then requires some reverse action for a woman to become pregnant, certainly would change the situation. It would clearly inhibit unplanned pregnancies, which currently are still quite numerous. It will make quite a difference for future fertility levels whether one must go to the doctor to have a child or not to have a child; currently, the latter is the case.

Arguments Suggesting an Increase in Fertility

*Fertility Cycles*

It is assumed that fertility cycles also follow certain patterns. The theory says that the fertility level of the parents' generation determines their children's reproductive behaviour. The first generation has a low relative income and low fertility. The second generation grows up with low aspirations for wealth but faces favourable conditions on the labour market because there are only few competitors. Hence, it has a high relative income and high fertility. The third generation is numerous and has high aspirations. As a consequence, it has a low relative income and low fertility. Empirically, this model fits

nicely with the US baby-boom of the 1960s and the subsequent fertility decline. But this is not a complete cycle. A new baby-boom has failed to materialise. For other countries, the historical long-term cycle argument is even less applicable.

*National Identity and Ethnic Rivalry*

National identity may have an important influence on individual reproductive behaviour. Fears related to the ethnic composition of the population and in-group-out-group feelings can be powerful emotional forces that may directly influence fertility. Examples may be found in Israel, Northern Ireland and in the Baltic States (before 1991). In these areas, there is a clear

How Low Can Fertility Go?

In demography, there is a body of literature discussing what is the maximum fertility that can be achieved in a population. The highest levels observed were 10.9 children per woman for the Hutterite community in the US (marriages from 1921–1930) and 10.8 for Canadians in the 18th century. On the national level, the highest fertility reported by the UN was 8.5 for Rwanda in 1975–1980, with many other African countries having rates above 8.0 during this period.

In 1998, the Italian demographer Antonio Golini published an article on how low fertility can go in a population. Besides giving some of the lowest total fertility rates observed (e.g. 0.77 for Eastern Germany in 1994, or 0.80 for the Italian province of Ferrara), he also calculates a total fertility rate of 0.72 by combining the lowest age-specific fertility rates observed between 1990 and 1995 in national populations. With respect to cohort fertility, he simulates a case in which 20–30 percent of all women remain childless and the rest has just one child. These data are not dissimilar to recent conditions in some provinces of northern Italy. This results in 0.70 to 0.80 children as the lower boundary for cohort fertility. Whether such low levels will actually be reached at a national level, and whether they are sustainable in the longer run in terms of their social and economic implications, are of course different questions



rivalry between two population groups that may attempt to outnumber each other. This rivalry may be an important reason why fertility levels are higher in these countries than in other countries with similar socio-economic conditions. According to one hypothesis, such rivalry may also be exported to other industrialised countries via international migration. However, there are also strong counter-examples, such as Francophone Canadians, non-Hispanic Californians, or Germans living in cities with many Turks, where ethnic-linguistic rivalry is carried out by means other than reproductive behaviour.

## C an Government Policies Influence Fertility and Should They Do So?

Potential government policies to control the number of children have been a highly controversial topic in Europe since the 1930s. Induced by the low birth rates in many European countries as a result of the worldwide economic crisis, the issue was broadly discussed all over Europe. At that time, the debate was very much phrased in nationalist and eugenic terms. The results of these concerns, however, differed dramatically in the Member States. In Sweden, for instance, pro-birth policies had been considered a real option, but were soon turned into welfare policies. Nazi Germany made the "breeding of true Germans" a national priority and introduced moral rather than economic incentives, including the infamous 'mother

award'. After the Second World War, the issue became a non-topic in most European countries except for France, where child support schemes have had a clear pro-birth intention focusing more strongly on higher numbers of births. The post-war baby-boom peaked in most European countries in the early 1960s. It also brought period fertility rates well above replacement level, therefore moving public attention away from the level of fertility to family-welfare issues.

Even today, virtually all EU Member States see child-support schemes and family benefits primarily as an instrument of social policy to ameliorate the tight economic conditions of younger families, especially if they have a larger number of children. Even some measures that could be interpreted in a pro-birth way, such as the payment of higher child benefits for the third and subsequent children in Ireland, have an explicit social-policy root and are imbued with the intention of assisting poorer families. Increasingly, family policies also become an instrument of women's policies focusing on female employment and the compatibility of work and family. Since the 1970s, two main features of this trend have been the expansion of paid maternity leave and the provision of public child care in most European countries.

In view of the significant fertility declines in many European countries during the early 1970s, the debate on low fertility has re-emerged and some scientific studies focused on the possible effectiveness of state interventions. In general, these studies failed to detect any measurable effect of government policies. Among other things, it

## A View to Asia: Singapore Family Policies

After two decades of family policy aiming at lower fertility—the "stop at two" policy—Singapore took a rather sharp turn in the mid-1980s and announced in 1987, "Have three or more, if you can afford it". At that point, the total fertility rate had fallen to 1.62. The main concerns were with population ageing in general, and the fact that especially the better-educated women had fewer children. The latter was assumed to have negative impacts on human capital formation and the abilities of future generations as children of educated mothers tend to have a better education. After some controversy, the benefits were not only granted to educated but to all women. They comprised (a) financial incentives, including tax rebates, for third and fourth children; (b) child-care subsidies and other measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family; and (c) priority in the allocation of new homes. These measures were accompanied by a presumably rather effective image campaign on childbearing.

In the next three years, the fertility rate increased by 15 percent. The increase was particularly pronounced for third births, which almost doubled between 1986 and 1990. Recently, the government has launched a new campaign to lower the mean age at marriage. It remains to be seen whether these measures will be equally successful.

was concluded that the more significant determinants of fertility are in areas beyond the reach of the state, such as individual religiosity or partner relationships. In combination with the clear political emphasis on welfare policies, this has resulted in fewer discussions about pro-birth policies during the past 15–30 years.

On the empirical side, there are only a few clear cases from Socialist countries, e.g. the 1976 pro-birth measures taken in Eastern Germany. They are estimated to have increased fertility by about 20 percent, partly due to the fact that having a child was the only way for young women and men to get an apartment of their own. However, this only worked in the absence of an open housing market.

Many of the studies analysing the temporal correlation between policy measures and fertility rates face the methodological problem that sudden policy changes are rare and numerous other fertility determinants are changing at the same time. This makes it difficult to pin down the specific contribution of the policy change. Only when a sharp timing of the policy and the response is possible do such associations become rather unambiguous. An example of a negative association of this sort could recently be observed in Austria. In the course of the budget consolidation in late 1996, a long-established cash payment (of ATS 15,000; Euro 1,090) granted at each birth was abolished as of January 1997. This was extensively covered in the media in late 1996. Monthly birth rates in 1997 remained at

their previous average level (total fertility rate around 1.4) until August/September; in October 1997 they fell by about ten percent and have remained at that lower level ever since (most recent data for mid-1998). Although there seems to be little doubt about this particular timing, it is of course unclear whether this will be a temporary or a lasting effect.

The most comprehensive study on the impact of financial benefits granted to families in Western Europe was published by Gauthier and Hatzius in 1997. It is based on econometric time-series methods applied to 22 industrialised countries for the period 1970–1990. The study indicates that a 25-percent increase in family allowances would increase fertility by an average of four percent, or 0.07 children per woman. The authors call it a modest but statistically significant effect. Given the present restricted budgetary situations in most industrialised countries, it seems rather unlikely that financial incentives of such a magnitude could be provided that they would bring fertility back up to replacement level. But perhaps

finances are less important than other non-monetary incentives (see box: A View to Asia: Singapore Family Policies).

Public concern about low fertility seems to be reaching a new phase. In many European countries, period fertility has now been below replacement for a quarter of a century and expectations that it might recover by itself are diminishing. It is not even clear whether we have already reached the bottom of the curve (see box: How Low Can Fertility Go?). Moreover, migration, which has always been in the back of our mind as a possible remedy against too rapid ageing, seems to be less of a viable option these days when immigration policies tend to become much more restrictive. Finally, the expected discontinuity and the ensuing serious problems in the pension system expected to occur with the retirement of the baby-boom generation are only two to three decades ahead so preventive measures must be taken soon.

At the European level, the issue of population ageing is now widely discussed. A series of high-level conferences, as well as



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extensive media coverage, have once more focused the public awareness on this issue. At present, Greece is the EU Member State with the most pronounced concern about low fertility. The concern about low and further-decreasing fertility seems to go across the entire political spectrum. This may also be connected with rapid population growth in neighbouring countries. In Greece, pro-birth policies are considered the only option and should include direct as well as indirect effects on family size. At the European level, there was no clear correlation between the level of fertility in a country and its concern about low fertility during the 1980s (France was the country most concerned despite its relatively high fertility rates). However, now such a correlation seems to prevail. In the UK, Ireland and the Nordic countries, where fertility is relatively high, concern seems to be the lowest; whereas in Southern Europe, where fertility is at very low levels, concern seems to be rapidly increasing.

gender and intergenerational equity, and the human-rights view according to which the decision to have children is largely considered a private matter?

Both questions have not yet found sufficient answers in Europe. The first question is of an empirical and scientific nature and needs increased attention by European scholars specialising on family, population and public policy. The second question is largely a political issue that will have to be discussed extensively at different political levels. However, a rational discussion of the second question will depend on the kind of answer that scientists give to the first question, as well as on how scientists assess the expected consequences of continued low fertility. Scientists should get to work quickly to be able to present some evidence when the political question will inevitably heat up.

### It Will Take Some Time before Europe Dies Out

Even if fertility rates remain at their present low levels, Europe's population will only shrink very slowly. Assuming that fertility and mortality remain constant and there is no net migration, i.e. no increase due to migration, the 375 million inhabitants of the European Union will have shrunk to 298 millions by the year 2050. Projections for the more distant future yield a population of 186 million people (around half the present population) for 2100. The population will have decreased to 75 millions (less than a quarter) by 2200, to 30 millions by 2300, to 12 millions by 2400, and to less than 5 million people by 2500. If you do not stop the computer, you will learn that there will be just around 50,000 Europeans in the year 3000. Of course, this is an unrealistic and absolutely hypothetical projection!

In this connection, two important questions have to be asked:

- Can public policies influence fertility levels, and what kinds of measures tend to have what kinds of effects under different conditions?
- If yes, are such policy measures desirable under different criteria of social equity,







# Work Viewed from a Childhood Perspective

Childhood perspective

The reconciliation of family

and work is one of the great challenges in Europe. There are intensive debates about the role of fathers and mothers, employees and employers. But who listens to the children?

Helmut Wintersberger

**A**t first glance, one would assume that the whole issue of reconciling family and work was predominantly about children. However, a closer inspection shows that a childhood and/or children's perspective is generally missing in the debate. If at all, children are seen as objects and obstacles rather than as subjects and as a population group with its own needs and expectations. The tasks of child care and of balancing family and work cannot be entirely left to parents (who are more or less willing to share responsibilities between them) or to employers (who may or may not establish a family-friendly work environment). These tasks also have to be approached at the socio-

political level. The issue of reconciling family and work thus not only concerns the very central parts of both the gender and generational contracts, but is also crucial for the state versus the individual or family compact.

**H**istorical  
Perspective:  
Two Child-care  
Revolutions

Contrary to widespread perceptions of family erosion and instability, childhood in Western countries is seen as family childhood. In a historical perspective, countries like

Austria have never before had such a high percentage of children who lived in a family arrangement. According to Austrian statistics, 99 percent of children live in some kind of family, be it a traditional nuclear family, a single-parent family, a reconstituted or any other type of family. From the remaining one percent, the majority, i.e. 0.6 percent, lives with a foster family; only 0.4 percent live in some kind of residential institution. This development is connected to a widespread belief that a family or family-like arrangement is the best environment for raising a child, as compared to a children's home or similar institution. Simultaneously with this ongoing de-institutionalisation of childhood, we can also observe a growing level of institutionalisation: Children



spend more hours and years in school than before. In addition, an increasing percentage of children are enrolled in day-care centres, crèches and extra-curricular activities.

