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Family Diversity and its Challenges for Policy Makers in Europe

Evidence and recommendations from the FP7 project *FamiliesAndSocieties*

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› Introduction

The aim of this discussion paper is to provide up-to-date empirical evidence and policy recommendations related to family issues in Europe. The content presented is based on the main findings of the large-scale EU Seventh Framework project - "Changing families and sustainable societies: Policy contexts and diversity over the life course and across generations" (*FamiliesAndSocieties*). From February 2013 until January 2017, the consortium brought together a total of 25 leading universities and research institutes from 15 European countries, three transnational civil society actors and a large number of national and international stakeholders. The general coordination of the project was carried out at Stockholm University by project coordinator Associate Professor Livia Sz. Oláh, who was assisted by a management team comprised of Professor Gunnar Andersson and Associate Professor Gerda Neyer.

The project had four objectives:

- To explore the growing complexity of family configurations and transitions across and within European societies;
- To examine their implications for children, women and men with respect to inequalities in life chances, intergenerational relations and care arrangements;
- To investigate how policies address family diversity and its consequences;
- To identify likely paths of future changes in family compositions and related policy needs.

In order to achieve these goals, the project was structured into 12 Work Packages:

- Work package 1: Project management (Leader: Livia Sz. Oláh, Stockholm University).
- Work package 2: Diverse family configurations – Life goals and life course transitions (Co-leaders: Dimitri Mortelmans, University of Antwerp, and Ariane Pailhé, Institut national d'études démographiques).
- Work package 3: The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies (Co-leaders: Rudolf Richter, University of Vienna, and Irena Kotowska, Warsaw School of Economics).
- Work package 4: The changing role of children and societal implications: Assisted reproduction, late fertility and childlessness (Co-leaders: Melinda Mills, University of Oxford, and Maria Letizia Tanturri, University of Padova).
- Work package 5: Family dynamics and inequalities in children's life chances (Co-leaders: Juho Härkönen, Stockholm University, and Fabrizio Bernardi, European University Institute).
- Work package 6: Childcare arrangements: Determinants and consequences (Co-leaders: Daniela del Boca and Chiara Monfardini, Collegio Carlo Alberto).
- Work package 7: Intergenerational linkages in the family: The organization of caring and financial responsibilities (Co-leaders: Pearl Dykstra and Kasia Karpinska, Erasmus University Rotterdam).
- Work package 8: New Europeans – Social Inclusion of Migrant and Ethnic Minority Families (Co-leaders: Hill Kulu, University of Liverpool, and Amparo González-Ferrer, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas).
- Work package 9: Policies and diversity over the life course (Co-leaders: Olivier Thévenon, Institut national d'études démographiques, and Gerda Neyer, Stockholm University).
- Work package 10: Foresight activities (Co-leaders: Dimiter Philipov and Thomas Fent / Bernhard Riederer, Austrian Academy of Sciences / Vienna Institute of Demography).
- Work package 11: Synthesis and policy implications (Co-leaders: Barbara Hobson and Livia Sz. Oláh, Stockholm University).
- Work package 12: The "*FamiliesAndSocieties* Forum" (Co-leaders: James W. Vaupel and Andreas Edel, Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research).

All contents presented in this document derive from the studies conducted along the project and the final reports of each work package. Policy recommendations are mainly based on the project's report "Policy recommendations for changing families and sustainable societies: Policy contexts and diversity over the life course and across generations" by Laura Carlson, Livia Sz. Oláh and Barbara Hobson, and on the project's Policy Briefs, which are available at www.familiesandsocieties.eu.

This document is part of Population Europe's discussion paper series, which provides in-depth insights into contemporary discussions among demographic experts from research, policy and civil society at the European level. The discussion paper series is part of Population Europe's strategy to

promote comprehensive knowledge and new insights based on top-research findings, and make them easily accessible to decision-makers and other audiences interested in Europe's demographic change (www.population-europe.eu). As the collaborative network of Europe's leading demographic research centres, Population Europe has developed an extensive set of tools for efficient dissemination of research outcomes to researchers, policy makers, civil society, the media and other interested audiences. Furthermore, Population Europe actively promotes direct exchange between scientists and societal decision-makers through regular conferences and workshops jointly organised with its partners. The network participated in the project *FamiliesAndSocieties* as the leading organisation in charge of dissemination activities.