For American society, Don Hernandez has identified two child-care revolutions: The transition from the two-parent farm family to the father-breadwinner/mother-homemaker family brought about the first child-care revolution. The father's daily exit from home to work became socially accepted. At the same time, going to school became an obligation for children.

The second child-care revolution set in when the model of the dual-earner family gained ground. After the father, the mother also left the home. Hernandez argues that this second child-care revolution actually created the need for day-care for pre-school children. In a gender perspective, one has to critically remark that concerns were not raised with a view to the first child-care revolution, which is connected with fathers' participation in the labour market. However, the advantages and disadvantages of working mothers are still heavily debated. Yet these concerns are mainly due to male resistance to contributing a fair share to household and child-care work.

## The European Perspective: Common Questions, Different Answers

Developments in the United States can never be directly

applied to Europe. Yet, on the whole, the fundamental pattern of changes concerning family formations and child care is rather similar: The ageing of society, the current pluralisation of family patterns, such changes on the labour market as increasing female employment, and threatening unemployment are only a few examples. However, regarding child-care services, the perception of trends and solution of problems varies between, and sometimes even within countries. This can partly be explained by the different concepts regarding the tasks of child-care facilities. Some consider child day-care an educational institution; for others, it is a care service; and a third group defines it as a place where children can display their creative potential. One aspect, however, is similar all over Europe: Child-care facilities are not considered as important as, for example, the question of how to finance the pension system or how to reduce unemployment.

“The present distribution of working time over the life cycle is a lucid example of society's disregard for children and families.”

Coherent and comprehensive solutions are only found in the Nordic countries, i.e. in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. Differently from Sweden, where the preference is exclusively on day-care facilities, the Finnish model combines coherent, comprehensive solutions with

### What Is Childhood?

From the single individual's point of view, childhood is a transient phase. From the point of view of society, childhood is a timeless phenomenon. This simply means that childhood is a necessary constituent of every society. The population group of children keeps changing: Children grow up and leave the group, while newborn children continuously join it. Childhood also changes in the course of history and differs between countries and continents.

For this reason, social scientists no longer limit their studies of children's life situations to comparisons between children of different ages and sexes or from different social classes. In a growing number of studies, they contrast the situation of children with that of adults and that of elderly persons.

flexibility. Sirpa Taskinen reports, “One of the parents can lengthen her/his leave until the child is three years old without losing a job. Parents of young children are entitled to shorten working hours to six hours a day or 30 hours a week, until the end of the year in which the child starts school. Both parents must be in gainful employment and only one of them can apply.

family reasons. All Member States make some provision for post-natal leave: The period varies between 8 and 18 weeks. In most Member States, mothers receive between 70 and 100 percent of their normal earnings. An exception is the UK, where post-natal leave may last up to 29 weeks, but most of it is either paid at a low flat rate or unpaid.

Parents of children under three can apply for a partial home-care allowance to cover the reduction of income.” In Europe, common statutory leave arrangements for workers with children comprise maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, and leave for

Variety increases if we turn our attention to the other leave arrangements. Only the Nordic countries introduced a right to a paternity leave of at least two weeks. A few more countries have provisions foreseeing two to three days' leave for fathers at the time of birth. The picture is

Provision of Publicly-funded Services in Member States

Member State	Age at which compulsory schooling begins	Provision in publicly-funded services for children aged (years):		
		0-3	3-6	6-10 *
Austria	6	3%	75%	6%
Belgium	6	30%	95%+	??
Denmark	7	48%	82%	62% + all 6 year olds in pre-primary education
Finland	7	21%	53%	5%+60% of 6 year olds in welfare and education system services
France	6	23%	99%	?30%
Germany	6	2% (W) 50% (O)	78% (W) 100% (O)	5% (W) 88% (O)
Greece	6	#3%	#70% (a)	?<5%
Ireland	6	2%	55%	?<5%
Italy	6	6%	91%	??
Netherlands	5	#8% (a)	#71% (a)	?<5%
Portugal	6	12%	48%	10%
Spain	6	?2%	84%	??
Sweden	7	33%	72%	64% + some 6 year olds in pre-primary schooling
UK	5	2%	#60% (a)	?<5%

Source: European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities (ed.) (1996): A Review of Services For Young Children in the European Union 1990-1995. Luxembourg: European Commission Directorate General V. (The source table does not contain data on Luxembourg.)

Key:

- \* The figures in this column do not include children in compulsory schooling; the data are confined to services providing care and recreation to school-aged children.
- (a) Figure includes some children in compulsory schooling (i.e. where compulsory schooling begins before 6).
- ?? No information.
- ?<5% No information, but under 5 percent.
- ? Approximate figure.
- # Greece, the Netherlands and the UK do not produce statistics for children aged 0-3 and 3-6: In Greece, statistics are for children aged 0-2.5-5 years; in the Netherlands, for children aged 0-4 years; in the UK, for children aged 0-5 years.

In nearly all cases, 'publicly-funded' means that more than half of the total costs of a service are paid from public sources, usually between 75 percent and 100 percent. The main exception to this are the Netherlands, where public funding usually covers less than half the costs of services in the welfare system.

equally heterogeneous concerning parental leave. The arrangements differ widely as to their length: from two months to three years. Yet another difference is the financial compensation and the choice between either taking leave in one block or splitting it up into several periods. Leave for family reasons, e.g. in case the children are ill, is guaranteed in eight Member States. The most generous entitlements are granted in Germany and Sweden.

All Member States provide publicly-funded child-care services, but the levels of provision for different age groups show a wide variance. For children aged 0 to 3 years, coverage varies between 2 and 48 percent; for children aged 3 to 6 years, between 48 and 99 percent; and for children aged 6 to 10 years, between 0 and 62 percent.

There is some convergence with regard to care for children aged 3-6 years, but obviously not with regard to children aged 0-3 and school children under 10. The reports of the Childcare Network also reveal remarkable differences concerning access, payment, curricula, opening hours, flexibility, and quality of services. In Anglo-Saxon countries, publicly-funded day-care institutions primarily serve low-income families. In other countries, the right to day-care is a universal right, either free of charge or for a subsidised fee that may be the same for every child or depend on the family income. In some countries, child care is understood and organised as an educational service; in others, as a social service. In many places, day-care centres are open only in the morning, but there is a visible trend towards full-time day-care. In Austria and Germany, most primary schools work only in

the mornings, so that there exists a particular care problem for young schoolchildren in the afternoon.

## Development of Laws at the International and European Levels

While recent recommendations of the European Parliament, as well as of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, predominantly address children as subjects, this was originally not the case for the various initiatives of the European Council and the European Commission. Meanwhile, a tendency to recognise children as citizens of Europe can also be observed there. Additional momentum was generated by the Treaty of Amsterdam, which introduced age as a criterion of discrimination. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the one hand, demonstrates very well the tension between the different dimensions of rights and responsibilities of society, the family and the individual. Article 18, which relates to child care, points out that caring for children is in principle a joint parental responsibility, and that society has to support parents in the performance of this task by developing adequate child-care facilities. On the other hand, by restricting the right to day-care to children of working parents, Article 18 is one of the sections of the Convention which obviously does not correspond to the main philosophy of recognising children as subjects and citizens. Strictly speaking, a right granted to children of



working parents is not a child's right but a right of working parents. This is underlined by a comparison with Article 28 of the Convention, inviting states to "recognise the right of the child to education" and in particular to make "primary education compulsory and available free to all". This is clearly an obligation and a right assigned directly to children regardless of the employment (or any other) status of their parents.

That this criticism with regard to Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is not mere legal hair-splitting, is underlined by experiences reported from Sweden, a country that takes the implementation of the Convention very seriously. However, in doing so, a number of local authorities have obviously also taken seriously the limitation contained in Article 18.

Ulla Björnberg reports that, due to fiscal constraints, about half of the local authorities have reduced the right to child care when one parent is unemployed. Some Swedish local authorities admit children with an unemployed parent only for

violation of Article 2 of the Convention, according to which no child should be discriminated against, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

## Suggestions for a Child-centred Approach to Reconciliation

### Space and Time for Young Children

In a traditional understanding of child care, care is seen as a one-sided phenomenon of adults (parents or child professionals) taking care of children. At first sight, this seems obvious: Small children cannot look after themselves. Nevertheless, we should reflect on how much of children's need for care is

arities of this very society. Children are kept in special reserves, at home or in child-care centres. Their mobility is restricted so that they will survive modern traffic. On the one hand, the concept of modern child care seems to be based on the view that young children are like aliens who have to be socialised. On the other hand, there is the idea of creating and extending spaces for young children. By reintegrating the needs of young children, society would increasingly readapt itself not only to children's but also to human needs in general.

Urban planners and architects increasingly envisage large areas where modern traffic does not impose its logic on people, but has to adapt to the pace of human beings—young children included. A space for young children may, however, not only be understood in the physical sense, but also in a qualitative sense as a place where "children should be entitled to be creative children in their own right", as the Swedish expert Ulla Björnberg puts it.

Another aspect is time. The discrepancy between children's

out the industrial revolution, its rationality is questionable in post-industrial societies. How is paid work distributed over the life cycle? Education finishes later, and entry into the labour market—as well as the attainment of financial independence—are deferred. The age of marriage has increased, and women have their first child at a later age. However, there is one exception to this trend, namely the age at which people—and in particular men—leave the labour market. The modern life cycle is characterised by three more or less equally long periods: A formative stage of approximately 25 years, an 'active' stage of approximately 30 years, and an 'inactive' stage of approximately 25 years. Raising the current pension age has been discussed time and again, but this does not alter the fact that the labour market hardly offers any jobs for this population group.

Another contradiction concerns the increasing coincidence between working and child-rearing years. Postponing the employment of the young, early retirement for older people, and the growing participation of women in the labour force have all brought a concentration of work during the 'prime working age', i.e. between the ages of 25 and 50 years. In EU Member States in 1994, people of prime working age accounted for hardly more than half of the working-age population; however, they constituted two thirds of the population actually working. The prime working age group is thus overrepresented in the group of people who actually work. At the same time, these years of the life cycle coincide with the most important years for forming a family and raising children. If we do

"Fewer structural constraints for families could improve equal opportunities for women, men and children."

three hours a day. Totally or partly excluding children with an unemployed parent from child care may correspond to the letter of Article 18. Nevertheless, it constitutes a clear

socially determined. While there has always been some need for the care of small children in any society, the great extent of child care required in modern society is connected with the peculi-

subjective time perception and their subordination under a 'linear' time regime is quite evident. While this rigid time regime was necessary to achieve material development through-

not want to impede child-bearing, it is obvious that the overall work load should be redistributed over the life cycle. Moreover, parental child care has to be complemented by additional (professional or non-professional), high-quality care facilities.

The present distribution of working time over the life cycle is a lucid example of society's disregard for children and families. There are biological (and social) limits to shifting reproduction in either direction. Along with a reduction of working time during the prime age, one could also envisage an extension of working time in the years preceding and following the prime age. In this way, young people would be integrated earlier into employment, and the actual age of retirement would be deferred.

#### Child Care and Gender Policies: Reducing the Gender Bias in Child Care

Regarding labour-market participation in the European Union, fathers emerge in first place, followed by childless men, childless women, and finally by mothers. Around 70 percent of all men of employable age are actually employed; the corresponding percentage for women, however, is only 50 percent. In addition, more women work part-time than men, the result of which is that women's share in the total volume of paid work is barely more than one third. It is, however, more interesting to study the gender pattern of labour-market participation in relation to the presence of children in the family. While fathers are more likely to participate in the labour force than are childless men, mothers are less likely to do so than are childless women. Data from the UK demonstrate that this

reversal is particularly accentuated for more qualified positions: Two thirds of women managers are childless, while two thirds of men managers have children.

There could be different interpretations for this phenomenon. A possible explanation is that a cultural process of gender assimilation has already come to some fruition in the case of childless persons. Women are more work-oriented than they used to be, while men are less work-oriented than before: This has reduced the gap in work orientation between women and men. Why does this cultural achievement vanish once we turn our attention to fathers and mothers? As a consequence of society's structural indifference or hostility towards children, families with children experience additional constraints and pressures, both in terms of finances and time. In order to be competitive with childless households, households with children have to increase their efficiency. To the extent that men are more 'efficient' in earning money and women in caring for children, it becomes economically rational to specialise, i.e. men dedicate themselves to work and women to child care.

These male and female 'efficiencies' are not natural. They are socially transmitted through gender relations. If this interpretation is correct, and if we want to change gender relations not only for childless couples but also for parents (who transmit gender perceptions to the next generation), it will not suffice merely to appeal to fathers and mothers. Pressures and constraints affecting households with children will have to be eliminated by a combination of additional financial benefits, child-care services, and suf-

ficient time for mothers and fathers to take care of their children.

#### Child Care and the Generational Contract

In traditional society, it was obvious to perceive children as an investment in one's own future, in particular with regard to security in old age. Along with the process of modernisation, children have increasingly lost their paramount function for income maintenance in old age. In the public perception, this role has been taken over by the welfare state. After the Second World War, the expansion of welfare states as well as the development of social security systems—and in particular of old-age pensions—were facilitated by both economic and population growth. As long as both trends prevailed, it was feasible to pay increasing pensions to a growing

number of pensioners. This has created the illusion of secure and foreseeable pension entitlements accruing after decades, which would somehow depend on the income level and the duration of working life in line with the respective social security regulations. However, in the majority of the Member States, public pension schemes operate on the principle that they more or less spend on old-age pensions what they collect from workers in the current year. In an ageing society, this will obviously lead to problems and tensions when a shrinking active workforce will have to pay an increasing part of their salary for a growing population of elderly persons. One could argue that the principle of social pension insurance could be changed, and national pension funds could be obliged to accumulate material value to allow them to maintain their commitments irrespective of

### Legal Documents at the International and European Levels

In the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, Article 18 especially relates to caring for children, which is considered the common responsibility of both parents. Society is to assist them in this task by providing adequate institutions, facilities and services for child care. In particular, children of working parents should have the right to benefit from such institutions.

In **Recommendation 1286 (1996) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on a European Strategy for Children**, states are urged "to guarantee to all children the right to free and high-quality education for pre-school, primary and secondary education". Contrary to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, right of access to pre-school institutions is not limited to children of working parents.

At the level of the European Union, the **Council Recommendation of 31 March 1992 on Child Care** lists four relevant areas for initiatives that should enable parents to fulfil their vocational, familial and educational obligations: child-care services; leave arrangements for working parents; workplaces responsive to the needs of workers with children; and increased participation of fathers in child care.

demographic developments. However, the principle of the unity of the social budget stipulates otherwise: any social benefits—and in particular, transfer payments to such members of the non-working population as children and elderly persons—have to be deducted from the income of

From a family-centred point of view, it is obvious that parents invest quite a lot in their children, both in cash and in care. But what about society? Public pension schemes really do not favour those who bring up children, but rather those who care predominantly about their own career. At the in-

## Child Care and Quality Issues

The EU publication on the reconciliation of work and family life (see box: Sources) shows that quality is the most important but least researched problem in child care. Quality of care is important, first of all, in an egalitarian perspective.

too difficult to interview young children. High quality child-care services require children's participation. There is evidence of the successful implementation of their participation in issues regarding their own care in such countries as Denmark. In Sweden, severe financial constraints have forced day-care centres to negotiate a care contract with the parents. Ulla Björnberg thinks that the contract "which is set between the child-care centre and the parents at the beginning of the semester, creates inflexibility for parents who might have to work overtime. These strategies are adult-centred in the sense that they focus on costs and fees and not on the needs of adapting work and child care." The writer agrees with Ulla Björnberg that the Swedish child-care contract in its present form is too inflexible and, on the whole, shortsighted. In principle, he could imagine a different type of child-care contract, namely one that would have to be extended to quality issues (and not just opening hours), and include children themselves as third partners in the negotiation process—because young children also have their rights and duties.

# „Public pension schemes favour people without children.“

the working population, on the basis of either an explicit or an implicit generational contract. During the transition from traditional to modern society, the principle of intergenerational solidarity has been retained. It was simply transferred from the level of the extended family to society. In modern society, the generational contract is based on the reciprocity of a generation of parents who cared for the generation of their children, who will in turn care for their aged parents' generation when they become adults. Strictly speaking, contributions to pension insurance are therefore not to be considered as a contribution to one's own pension but rather to that of one's parents. Only expenditures for children (for one's own children as well as contributions to a public family allowance fund) may be considered a contribution to one's own pension. It is therefore necessary to analyse the existing social security regulations, their underlying normative values, and their implications for income distribution over the life cycle with regard to distributive justice for families, genders and generations.

dividual level, it is perfectly rational to live without children and to optimise active income and pension entitlements. At the level of society, the aggregation of these individual approaches may turn out to be problematic with regard to demographic development, distributive justice, and the viability of public pension schemes.

This is also confirmed by a gender-specific analysis. Under the logic of present social security regulations, men—who mostly concentrate on their career—get much higher pensions than women, who usually invest much more in their children. From a child-centred perspective, the generational contract has to be extended and revised.

Usually, the generational contract is interpreted as a contract between only two generations, i.e. the 'active' population of employable age and the population of the aged. This contract has to be redefined as a contract between three generations, namely children and youth, working-age adults, and senior citizens.

Labour-market promotion should not be achieved at the expense of child welfare. Gender equity also requires high-quality care, because both social pressure and personal loyalty may result in women's leaving work if services are unsatisfactory. The opposite is also true: An infrastructure providing good care services is one factor in promoting female employment. This is clearly underlined by higher female labour-force rates in the Nordic countries. To the extent that there are quantitative studies on supply and demand of child-care services, as far as quality is touched upon, the analysis is usually restricted to such structural aspects as budgets, rooms, equipment, opening hours, or the number of children per teacher. With a view to processes and interactions, the quality of child care is difficult to examine and measure. The first question to be asked is, "Whose perspective is important?" The perspective of parents, that of teachers, or that of children? Children are usually the last to be asked. Decision-makers and experts often resort to the prejudice that it is simply

## Summary and Conclusions

If children are to be addressed as subjects, this presupposes a child-centred discourse on reconciliation, in which the interests of children have to be prioritised and care for young children is to be seen as a task just as important as any other tasks in the economy and/or



society. At the conceptual level, the notion of the welfare mix may prove instrumental in many ways. In particular, the following arguments suggest introducing it into the child-care debate.

- The welfare mix concept may be understood as being synonymous with welfare pluralism, acknowledging the relevance of the state, the market, the voluntary sector and the family for the total welfare of the population. With a view to child-care policies, this could mean shifting the family's care monopoly towards a more balanced mix of resources in order to reduce the pressure on parents (and especially on mothers) and to improve the wellbeing of children.

- The concept of the welfare mix could be understood as a tool for an inclusive and comprehensive discourse, instrumental in combining the main ideological orientations. While Conservatives will tend to emphasise the role of the family, Liberals that of the market, and Labour that of the public sector, they all may agree on the fundamental principle that any solutions for meeting children's needs have to be found somewhere in the area circumscribed by the welfare triangle of market, state and household. The welfare-mix concept provides tools that also allow for identifying and locating intermediate solutions and organisations, such as service co-operatives or self-help groups, on the map of social and child-care services.

- The concept of the welfare mix could be utilised to not only make the gaps in child-care policies visible, but to also deal with them. This presupposes that parents (and children) are permitted to identify their own strategy, and to combine financial child-care benefits with the level of employment they

consider appropriate. The concept of choice is often used in a way complementary to competition. This holds true in particular for choices of the 'either-or' type. Existing regulations sometimes do not offer any choices to parents at all (e.g. only parental leave but no child-care services or vice versa); or else they give parents a choice between undesirable alternatives (either a low parental leave benefit or full-time work). Such regulations are hardly geared to the needs of the people, but rather to 'visions' of (male) politicians who are not familiar with the reality of family life.

- From a child-centred point of view, the welfare-mix concept is relatively neutral in relation to different stakeholder groups. It allows children to be included as both subjects and partners in the process of identifying, negotiating and implementing the reconciliation programmes and child-care services that have a direct bearing on their life.

At the pragmatic level, the Co-ordinator of the European Observatory on Family Matters, Helmut Wintersberger, argues for

- a different distribution of working time over the life cycle;
- reducing pressures and constraints specifically affecting families with children;
- improving the recognition of child-care activities in pension insurance, and recognising children as partners in the tripartite generational contract;
- developing and implementing coherent, comprehensive child-care policies; and
- promoting children's participation as early as pre-school age as a prerequisite for assessing the quality of services from a child-centred perspective.

On the whole, the failure of European societies to successfully combine economic



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development with conditions for a good family life—as the basic prerequisite of biological and social renovation—is a sign of a society more careless than caring, operating mainly at the expense of both children and their mothers. At the same time, however, it constitutes an obstacle to international competitiveness in the economic sense. In the long run, the implementation of successful models of reconciling family and work will be more important for Europe's economic performance than improving the main traffic connections in Europe—though this issue is much closer to European politicians' hearts. All over Europe, there are heated debates about work, and the battle

against unemployment is a priority topic. This might be the point to engage in a comprehensive discussion on the concept of work: What is work? How do we define paid v. unpaid work? Which kind of work is valuable from whose point of view? How do we define socially valuable work? Who does what kind of work? Who gets which type of financial and social-security compensation? Questions abound. We have to ask who will answer them and what will happen with the answers. Looking back from a family perspective on the first decade of the European Observatory on Family Matters, it can be said that we have already learned a lot, though there is still much to be done.

## Sources

This article is predominantly based on three information and data sources:

First, it draws on the results obtained in the international research project **Childhood as a Social Phenomenon** (Qvortrup, J. et al. (eds.) (1994): **Childhood Matters**. Aldershot: Avebury).

Second, mention should be made of the work done by **the European Commission's Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities**.

Peter Moss directed this network, which was the competent body at EU level to systematically collect information and data up to 1995.

The third main source is the report **Reconciliation of Work and Family Life for Men and Women and the Quality of Care Services – Report on Existing Research in the European Union**.

It was also written by members of the Childcare Network mentioned above and published by the European Commission (DG V/D/5, ISBN 92-828.6184-8) in 1999.





# Austria

## Societal and Business-level Efforts to Promote the Family

### Living Arrangements

In 1998, Austria registered a total of 81,233 births, i.e. an average of 1.34 children per woman. This is the lowest rate ever recorded in Austria and means that just 66 percent of the current generation of parents is being 'replaced' by a generation of children. Young people postpone starting families, young couples frequently cohabit without marrying, and there are more singles. Nevertheless, even among the young, only a minority shows a decided preference for remaining single.

The facts provide clear evidence that partnership, marriage and family are still the paramount living arrangements chosen by Austrians. In 1997, there were 2.24 million nuclear families in Austria, i.e. (married) couples with or without one or more child/ren

and lone parents with one or more child/ren. Of these, two out of three family households (64 percent or 1.44 million) consisted of families with child/ren living in the same household. Thus, a change can be observed, even though it is not radical enough to speak of a



genuine break with past trends. One of the most statistically significant changes is the marked increase in the number of parents in the 'empty-nest phase' (who, for statistical purposes, are counted as childless).