› 1. Growing family diversity

Family patterns have changed substantially over the past fifty years as a result of new partnership and childbearing trends. The 1960s marked the end of the so-called "Golden Age of the Family", when high marriage and birth rates at relatively young ages, low divorce rates and non-traditional family forms prevailed (Neyer et al. 2016). Currently, a wide variety of family forms and relationships coexist: Married and cohabitating couples with or without children, single parents, stepfamilies, blended families, childless couples and same-sex unions, just to mention a few. Results from *FamiliesAndSocieties* highlight that family forms are not the only thing that have shifted. Family life over the life course is a dynamic pathway and the pace at which events occur have become less standardised than before. Examples are the timing of when one moves out of the parental home, when couples decide to cohabit or get married and have children (FamiliesAndSocieties 2017 - WP2).

These processes are accompanied by potential challenges over the course of the entire life, implying that **social protection and social investments should also be able to protect individuals against these risks over the life course, independent of the family arrangements they have. Accordingly, laws and policies should not have any bias in favour of specific types of families**. Legal recognition and regulation of various family structures is a key mechanism of social inclusion. However, in many countries, stepfamilies, "living apart together" and same-sex relationships are not yet recognised or regulated.

Recognising stepfamilies

√ Laws, policies and practices should avoid negative connotations and discrimination with respect to stepfamilies vis-a-vis the nuclear family model.

√ Bias in favour of nuclear families living in the same household, as well as biologically-based relationships should be negated.

√ Appropriate non-discriminatory terms should be introduced and promoted for various family relationships in stepfamilies. A glossary of terms for different family forms and their members may help to reduce negative attitudes towards such families.

√ Legal systems should grant parental responsibility for a child to more than two people in the case of stepfamilies (as is the case in England and Australia).

√ A legal recognition of the commitments of stepparents with corresponding sets of rights and obligations should be implemented.

Source: Carlson et al, 2017.

One of the greatest challenges for law and social policy in the future with respect to the wellbeing of families will lie in addressing vulnerable family constellations in order to prevent or at least reduce the reproduction of vulnerability. Economic hardship and social exclusion, stigmatization or lack of social support are key aspects to be tackled. However, vulnerability also encompasses a lack of balance and stability in the lives of families. A qualitative study by Monika Mynarska and colleagues for *FamiliesAndSocieties* describes families at risk of vulnerability as those experiencing extreme time pressures and stress, and who are overburdened, but also those experiencing high levels of conflict linked to their specific circumstances or divorce. Single parents and families with many children were perceived as the most vulnerable groups in this study, followed by orphan and adoptive/foster families, migrant families and families with a disabled dependant. Families simultaneously belonging to

more than one category (e.g., a single parent with a migrant background with a disabled child) were considered particularly vulnerable (Mynarska et al. 2016).

Single-parent families (also referred to as one-parent or solo parent) are often the result of divorce or separation and represent a growing minority among families with children (WP2). Many countries have experienced a substantial rise in lone-parenthood and a significant proportion of children are part of a single-parent family at some point in their life course. However, in countries where divorce is common, increasing trends of single parent families seem to have slowly levelled off or even decreased in the last decades, while in countries with low levels of divorce, the upward trend is still on-going.

Although single-father families have become more common in the last decades, the vast majority of single-parent families are still composed of single-mothers who have custody of their child(ren) (Hobson et al. 2017 – WP11). Almost fifty per cent of single parents with dependent children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat 2016). However, it is often uncertain whether this is due to the family status itself, individuals' social background, or events that happened at a previous stage of the life course that had lasting effects (Bernardi et al. 2014). For instance, a recent study by Juho Härkönen, Eevi Lappalainen and Marika Jalovaara (2016) for *FamiliesAndSocietes* shows that the educational profiles of single mothers reinforce their disadvantage in the labour market in comparison to partnered women. The authors also show that **countries that encourage women to prioritise caregiving responsibilities in the home have higher rates of poverty among single mothers.**

Households with three or more children form another group with high risks of vulnerability, according to results of *FamiliesAndSocieties*. This is in line with the most recent data from Eurostat, which shows that almost one-third (31.7%) of two-adult households with three or more dependent children in 2015 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-28. For this group of families, adequate conditions for work-life balance are of central relevance, particularly flexible work schedules, state support and easily accessible childcare facilities.