### Family Policies

The early 1990s saw an extension of family benefits: A second year of parental leave was introduced and the family allowance was raised. However, benefits were at least partially curtailed in 1995 and again in 1996 in the course of two austerity programmes launched by the government. The families were the only group that suffered cuts in real terms, to the tune of ATS 3 billion (Euro 218 million). Nevertheless, a new family package that will first come into full effect in 2000 will more than compensate for these cutbacks. It was passed in response to a ruling by the Constitutional Court in 1997 requiring that the tax system take more account of the child-maintenance obligation.

There has been an ongoing and intense discussion of how to assist parents with small children. Based on a feasibility study of a proposed child-care-voucher system presented by the Austrian Institute for Family Studies, politicians are discussing a range of schemes (parental leave benefit for all mothers, a three-year child-care benefit, means-tested parental leave benefit). A key point of the dispute is whether the parental leave benefit should continue to be linked to unemployment insurance or whether it should be granted to all parents as a type of basic income for a specific life phase, regardless of whether or not they have been previously employed.

### Reconciling Family and Work

Discussions in this context involve company facilities for child care, family-friendly working hours, schemes to help parents return to their job after taking a baby break, etc. As the responsible authority, the Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family Affairs, in co-operation with the business community, has introduced a Family & Work Audit that allows companies to review their pro-family activities within the scope of an additional module for ISO certification. ■



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# Belgium

## Combating Sexual Abuse

Over the past few years, public discussion in Belgium has been dominated by the Dutroux case, which has developed into a full-fledged debate on child sexual abuse. Discoveries of irregularities in the operation of the judicial system have led to more stringent laws against white slavery and child pornography. This crackdown included extensive campaigns to report family rape and child prostitution, as well as the establishment of special counselling centres. Belgium also took the initiative at the European level, proposing, inter alia, that





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Europol should be granted more authority in the fight against child sexual abuse. The French-speaking community appointed the Délégué Général de la Communauté Française aux Droits de l'Enfant (General Delegate of the French-speaking Community for the Rights of the Child) (1991/1997); the Dutch-speaking community founded the Commissariat of Juvenile Court Judges (1997/1999). Of even greater importance was the formation of Child Focus, the European Centre for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children, a non-profit organisation of international dimensions.

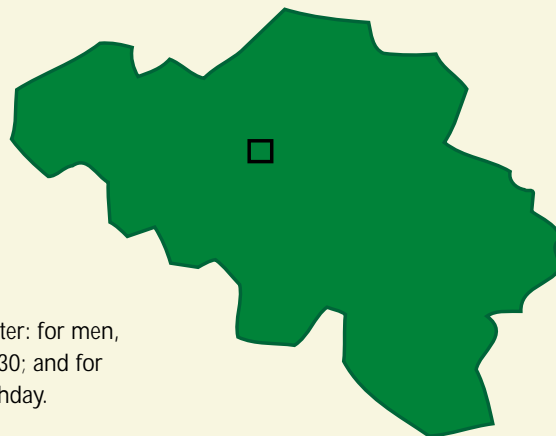
### Government Financial Policies for Families

Because of the federal structure of Belgium, family policy is a regional competence, while the financial side is regulated at the federal level. Due to this split, it is difficult to provide any genuinely comprehensive survey. Under pressure to meet the Maastricht criteria, the Belgian government implemented measures at the expenditure and financing sides; nevertheless, these failed to cause any fundamental change in the situation of families. Salaries and benefits were indexed to the inflation rate, which meant that child benefits were raised by two percent.

### Demography

Demographic developments in Belgium are similar to those prevailing across Europe:

- declining birth rates (presently 1.13 children per woman);
- a decline in marriage rates by 1.1 percent in 1994–1995, coinciding with a rise in the likelihood of divorce;
- a tendency towards marrying later: for men, at an average age of just below 30; and for women, just after their 31st birthday.



### Family Structure

Dual-income households continue to be the chief family type in Belgium, but the percentage of single-earner households is growing steadily. The proportion of children in households headed by a single wage-earner rose from 5.6 percent in 1985 to 8.8 percent in 1992. The number of children living in poor lone-parent households, on the other hand, declined during that period. There are a number of factors to explain this improvement: not only a rise in the subsistence minimum for this group, but also a marked increase in the number of lone parents pursuing some gainful employment.

### Reconciling Family and Work

In 1996, a Royal Decision was approved to extend the types of career breaks available. Up till then, full- and half-time career breaks were possible. The new Decision introduces new forms of part-time career breaks in addition to the existing ones: 1/5, 1/4 and 1/3 career breaks are now possible. The monthly career break allowance has also been increased provided the break is taken within three years of the birth of the second or subsequent child. ■



In Belgium, two magazines—a Dutch weekly and a French biweekly—deal with a large range of family issues, including school or youth unemployment. For more information, contact:

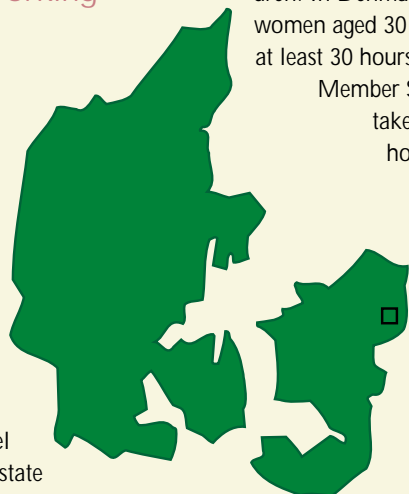
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# Denmark

## 30 Percent of the Working Population Lives on Social Benefits

A general debate on the Danish welfare state gave rise to a number of parliamentary decisions and government initiatives but failed to substantially change family policies and family law. The main problem of the Danish welfare-state model is the financial burden on the state budget. Social transfers constitute the main source of household income for around 30 percent of the working-age population. This high transfer level has led to a debate on alternative ways of organising the welfare system.



### Family Structure

Because most mothers work outside the home, parents tend to share the care for their children. In Denmark, 86 percent of all women aged 30 to 50 work full-time (i.e. at least 30 hours per week). As in other Member States, Danish women take on more (unpaid) housework than men, while fathers invest more time in (paid) work done outside the home. The trend, however, is against a more equal distribution of time between spouses.

According to estimates, one out of every three children experiences her or his parents' divorce. 11 percent of all children of divorced parents (28,000 children under 18) live with their father. Among younger children, this percentage is much lower. The number of children who do not live with their parents (1.3 percent in 1996) has declined since the 1980s.

### Family Policies

In 1993, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children launched an action programme to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. A report prepared in the course of this programme states that it is possible to develop more family-friendly workplaces, based on the wishes of the employees. These wishes mainly concern flexibility in working hours and work organisation. Surprisingly, employed parents are not interested in day-care facilities organised by the firm and usually prefer public day-care services.

Though the number of day-care facilities increased considerably within the last years, demand still exceeds supply. Special attention will be paid to the growing need for day-care facilities that extend their hours beyond the traditional workday.

There are child-care facilities for every age group. The offer ranges from such day-care facilities for children as nurseries and supervised family day care, to after-school centres. In line with the "Child Care Guarantee", these facilities have to be provided by the local authorities.

In general, the economic situation of families and children is satisfactory. However, when considering that more people have to live from the available funds, the per capita income of families with children is, on the average, lower than that of families without children.

### Unemployment Affects Children

Many family problems are closely connected with parental unemployment. In 1998, 7.3 percent of the Danes were without work. Violence, health and family problems, attempted suicides, alcoholism and criminal offences are observed more frequently with people who have been unemployed for longer periods. One out of every two children from families where one or both parents are dealing with long-term unemployment experiences the breakdown of her or his family. ■



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# Finland

## A Right to Public Day Care

Finnish family policy follows the so-called 'Scandinavian (or Nordic) welfare model'. The main challenge to Finnish social policy in the early part of this decade was a sharp economic decline. From 1991 to 1994, all wage earners lost an average of 7.6 percent of their available income. This development has heightened the controversy on social policy as a whole. Social expenditures were cut in many ways, and families and unemployed people were particularly hit by these cutbacks. Despite these difficulties, Finland is the only Member State in the European Union to have fully implemented all of the 50 social-related directives that have come into force. In the past few years, the Finnish economy has rapidly recovered.

## Family Demography

In Finland, the fertility rate has remained relatively high. Finland has one of the lowest rates of maternal deaths (3.3 per hundredthousand), stillbirths (4.0 per thousand), and infant mortality (3.9 per thousand) (1997 figures). Despite a steady increase in the number of separations and divorces, four out of every five children still spend their childhood with their biological parents. The number of cohabiting couples has also shown an upsurge: In 1997, every sixth family was of this type. However, cohabitees frequently decide to marry when they have a child. Parents tend to cohabit more often than in former times, but the number of lone mothers is also rising. People who have no children are most likely to divorce



and separate, while parents of two children have the most stable relationships. If the parents are not married, the risk that the children will experience a separation is five times higher than that affecting children born to married parents.

## Reconciling Family and Work

The Finns are very proud of the high level of equality achieved in their country. Female labour-market participation is high in Finland. Young fathers increasingly take on responsibilities for child care and housework, but young mothers—most of whom work—still do the lion's share of the housework.

In a project financed by the European Union, various models for combining family and work are being tested in collaboration with ten different types of firms. One example gives the employee a chance to save up time on an account and to use it when there is a need for care leave involving children.

## Child Care

Women are entitled to 105 workdays of maternity leave. After that, either parent is entitled to a leave of 158 days. On the average, the benefit for parental leave is 70 percent of one's income. However, this percentage will decrease if the income exceeds a certain level. In addition, every new-born child receives a substantial maternity package containing baby equipment. The state child allowance is paid up to age 17.

Communities and municipalities have been responsible for establishing suitable child-care facilities since 1973. In 1990, the right to placement in public day care was granted to all children below the age of three. In 1996, this right was enlarged to include all children below the age of seven. Low-income families may be totally exempted from paying for day-care charges. Parents of children under three who do not use municipal day-care services are granted an allowance for their children's home care.

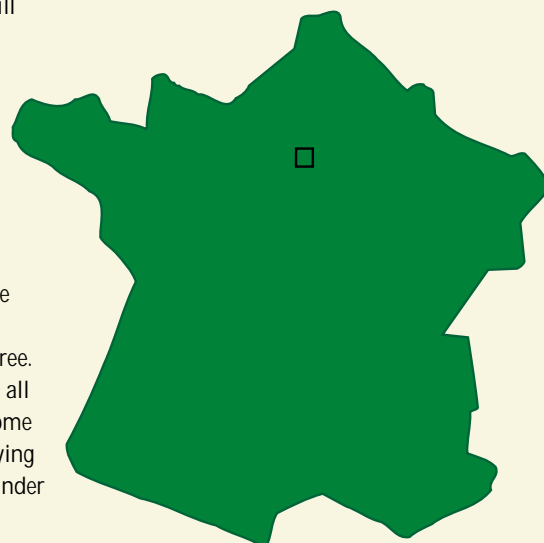
# France

## Family Renaissance

Changes everywhere! This is how you could describe the situation of families in France. Since 1965, the likelihood of divorce has quadrupled (from 10 to 40 percent in 1997). While 30 years ago just six percent of children were born outside marriage, the rate had rocketed to 40 percent by 1997. Yet the French are about to rediscover the benefits of family life. Their behaviour has not changed fundamentally, but new ideas are emerging. As Claude Martin ironically says: "The best way to sell a vacuum-cleaner in France today is to show a man vacuuming his home."

## Reconciling Family and Work

This subject has been fiercely debated, but up to now not much has been done to help women reconcile family and work. Some 70 percent of all women are gainfully employed: 45 percent of the women with three children work, and 16 percent of all women have a part-time job (as opposed to 11 percent ten years ago). The government often praises part-time jobs as a measure to reconcile family and work, but companies tend to see them as a tool to improve labour flexibility. Nevertheless there are some genuine model enterprises: One of them is the hospital of Saint Camille, a private non-profit operation which won a European award. This hospital, when looking into ways to improve the working conditions of its employees, founded its own service organisation



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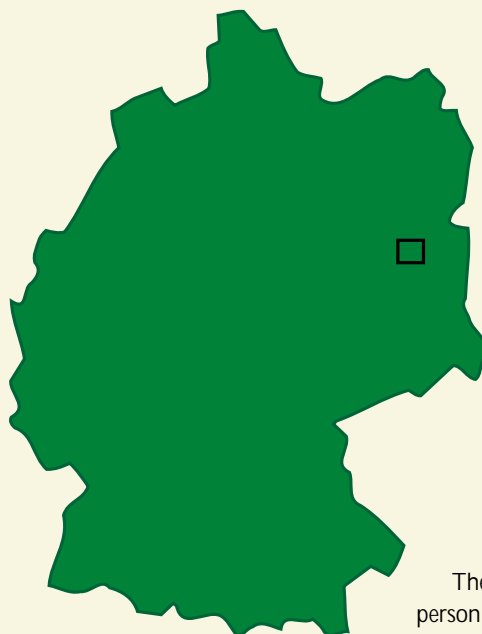
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offering a range of services to the hospital staff. Nurses deliver their laundry in the morning and get it back washed and ironed after work; sewing, cooking and cleaning services round off the picture. In co-operation with the national employment office, ten long-term unemployed persons were hired to perform these services.

### Child Care

Child care is a major issue in France. Since 1988, 1,800 child-care contracts have been signed with community authorities to provide public coverage. Since 1995, parents who leave their child with a day-care mother have been able to receive an allowance of FF 800 (Euro 122) until the child's third birthday. Since 1986, the government has been providing a subsidy to working parents with children under six who employ a daily helper, though this measure has been highly controversial. The market for child-care facilities is not growing.

Parents who take a full or partial job break to stay home with children under three are entitled to a child-raising allowance, provided at least two children are cared for. The full rate is FF 2,964 (Euro 452), payable when the parent takes a full break; but graduations are possible. ■



### Family Structure

The number of both single-person and multi-person households is growing, though the mean size of private households is declining. Trends indicate that marriage and childbirth are being continuously postponed. These developments do not mean that family and marriage are less important. A study on

## Germany

### Principle and Practice

In 1998, public life was dominated by the elections to the 14th German Bundestag. The debate focused on the tax reform and on the various models proposed by each of the political parties represented in the Bundestag, as well as on a new and more appropriate division of responsibilities between state and business. Studying out its impact on families, Thomas Bahle and Franz Rothenbacher, experts of the European Observatory until 1996, made this pointed observation: "It is the family that must shoulder the burden when the state withdraws and the market fails to provide the necessary goods and services. When politicians speak of 'self-reliance' and 'individual responsibility' they must—or should—have the family in mind. If the balance between the state, the market, and the family is shifting towards more 'self-reliance', then the family definitely needs more support in order to fulfil its duties."



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values has found that family still is ranked most highly by the population. Partnerships are not as unstable as is often thought. Walter Bien from the German Youth Institute summarises the situation as follows: "Families have never had it so good: People have more leisure time and they actually spend it together, yet reality is still far removed from the ideal."

As (and perhaps because) the number of children per family is declining, conditions for the young generation are better than ever. Relations between the generations are relaxed. Compared to former times, younger people no longer carry the burden of direct obligations for the older generations. Housing is less cramped, allowing people to enjoy intimacy at a distance.

### Fathers

Fathers increasingly make efforts to assume more responsibilities within the family. Yet the rule still applies that men profit from marriage, especially with regard to their gainful employment, while women are the losers in

terms of social security and financial aspects, as well as regarding the division of labour. As a result, unmarried men are less well off economically than unmarried women, unless the latter have children in their household.

### The Risk of Poverty

Over the past few years, it has become increasingly clear that the risk of becoming impoverished is shifting from the old to the young. The number of children receiving social assistance has quadrupled over the past 15 years. Christian Palentien of the University of Bielefeld states it unequivocally: "When you decide to have a child you are on the road to economic ruin." Nevertheless, this applies neither to all families nor to all life phases. Those most affected are women under 30 with children under six and no partner: Two out of three subsist on an income at the social-assistance level. Empty-nest parents, on the other hand, are the strongest group in economic terms.

# Greece

## Schools Operate in Shifts

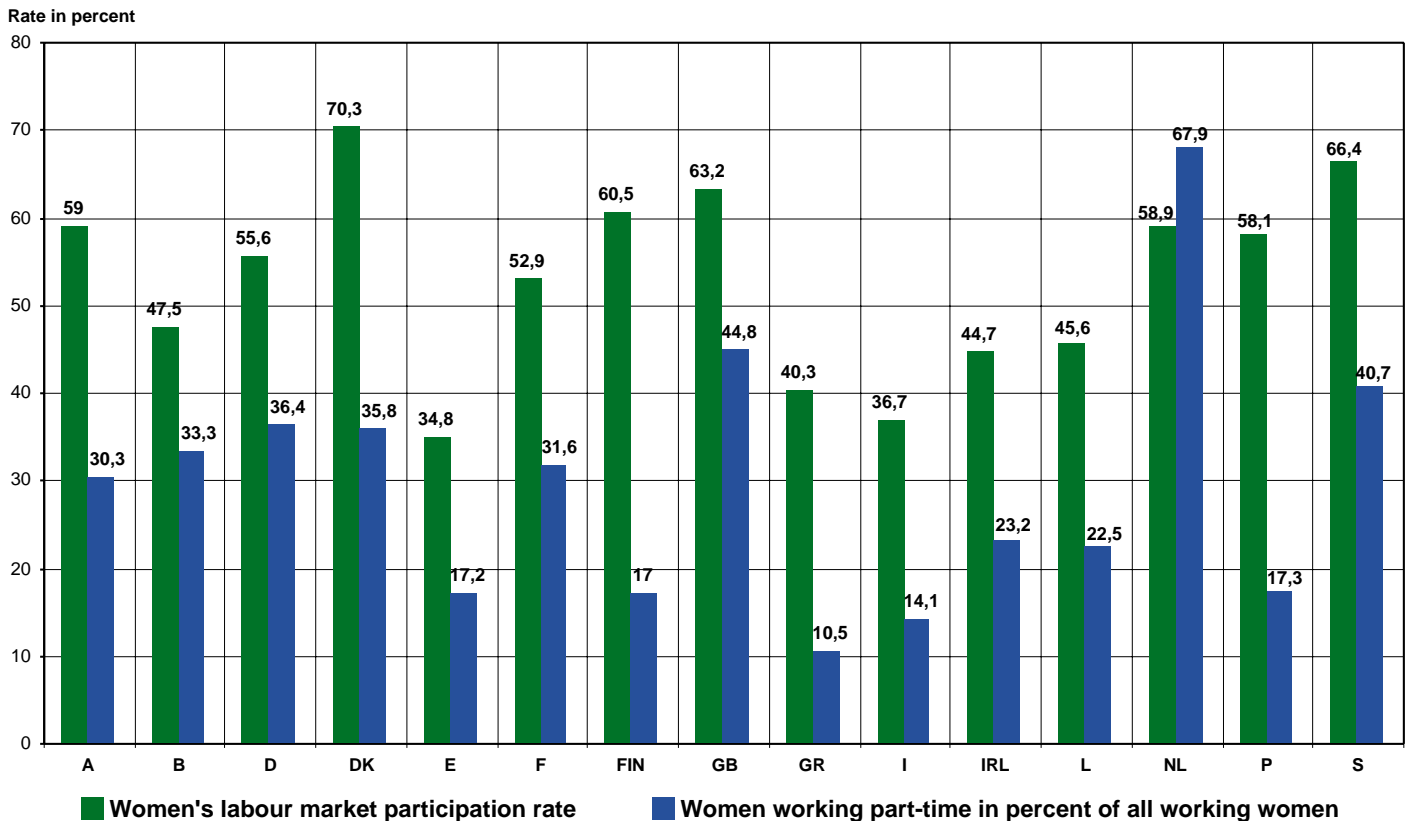
### Demography

Greek fertility is declining; in 1996, the rate was below 1.4 children per woman. Most children are born to married parents. Although divorce remains infrequent, three out of four cases affect families with children. Divorce is particularly frequent after five to seven years of marriage; as a consequence, the children affected are very young.

### Family Policies

In 1997, the social budget amounted to 25.8 percent of the gross national product. In 1996, half of this budget was spent on social insurance (mainly pensions), and all the other social expenditures made up the other half (health: 4.8 percent; education: 3.4; welfare: 2.2; housing 0.7; unemployment and training for re-employment: 0.8; miscellaneous: 1.1). Greek family policies definitely focus on the promotion of larger families. The amount of

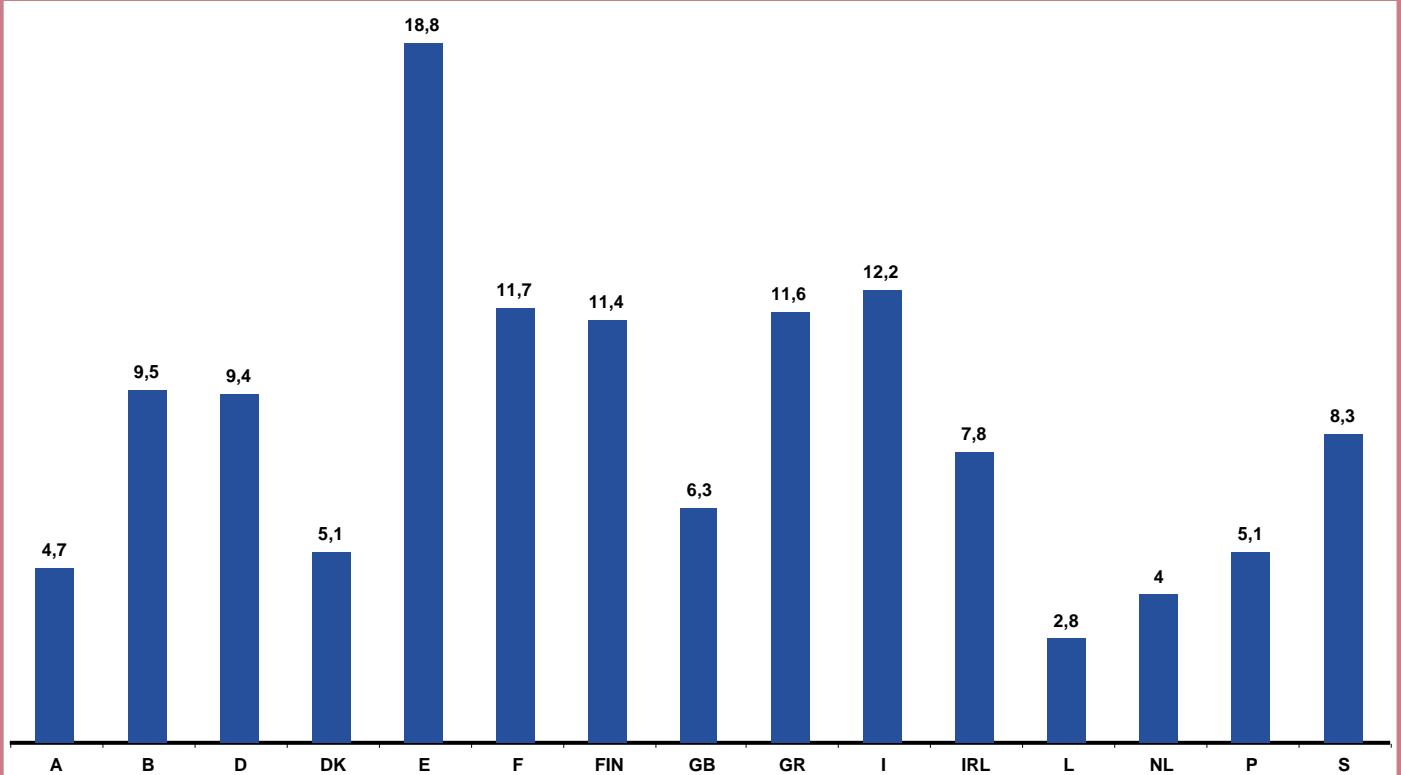
## Women's Labour Market Participation Rate (1998)



Source: New Cronos Database

## Unemployment Rate (1998) in percent

Source: New Cronos Database



every unmarried child under 23. In addition, such mothers are paid a tax-free monthly pension of GRD 23,000 (Euro 70) for life, provided the annual family income is not in excess of GRD 3,000,000 (Euro 9,236).