Policy recommendations for single-parent families

√ Single-parent families should be explicitly considered in social, economic and labour market policies.

√ Policies should facilitate the participation of single parents in the labour market, and provide adequate conditions for work-life balance.

√ Single parents should have a higher priority with respect to the access of adult education and training opportunities, and to childcare outside the home.

√ Policies should provide equal rights for mothers and fathers after a divorce and promote co-parenting, shared residence and shared custody.

Source: Carlson et al., 2017 and Bernardi et al., 2014.

› 2. Gender equality

Similar to family structures, gender roles have also changed greatly over time. To a larger or smaller extent, depending on country and region, the male breadwinner / female homemaker family model has given way to a dual earner family model, where both men and women contribute to the family budget and share childcare and household responsibilities. However, the shift in gender roles has been asymmetric. **Virtually everywhere, female labour market participation has been increasing much more than male participation in housework and childcare**. As a result, women today often face a "double burden" or a "second shift": After their paid work hours, they are expected to take the main responsibilities at home, too. This double burden is reflected in the family constellation labelled as the "dual earner / double burden of women" model (Fahlén 2015). The difficulties of work-family reconciliation experienced by women and the fact that women's labour force participation is often still subordinate to their organising and caretaking role in family life are hindering the professional careers of many women (Oláh et al. 2017 – WP3).

Gender equality is considered in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights as a core EU

value. However, as shown by many studies women remain underrepresented and disadvantaged in the labour market as a whole, overrepresented in part-time work and the lowest-paid sectors, and receive lower hourly wages than men (European Parliament 2016). The conclusions of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project are in line with the recommendations of the European Parliament on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2016): **States should strengthen policies and increase investment supporting female employment in quality jobs**. However, policies strengthening women's position as an economic provider should be accompanied by policies that facilitate men's role as a childcare giver. **Two specific measures should be prioritised: Paternity and parental leaves, and flexible working arrangements**.

Fathers should be encouraged to take parental leave. Despite the introduction of such leave entitlements in EU member states, the number of weeks reserved exclusively for fathers remains far below the number of weeks required for a gender-equal sharing of parental leave. Fathers' uptake of parental leave is low in the vast majority of European countries: The overall take-up falls between 20% and 30% of their entitlements. These low numbers and/or short durations are related to the fact that parental leave benefits (if granted) are often too low to compensate for the income loss during parental leave, and that many fathers who do not take parental leave fear or face higher labour market risks, such as fathers with low education or short work experience (Neyer et al. 2016).