From a financial point of view, the overall situation of families is much less favourable in Greece than in the other Member States of the European Union. According to the findings of a survey carried out in 1996, 44 percent of the households feel that their financial situation has deteriorated.

### Reconciling Family and Work

On the public level, reconciliation of family and work has not been particularly promoted. However, there is rising awareness that parents need support—not only because people in Greece have longer working hours than the European average, but also because of the peculiarities of the Greek school system. In Greece, average working hours are 46.7 weekly (60.5 for employers, 55 for self-employed), and 16 percent of the workers have a second job. Trade unions are promoting the 35-hour week without any decrease in pay as a means of fighting unemployment. The average daily

time spent on child care is 90 minutes for women and 36 minutes for men.

the allowance for the third child was recently increased from GRD 34,000 (Euro 103) to GRD 40,000 (Euro 121) per month. Moreover, the child's age up to which the mother can benefit from the allowance was raised from three to six. Every mother of four or more children receives GRD 10,000 (Euro 30) per month for



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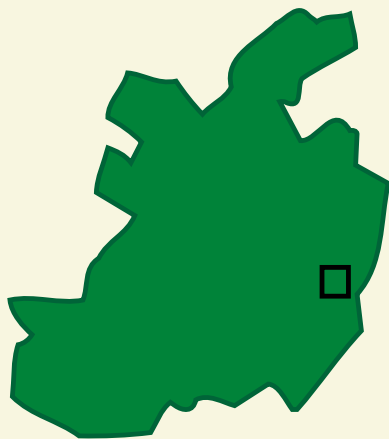


Due to a lack of classrooms, in particular in urban areas, the great majority of public schools operate on a shift system. As the shifts often follow a rotation pattern, the children sometimes go to school in the mornings and sometimes in the afternoons. This scheme creates many problems for parents who have to cope with time variations in care, meal arrangements, and travel to and from school. The stress on parents with several children rises, if the children are taught in different shifts.

In order to promote gender equality, Greece has introduced a special programme designed to protect women from unemployment and poverty, improve their social and professional status, and safeguard their health. ■

## Ireland

The Irish Are the Youngest



### Family Policies

A high number of births, a trend towards cohabitation, and a high risk among children to become poor: These are the benchmark data of the Irish family. The Irish economy's growth rate of 5.75 percent exceeds the European average and permits a more active family policy.

Ireland has no explicitly pro-birth policy. Gabriel Kiely explains that, despite the temptation to consider the higher benefits paid to families with three or more children pronatalist, this measure was actually introduced to support poorer families with more children.

### Demography

The 1996 Census shows an increase in the total population of 2.7 percent over the 1991 Census. Contrary to most other European countries, this is not due to inward migration but to a comparatively high birth rate. Statistically, every woman in Ireland had 1.92 children in 1997. However, birth rates are also declining in Ireland, though from an originally high level. More than 20 percent of the children are born out of wedlock. Ireland has the youngest population in the European Union. The share of those younger than 14 is 30.9 percent. In 1996, the share of those older than 65 was 11 percent. The projections for the year 2026 are 19 percent for this age group, indicating that the Irish population will remain young in decades to come.

### Family Structure

In 1994, the marriage rate was 4.4 per thousand inhabitants. This corresponds to the trend persisting since the 1970s. The rate is continuously dropping. There are no reliable figures on cohabitation. It is, however, assumed that the decline in marriage rates and the rise in the number of births outside marriage reflect a trend towards cohabitation.

### Homeless Children

There are around 5,000 homeless people in Ireland; almost ten percent of them are children. More than 400 homeless children are picked up by the police in the streets of Dublin every year. A report shows that the homeless are getting younger and younger. These children leave their homes because of family problems, poverty, abuse or neglect.



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### Child Benefits for Families

The allowance paid a family for a child is the pre-eminent state benefit within the scope of family allowances. In most Member States, the amount paid depends on the number of children. The benefit is financed through one of two schemes. In Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the allowance is paid from public funds. In Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal, it is financed from employers' contributions, with the state topping up funds in Italy and Luxembourg. Greece and Spain have a mixed system: Employers, employees and the state all contribute. In addition, there are differences among countries, depending on the children's age and the parents' income. In some countries, lone parents receive extra payments. Most countries also grant birth allowances and other cash benefits (e.g. when the child starts going to school), as well as additional payments for children with disabilities.

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## Lone Parents

The Minister for Social Welfare introduced a new one-parent family payment, which took effect on 1 January 1997. The former lone parent's allowance and deserted wife's benefit were amalgamated in the new payment. This brought about full equality between men and women in this area and removed the concept of 'desertion' from the social welfare system. Since 1997, all lone parents have been allowed to earn IEP 6,000 (Euro 7,618) per year without losing their allowance, and up to IEP 12,000 (Euro 15,237) while receiving a partial allowance. This was designed to help lone parents enter the labour market.

## Reconciling Family and Work

In 1996, a report on the introduction of family-friendly initiatives in the workplace stated that "despite the existence of legislation on equal pay and equal opportunities at work, employment practices in many organisations still reflect a view that workers are male employees without family responsibilities".

Altogether, there are fewer marriages and a steady rise of those that end in divorce. Even so, the Italian divorce rate is still far below European levels. Some 90 percent of children under 18 live with both their parents, and almost eight percent with one parent. Similarly, women's position in Italy has undergone substantial change. Today, women are acquiring more interests outside the family; they have the same goals as men in terms of education and jobs, so that they postpone marrying and having children and give birth to fewer children. Women's employment is still lower in Italy than in many other European countries, but women have been catching up. It is mostly the young women who enter the labour market in droves, and they intend to stay on even after they have children.

## Hotel 'La Mamma'

Young people tend to stay on with their parents and delay establishing their own households. About 90 percent of those under 24 live with their parents—not only those who are studying and financially dependent on their parents, but even those who already have a job of their own. Experts attribute the trend to cultural roots and traditions, the proverbial

protectiveness of Italian families towards their children, and the 'familyism' of Catholic origin. In Southern Italy, however, young people do not always stay on their own volition: One in three 15- to 24-year-olds is unemployed, and in some areas the rate reaches 50–60 percent.

## Child Labour

By law, the minimum working age is 15, but compulsory education ends at 14. The resultant gap contributes to the illegal employment of minors. According to a study, there are some 50,000 children under the age of 14 who work despite the ban. A survey of 1989 found that about seven percent of children between 6 and 13 years of age help their parents by working outside the home on a more or less regular basis.

# Italy

## A Population Shifting towards the Old

### Demographic Development

The extended Italian family, that cherished cliché, has long since become a thing of the past. While the number of families is rising, families themselves are shrinking. Birth rates are about 40 percent lower than the replacement threshold that would guarantee population stability from generation to generation. Italian women give birth to 1.2 children on average. Over the past 20 years, the birth rate has been so low that, in 1996, Italy became the only country in the world in which the number of older people exceeded that of the young. The ageing of the population is a major problem for Italian society. In the past few years, there has been a virtual explosion of pension payments in terms of gross domestic product. Pension payments make up more than 70 percent of social expenditure.



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# Luxembourg

## Rarely Do Both Parents Work Full-Time

### Demographic Development

The number of births rose by 4.9 percent in 1996, with a fertility rate of 1.76. Such levels had not been reached since the beginning of the 1970s. This growth took place mainly within the foreign population; the natural increase amongst those from the traditional ethnic group of 'natives' was negative. Between 1995 and 2025, population growth is expected to produce a slanted age structure: The projected increase in the proportion of those aged 60 and above is more than 40 percent, one of the highest rates in the European Union. As for family statistics, Luxembourg (like other comparable EU Member States) has recorded a rise in the number of divorces and births outside marriage: 15 percent of all new births are of this category.

### Family Policies

As a rule, a woman caring for her child has problems reconciling work and family. Only 17 percent of all children live in households where both parents work full-time.

Child-care facilities do not meet women's requirements. One in every two women would like to have more crèches and nurseries available with hours more suited to her needs. In 1996, 1,123 children between the ages of two months and six years were enrolled in some type of child-care facility, while 862 enquiries could not be met.

Children go to nursery school from the age of four. Primary education begins at age six, and schooling is compulsory until the age of 15.

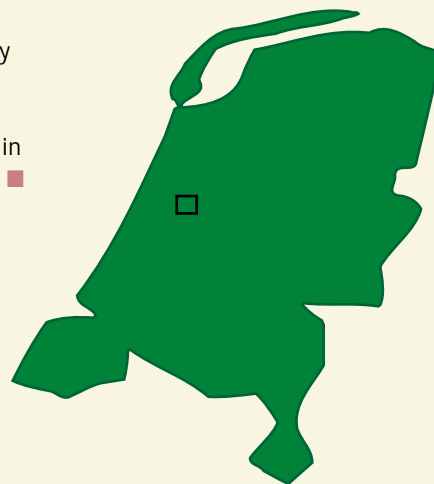
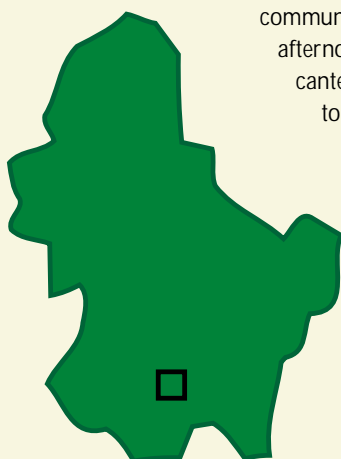
Schools usually close as soon as classes are over; currently, only 12 out of 118 communities offer care in the afternoon. Few schools have canteens, and the children have to go home for lunch. It is easy to see why many mothers choose to stay at home.

A major challenge for the whole system is the high percentage of foreign nationals (almost 30 percent of primary school children are foreigners), so that multi-lingualism is a crucial element in the country's educational system.

have their first child; the rest when they have the second child. Only four percent of small children attend a kindergarten or other child-care facility. Compulsory schooling starts at five, but 95 percent of all children attend nursery school at four. Primary school starts at six and takes six years.

On the other hand, many people hold part-time jobs. Two out of three women hold a job of fewer than 35 hours per week. This allows women to better reconcile their family and working life. In theory, everybody is progressive and agrees that household chores should be shared equally between both partners and handled jointly by them. However, although quite a few fathers are changing nappies and taking care of the kids, women still feel pressure in trying to be good mothers.

The government includes many members who are models of pro-family orientation: Some ministers leave parliamentary sessions early to be with their family. The finance minister is known for taking his children to school in the morning and insisting on sharing his dinner with them.



# Netherlands

## The Netherlands: A Land of Two Faces

There are two faces to the Netherlands: On the one hand, just five percent of all women with children work at a full-time job; and only 29 percent of the Dutch believe that women should contribute to the family income, as opposed to 75 percent of all Europeans. It is therefore the perceived opinion in the Netherlands that a single earner's salary suffices to provide for the partner and two children. Most women stop working when they

## Reconciling Family and Work

In the Netherlands, reconciling family and work is not the subject of any sweeping debate, not least because full-time employment is relatively low. Parental leave is very short and there are few child-care facilities within companies. Most Dutch are relatively affluent and feel that the family is their private affair, so that no genuine pressure for change has been building up at the political level. Most educated women prefer to give up their gainful employment to stay home with their children. Should they wish to continue in their job, they need to spend 30 to

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50 percent of their income on child care and transportation.

Mothers are not forced to take jobs for financial considerations. In 1963, the Netherlands introduced the 'Algemene Bijstandswet', a government-guaranteed minimum income to which anyone who has no income from work or property is entitled. Thus, a lone parent with one child receives HFL 1,444.90 (Euro 656) per month after taxes. A couple with one 10-year-old child gets HFL 2,004.22 (Euro 909); a couple with one 8- and one 12-year-old receives HFL 2,189.77 (Euro 994).

### Parental Leave Benefits

All expectant mothers in the Netherlands who have health insurance receive 100 percent of their pre-tax salary up to a maximum daily rate of HFL 289 (Euro 131) for altogether 16 weeks. They give birth at home, attended by midwives, except when medical reasons advise another course. The women are entitled to home care for at least 24 hours and at most 80 hours within the first ten days. Their own contribution is HFL 6 (Euro 2.70) per hour. Hospital costs accrued for medical reasons are paid by the state. The benefit is due not just to insured women but also to women and daughters co-insured with their husbands or fathers.

## Portugal

### Poverty Breeds Truancy

#### Family Policies

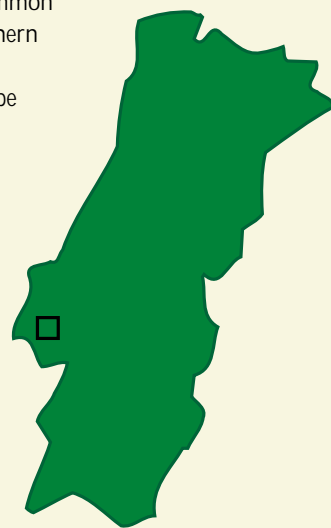
Although the economic situation in Portugal has improved during the past 15–20 years, poverty continues to be a great challenge for Portuguese family policy: 19 percent of all families in Portugal are poor. The 1991 Census showed that 2.3 percent of all families had no electricity, 12 percent had no indoor toilet, 12 percent had no water supply, and 18 percent no bathroom.

Portugal, in common with other southern

European countries, may be described as a country with a strong and explicit ideological commitment to the family, but a low profile as far as family policy is concerned.

The family is expected to compensate for

weaknesses of social policies. At the end of 1995, the Socialist government began discussing social-policy measures and support for low-income families. Some topics—such as child abuse, domestic violence or abortion—had been totally taboo up to that time. In July 1996, a guaranteed minimum income was introduced and fixed at PTE 54,600 (Euro 272), though the sums paid are lower. Two adults get PTE 20,000 (Euro 100) each, and children get PTE 10,000 (Euro 50). People who claim the guaranteed minimum income are required to participate in a social integration programme. Among other things, this has contributed to reduced absenteeism of children from school. At the end of 1996, 2,606 households lived on this benefit: 45 percent were couples with children, and 22 percent were lone parents.



### Protection and Benefits for Expectant and Nursing Mothers

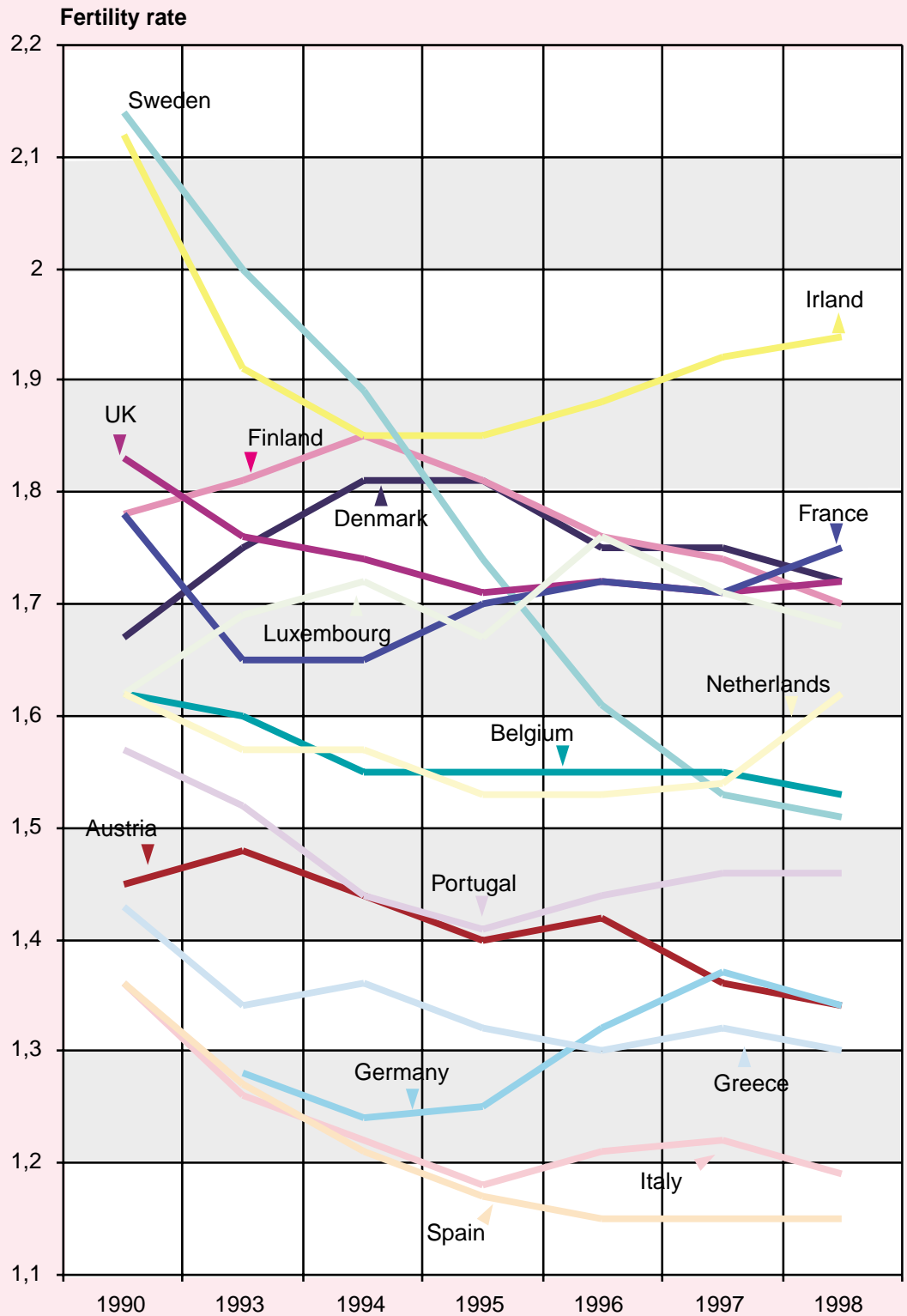
In addition to labour-law provisions introduced in all member states of the European Union to protect expectant and nursing mothers, regulations stemming from social-insurance laws exist in all countries and are enforced by the systems responsible for preventive health care. In Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, this task is carried out by the statutory health-insurance organisations; in the other countries, it is the responsibility of the state health-care services.

Benefits granted to expectant and nursing mothers include benefits in kind (inter alia access to medical care) as well as cash benefits designed to compensate for income lost during the period in which mothers are legally barred from working. This period differs within the European Union, varying from 14 to 28 weeks. Benefits are subject to similar variations, from 50 percent of the lost pretax income (Greece) to 100 percent (Netherlands, Portugal, Spain). Benefits in cash and kind are generally granted only after the mother has qualified for a certain minimum insurance period within the respective system.

# Fertility Rates in Europe

Change in percent	1990 - 1998
Austria	- 7,6
Belgium	- 5,6
Denmark	+ 3,0
Finland	- 4,5
France	- 1,7
Germany*	+ 4,7
Greece	- 9,1
Ireland	- 8,5
Italy	- 12,5
Luxembourg	+ 3,7
Netherlands	0,0
Portugal	- 7,0
Spain	- 15,4
Sweden	- 29,4
UK	- 6,0

\*) 1993 - 1998



Source: Council of Europe 1998; calculations ÖIF-hs

## Education

In the late 1980s, in order to reduce the high illiteracy rate, compulsory schooling was extended from six to nine years. The number of dropouts is high, absenteeism being partly due to child labour: 1,434 cases of child labour were detected between 1990 and 1995. For a long time, children were considered their parents' property. This concept has changed only gradually over the last two decades.



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The expansion of compulsory schooling was not accompanied by the necessary development of facilities. Pupils are often taught in two shifts. According to estimates, around 100,000 children drop out of school every year without completing compulsory education. Of those who remain at school, about one third have severe difficulties. A survey showed that one to two thirds of all children have nobody to help them with their homework.

## Reconciling Family and Work

Reconciling family and work is a major problem for Portuguese families. Women who are now in their fifties have hardly ever worked outside the home, but young women are expected to keep their full-time job when they have children. Women and men agree that both partners should contribute to the family income. However, child-care facilities are lacking in Portugal. There are hardly any nurseries for children below age three, because the state considers child care a purely educational task. For this reason, the current offer only comprises pre-school day nurseries for children above three. Many care facilities are open only five hours per day and close during lunch. Only 50 percent of children in the age group from three to six are in formal day-care arrangements.

## Spain

### Finding Work is a Problem for Young People

The economic situation in Spain has undergone a perceptible improvement in the last few years. A growing domestic product and a drop in inflation to 1.5 percent in 1998 are both benchmark data for the Spanish economy. The still-high unemployment rate (18.2 percent by the end of 1998) remains the main social problem. Unemployment particularly hits young people and women. The majority of unemployed people live as dependants in a family unit. The unemployment rate of breadwinners is only nine percent, while their daughters and sons experience three times that rate.

### Demography

Fertility has remained at a very low level (1.16 children per woman in 1997) and continues to decline in younger age groups. The high rate of

unemployment among the younger generation forces large numbers of young Spaniards to remain with their parents. Only 30 percent of the women and 14 percent of the men live as couples, as opposed to 55 percent and 36 percent, respectively, in France, Germany and the UK. By the end of 1996, there were 6.8 million children under 16, representing 17.3 percent of the total Spanish population. The overwhelming majority of them live in families of two parents.

### Family Policies

Parental-leave benefits are unknown in Spain: People who interrupt their vocational career to look after their children have to do so without pay. In 1997, the family allowance for dependent children was uprated in proportion to inflation forecasts. Only a small percentage of a family's real expenses can be deducted from its taxable income, a factor which



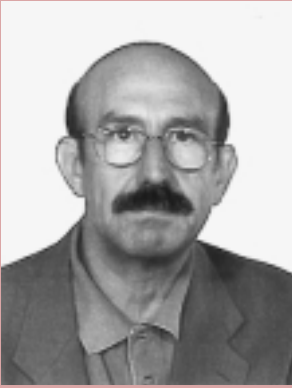
weakens the fiscal protection of the family. There are,

however, special benefits for large families. The number of public child-care facilities is insufficient. Spanish men hardly help out with household chores. Though the government supports workplace nurseries, the demand by far exceeds the supply. This makes it even more difficult for women to reconcile family and work. Poverty is yet another problem. An estimated 15 percent of the households with children under 17 live below the poverty line.