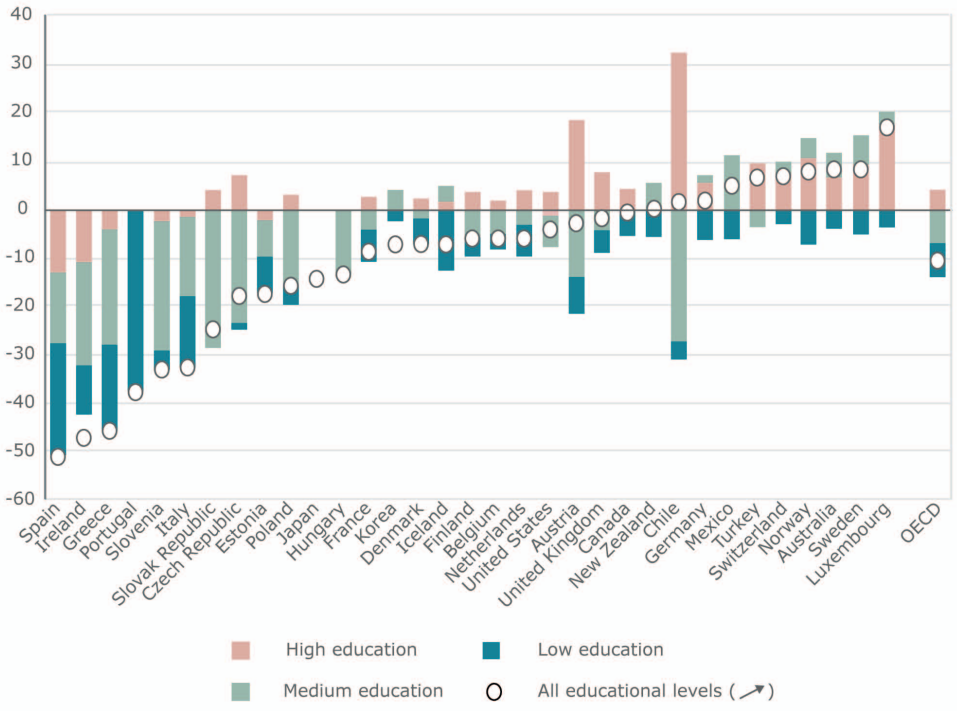
In general, paid leave with individualised rights and flexible use seems to be recommended. Results from the project on the implications of fathers' leave policies suggest that explicit policies (legal rights and quotas) may be more effective in promoting gender equality and social equality than "soft" (optional or contractual) forms of policies. Reforms introducing "daddy quotas" have proved to be efficient in encouraging fathers to take some period of leave. Moreover, parents with children born after the introduction of the daddy quota are less likely to experience conflicts over the division of household tasks, and are more likely to share such tasks. Studies also suggest an increase in fathers' involvement in caring for the child after the introduction of the quota (Dykstra et al. 2016). Findings of both qualitative and quantitative analyses on different countries revealed that increasing uptake of leaves by fathers also strengthens mothers' employment and their career prospects (Oláh et al. 2017 – WP3).

Fathers' leave taking may also have a positive influence on fertility and family stability. In a study on Nordic countries, Ann-Zofie Duvander, Gerda Neyer and colleagues show that when the father takes parental leave, couples are more likely to have a second child than if he does not take leave, regardless of the length of the leave taken (above or at the minimum of the legal "daddy quota") (Duvander et al. 2016). In another study they show that couples in which the father takes parental leave and shares childrearing with the mother are less likely to separate in the long run. These results support policy claims to reserve some part of the parental leave for fathers to promote gender equality in the care for children.

Besides leave schemes that facilitate fathers' uptake, more effort is needed in order to promote father-friendly work environments. A case study about employer-related leave in Switzerland (Valarino and Gauthier 2015) shows explicitly the mediating role of managers in enhancing/counteracting fathers' leave uptake. Moreover, it highlights that possibilities for flexible use of leave are important for both fathers and managers. **In countries where leave schemes for fathers are available, companies should be encouraged to motivate fathers to use their rights**.

Working time and its flexibility is of crucial relevance for balancing work and family demands. A comparative study on time use by Tanturri et al. (2016) indicates that fathers' working time is key for their time spent with children during weekdays. Their family engagement, especially the time spent alone with children, increases when mothers are employed and is influenced by the mothers' working schedule. **Reducing working hours for fathers with care responsibilities might be recommended as a policy measure to enhance active fatherhood and strengthen mothers' position in the labour market**. As for now, balancing work and care demands by either withdrawing from the labour market or moving to part-time employment is practised predominantly by mothers, especially with children aged 0-3 (Oláh et al. 2017 – WP3).

Figure 1: Percentage change in numbers of employed 15 to 29 year-olds, between 2007 and 2014, by level of education



Source: OECD 2016

› 3. Transitioning to adulthood

Young people face multiple challenges as they seek to complete education, move from education to employment, become economically independent and start a family (Pailhé et al. 2014). As a consequence, adulthood is entered into much later than in previous cohorts. Various factors are argued to have been responsible for this trend, including reduced economic opportunities, technological changes in the production process and the spread of globalization. Moreover, failure to obtain a college degree or dropping out of high school sharply decreases the probability of earning a middle-class wage. For many young individuals, unemployment has become a substantial problem, especially among disadvantaged minorities (Figure 1). Furthermore, jobs in general have become less stable over time. Thus there are greater uncertainties with respect to young people's ability and willingness to assume adult responsibilities, but also regarding their long-term socio-economic prospects. Consequently, significant proportions of young people remain unable to support themselves, much less a family, before their mid- to late 20s, and need to rely on their parents and/or the welfare state.

Financial independence is fundamental to being considered an adult. However, the achievement of self-sufficiency is a process that demands state support. In the Nordic countries there is strong policy support for youths to engage in education even beyond the secondary level, combine employment and studies, leave the parental home and establish their own household in their early 20s. Nonetheless, poverty rates are high among young individuals there, although only for a limited period of their lives. Elsewhere in the OECD, where youth are supported indirectly through their families, self-sufficiency may be even harder to achieve. According to studies from *FamiliesAndSocieties*, **greater self-sufficiency can be achieved by establishing policies that prevent early school leaving, by promoting a wider and better combination of work experience during studies, and by introducing welfare policies that not only support youths directly, but also aim to increase their personal income** (for example via social assistance, housing and education subsidies). Providing youths that lack education or employment with a second chance to obtain qualifications later in life is also a key measure for societies to be more inclusive (Neyer et al. 2016).

4. Childlessness

FamiliesAndSocieties examined core aspects of fertility trends. In the last decades, European societies have experienced increasing ages of having a first child, shrinking family sizes and increased levels of (in)voluntary childlessness. The historical trends in the prevalence of definite childlessness were found to be remarkably similar across European countries: A peak in childlessness rates for the 1880-1910 birth cohorts, a more or less continuous drop across the 1910-1949 birth cohorts, and a steady rise across the cohorts born from the 1950s onwards. The lowest proportion of childlessness is observed among the cohorts of women born after the Second World War (1945-49) in most countries, while higher levels are registered both among the older and younger cohorts. Permanent childlessness levels have increased across recent generations in most European countries, with the exception of Denmark, Latvia, the Russian Federation, Slovenia and Sweden (Präg et al. 2017 – WP4).

Among women, childlessness levels at ages 40-44 is low (≤ 10%) in most Eastern European countries – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Russian Federation; moderate (11-15%) in Belgium, France, Georgia, Germany, Norway, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden and the U.S.; and, high (around 20%) in Austria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. Male lifetime childlessness is increasing even more: The highest rates (above 23% among men aged 45-49) are seen in Finland, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. In the last decade, most European countries have experienced a remarkable rise in "temporary" childlessness levels at the age of 30-35 with a regional variability of 10-20% in most Eastern European countries, to over 40% in Austria, Finland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal. Surprisingly, high levels are also observed in Hungary (around 35%), unlike the rest of the Eastern countries. The spread of childlessness is accompanied by attitude and value changes as not having a child becomes more and more acceptable (Präg et al. 2017 – WP4).

Empirical analyses from *FamiliesAndSocieties* concluded that childlessness is neither associated with women's higher education nor with the proportion of women in the labour market, as is often assumed. Childlessness in one's late 30s or early 40s is to a large extent unwanted, and voluntarily childless individuals - often described as "childfree" - remain rare even in low fertility contexts. **The main obstacles to the process of family formation were found to be related to late access to employment, a low entry salary, discriminatory practices against working mothers, job instability, low wages and expensive housing. By tackling these issues, policies could contribute to lower levels of childlessness in Europe.**

In terms of country characteristics, results indicate that in countries that facilitate work-life balance for families (e.g., in Finland), women with higher levels of education are those who are less likely to remain childless because policies reduce their opportunity cost of having children, while they are more desirable marriage partners given the shift in values in favour of working women. Conversely, countries that are unable to implement such policies and continue to hold traditional values regarding gender roles, exhibit the highest percentages of highly educated, childless women. This result suggests the importance of policies supporting people (especially women) to reach, at reasonably young ages, the socio-economic conditions needed to form families and thus, to enter parenthood. At the same time, policy should promote the view that motherhood and family life are compatible with women's labour force participation: **Where work–life balance is possible and easily available, childlessness is relatively low and stable,** e.g., in Scandinavia and in France (Präg et al. 2017 – WP4).