### Dangers to Children

Concerning risks to children, the focus is on three areas: maltreatment, sexual abuse and economic exploitation. According to some local studies that have been extrapolated to all of Spain, 23 percent of the girls and 15 percent



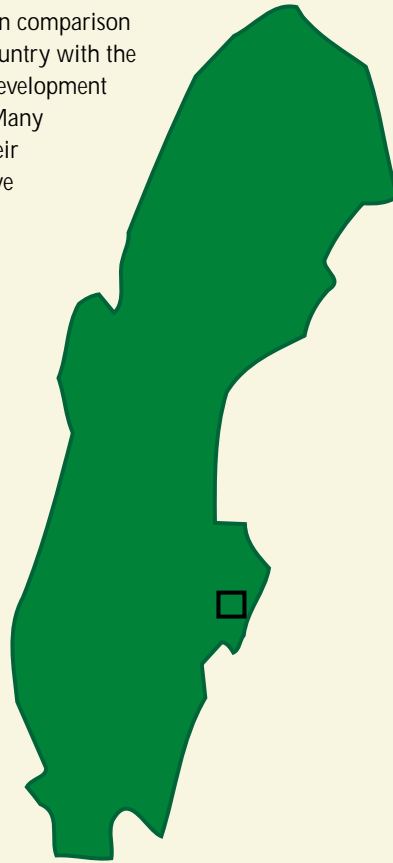


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of the boys have suffered from sexual abuse at least once in their lives. According to official figures, child labour is not very frequent: At the age of 14–15, three per thousand worked in 1995 as opposed to six per thousand in 1990. However, in rural areas or small towns, high school absenteeism might be an indication that some child labour does exist in Spain.

1995: 1.4 percent). In a European comparison in the 1990s, Sweden was the country with the largest decline in fertility. This development is attributed to various factors: Many women postpone the birth of their first child, and fewer couples have a third child. Birth rates have decreased most among the less educated. Other explanations are high unemployment, problems related to one's foothold in the labour market, and longer enrolment in educational programmes.



### Family Policies

Families were hit not only by the consolidation measures, but also by high unemployment: In 1998, the unemployment rate was 7.3 percent. Higher costs for social services (housing, child care), higher taxes, reduced benefits from social insurance schemes and lower allowances have all decreased the purchasing power of families. Lone mothers and low-income families are the biggest losers. The disposable income of families with children has become lower.

- Couples without children and households with retired couples have fared better than households with children. Needs testing has been tightened.

### Education

During the past few years, the Swedish school system was subject to a number of changes. Teaching hours have decreased, and school expenditures have been reduced in different ways while the amount of pupils has increased. Parents with a low educational level tend to choose schools in areas where the ethnic and social background resembles their own. This increases social segregation.

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## Sweden

### Families: Victims of Consolidation Policy?

Since 1996, the Swedish government has endeavoured to reduce the national budget deficit. The local level has been assuming more and more responsibilities. During recent years, there have been considerable cuts in local budgets for financing social services. This has had a negative impact on the living conditions of families.

### Demographic Trends

Birth rates in Sweden increased steadily during the 1980s. This trend has been broken from the beginning of the 1990s onwards (birth rate



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# United Kingdom



## Gradual Discovery of Family Policies

### Family Structure

30 percent of British households have dependent children; 80 percent of British children live in a family with two parents, and nine out of ten of these parents are married. However, currently one in three babies is born out of wedlock. In 60 percent of the two parent families with children, both parents go to work, but most mothers work part-time. British women are delaying having children to increasingly higher ages; on average, they are 27 when they have their first child. Childlessness is increasing. In this generation of childbearing women, one in five is predicted to remain childless compared with one in ten in their mothers' generation.

### Family Policies

Family policy in Britain has been described as 'implicit'. Family life has always been considered a private matter with the state's role essentially one of providing both a broad legislative framework regulating marriage and

divorce and other key events and some underlying fiscal support. The state only actively intervened when something went seriously wrong. Nevertheless, family life is of major importance to the British public. A recent national survey showed that people valued their family relationships as eleven times more important than their friends.

Family issues grew in political importance over the 1990s and the Labour government has gone further than any other British government in developing explicit policies for families. It inherited legislation for divorce reform which had fuelled a public debate on marriage and divorce and, like the previous Conservative government, Labour has been concerned with preventing juvenile delinquency and youth crime and the general issue of parenting.

Family policy in Britain currently focuses on families with children and in particular is concerned with tackling the family poverty associated with unemployment and non-working lone parents. A number of measures are being introduced to encourage workless parents off social security into employment. Chief of these are the New Deal for Lone Parents, the Working Family Tax Credit and the National Childcare Strategy. These last two measures essentially subsidise or top up the income of low-paid workers and provide financial help to meet the costs of formal child care so enabling parents to work.

In addition, the government has tackled the machinery of family policy making, historically spread across several government Departments. A Ministerial Group has been set up, chaired at a senior level by the Home Secretary, on which ministers from all relevant Departments sit. This aims to look at family policy issues holistically. This Committee has led to the publication of the first ever consultation document on family policy. "Supporting Families" was published in November 1998 and provoked considerable public interest. The document is essentially a record of the government's main activities and initiatives for families since taking office and identifies areas for further work and consultation.

To date public policy for families has been characterised by rhetoric for all parents but significant programmes and resources are

targeted at the vulnerable or disadvantaged such as lone parents, parents in poor areas, teenage and new parents. Among the issues causing political or public concern are:

- The high incidence of family and child poverty—one in three children in Britain lives below the poverty line.
- Marriage and relationship stability: High levels of divorce are accompanied by a growing incidence of cohabitation and extra-marital childbearing.
- Balancing home and work life: Men in Britain work the largest hours in Europe.
- Teenage pregnancy—the highest rate in Europe and not falling significantly. Most teenage mothers (85 percent) are unmarried and a very high proportion are financially dependent on the State. ■



**Ceridwen ROBERTS**  
national expert

Ceridwen Roberts, originally an industrial sociologist, has been working on family research and policy since 1992 when she became Director of the Family Policy Studies Centre. Her earlier work was on women's lifetime employment and labour market flexibility issues (part-time work, working time, etc.). More recently, she has researched kinship, parenting problems and worked on projects on lone parents, child support, fatherhood, marriage and divorce and teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

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# Reader's Poll

The *Family Observer* is trying to provide an overview of scientific research findings that is accessible to a broader public. We would like you to tell us whether we have been successful in our efforts, and naturally we are also interested in finding out what we can do better in the future.

1) Were the subjects of this issue interesting to you?

- Yes mostly
- Yes, partly
- No, not at all

2) What subjects would you like to read about in the *Family Observer*?

3) Do you think the *Family Observer* is ...?

informative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	not informative
superficial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	thorough
neutral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	value-biased
non-dynamic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	dynamic
single oriented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	family oriented
interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	uninteresting
progressive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	conservative
female oriented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	male oriented
relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	irrelevant
colourless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	colourful
easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	difficult to understand

4) How do you like the photographs?

- Very much
- Allright
- So-so
- Not much
- Not at all

5) How do you like the layout (e.g. format, font, paper quality)?

- Very much
- Allright
- So-so
- Not much
- Not at all

6) Do you think the layout is...?

modern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	old-fashioned
easy to read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	hard to read
clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	cluttered
handy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	unwieldy
attractive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	unattractive
interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	boring

7) Which would be your preferred language for reading the *Family Observer*?

8) How would you like to get the *Family Observer*?

- As a magazine
- As a CD-ROM
- Via Internet

9) Do you want to continue receiving the *Family Observer*?

- Yes
- No

10) Do you know anybody who might be interested in this publication? If so, please provide full addresses.

Your Comment:

About yourself:

11) Gender:

- female
- male

12) Status:

- single
- married
- cohabiting
- divorced
- widowed

13) Age:

..... years old

14) Do you have children?

- no
- yes

Number of children:  Ages of children:

15) Highest level of schooling completed:

- primary education
- secondary education
- tertiary education

16) In what field do you work?

- Administration
- Science
- Journalism
- Politics / NGO
- Family counselling
- Other:

Please return the questionnaire to Irene M. Kernthaler, Austrian Institute for Family Studies (ÖIF), Gonzagagasse 19/8, A-1010 Vienna, Austria, Fax: +43-1-535 14 55.

The results of this poll will be published on the Observatory's home page:  
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/family/observatory/home.html>

Thank you for your input and participation!





The artist speaks of her work for the *Family Observer*:

"In my work, I try to link my different roles as artist, mother, housewife, teacher, and organiser. Spheres of life, roles and experiences that are normally meticulously separated intermingle, influence and impact upon each other. My photos for this issue are based on this concept: pictures of children's rooms, toys, cuddly animals, Lego bricks. I work with the things I am confronted with in my everyday life."



# A Work of Art, a Slice of Life

Western industrial societies tend to idealise the family. Families smile at us from billboards and from the TV screen. A perfect world! The children are always neat and clean, the mothers relaxed, the fathers present, and the apartments tidy. All of us know that real life is often quite

different. In the *Family Observer*, we did not want to hide the discrepancy between our most cherished ideals and the everyday reality behind the embellished photos. To achieve this more complete picture of reality, we organised a competition for young artists, in

co-operation with the Federal Curator of Arts in Austria. The winners are Christine Susanna Prantauer (Innsbruck) (first prize), Hildegard Haselgrübler and Beate Rathmayr (Linz) (second prize), and Michaela Niederkircher (Innsbruck) (third prize). Ruth Noack (Vienna)

won a special prize. The Tyrolian Christine Prantauer has illustrated this issue of the *Family Observer*. In her photos, she shows a section of the 'real world': the world of kids encompassing the topics addressed by adults.

Irene M. Kernthaler

## Christine Susanna PRANTAUER

Born in Zams/Tyrol, Austria

1980–1984 Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna/diploma in painting

1985–1987 University of Applied Arts, Vienna

1988–1989 Lecturer at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna (P. Weibel)

1989 State Fellowship for Fine Arts

### Selection of Own Exhibits (O) and Participation in Other Exhibits (P)

1990 Sammlung EA Generali, Secession Vienna (P)

1991 Sub Trans Alpina, Valley of Aosta (P)

1992 Stadt der Frauen (Women's Town), Innsbruck (P)  
Gallery Elefant, Landeck (O)

1993 Fest am Boden (Feet Firmly on the Ground), Wörgl (P)

1994 Gallery Medienkunst Tirol, Innsbruck (O)

1995 Copygramme, Municipal Gallery Schwaz (P)

1996 Diskurs der Systeme (Discourse of Systems), University of Fine Arts in Innsbruck (with Thomas Feuerstein)

Copy Art Book, Gallery Maerz, Linz (P)

Die Produktion bestimmt die Konsumtion (Production Determines Consumption), Gallery Andechs, Innsbruck (O)

1998 Mobilität (Mobility), Palais Liechtenstein, Feldkirch (P)

Collezione tirole, Austrian Cultural Institute Rome (P)

Einbahn 175 (Oneway 175), façade installation at Museum Ferdinandeum, jointly with x-tra künstlerinnen kooperative

1999 Poster exhibit Innsbruck – Pristina/Galerie im Taxispalais

Kunst und Medien (Art and Media), Galerie am Grillhof (with Kurt Lang)

### Exhibits in Public Spaces

**1996: Poster: Herrenseilschaften (Men's Clubs)**

On the occasion of the event "In Lücken des Gedenkens" (Memory Lapses), Innsbruck 1996 (with Barbara Hundegger)

**1997: Poster: Wir, das seien alle (We, every one of us)**

On the occasion of the International Day of Action Against Violence against Women, Innsbruck 1997 (with Barbara Hundegger)

**1998: Einbahn 175 (Oneway 175)**

Façade installation in the balustrade series, Tiroler Landesmuseum (State Museum of Tyrol), Innsbruck 1998, jointly with x-tra künstlerinnen kooperative

**1999: Poster exhibit: Innsbruck – Pristina**

In three locations of Innsbruck, organised by the Galerie im Taxispalais.



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