5. Assisted reproduction technologies and its role in fertility levels

Individuals experiencing involuntary childlessness increasingly opt for Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) procedures. Europe is a world leader in the development and utilisation of ART. The regulation, financing and utilisation, however, differ widely across countries. Denmark, Belgium, Iceland, Sweden and Slovenia are countries where the largest number of ART cycles are initiated. A comparison of these countries shows that there is substantial heterogeneity among them. The number of ART treatments in Belgium and Denmark are considerably higher than in Iceland, Sweden and Slovenia. Furthermore, it is striking that the top group is not completely dominated by affluent Western European countries, which is related to differences in domestic regulations, cross-border

reproductive care and the commercialization of ART. Next to Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Serbia are also countries with a high level of ART "consumption", more so than wealthy nations such as Germany, the Netherlands or Switzerland. ART is least common in Austria, Germany and Ireland, with similar levels of ART use like in the Ukraine or Albania (Präg et al. 2017 – WP4).

ART is not an effective policy measure to counter low fertility. Studies from *FamiliesAndSocieties* show that the impact of ART on fertility rates is negligible and that improving access to ART will not affect fertility rates to a meaningful extent. The net contribution of ART on the overall birth rate ranges from 0.04 to 0.06, suggesting that any expectation that ART might substantially increase fertility rates is exaggerated.

However, ART is an important means to address involuntary childlessness. Infertility is nowadays seen as a condition leading to disability[1] (WHO & World Bank 2011) and as such, **infertile individuals should have a right to treatment**. Access to ART is often regulated by social requirements, which may ban certain groups from receiving ART treatment. Only a minority of countries demands that women are married, but single and lesbian women are often banned from treatment. Furthermore, access to specific ART techniques varies across countries.

Although the number of women aged 40 and older aspiring for ART treatment has grown over time, success rates for this group are markedly low, with the chance of around ten per cent for a successful birth with some treatments such as in vitro fertilization (IVF). **Future policy directives should focus on ensuring that this growing group of ART users and postponers above the age of 40 are aware of the limited success rates of ART at advanced ages.**

Although sperm donation (also with IVF) and oocyte donation appear to be widely available in most countries, more explicit policy recommendations need to be formulated regarding the donation of entire embryos. Additionally, there are concerns of cross-border care and unclear legal situations for parents and their children who engage in IVF surrogacy. Präg and Mills (2016) listed a number of relevant examples: A famous case that demonstrates the legal problems that can arise is that of twins who were born to a gay male British couple, one of whom was the biological father, with the help of an anonymous egg donor and a Ukrainian surrogate mother. Because of conflicts between British and Ukrainian laws, the British father was not treated as a parent of the twins, and his children were not allowed to enter the United Kingdom. Conversely, the Ukrainian surrogate mother had waived all rights to custody of her biological offspring in a surrogacy agreement, which was, however, only recognized under Ukrainian law and not under British law. Similar cases have been reported in Germany: For example, babies who were born outside the country using surrogacy have been denied citizenship, even though the German parents were named on the birth certificate.

Acknowledging the existence of cross-border reproductive care is essential for ART regulation in European countries. Cross-border reproductive care is a transnational practice that forces policy makers to think beyond the confines of the nation-state. Even in the fictitious case that all EU member states would be able to agree on a single ART regulation regime, citizens will continue to travel to pursue the treatment they want (or can afford) in non-EU countries. **Countries should also consider acknowledging the existence of all forms of ART in their family legislation, regardless of whether it is legal or not in their jurisdiction**. Banning some or all forms of surrogacy in a country does not absolve governments from having provisions in place for families or individuals with children born through surrogacy. Similarly, banning sperm donation will not resolve issues regarding the rights of children born due to sperm donation (Präg et al. 2017 – WP4).

› 6. Childcare

A growing literature has established the importance of early inputs in children's lives. **Preschool education is likely to diminish differences among children's skills independent of socio-economic background, reducing the persis-**

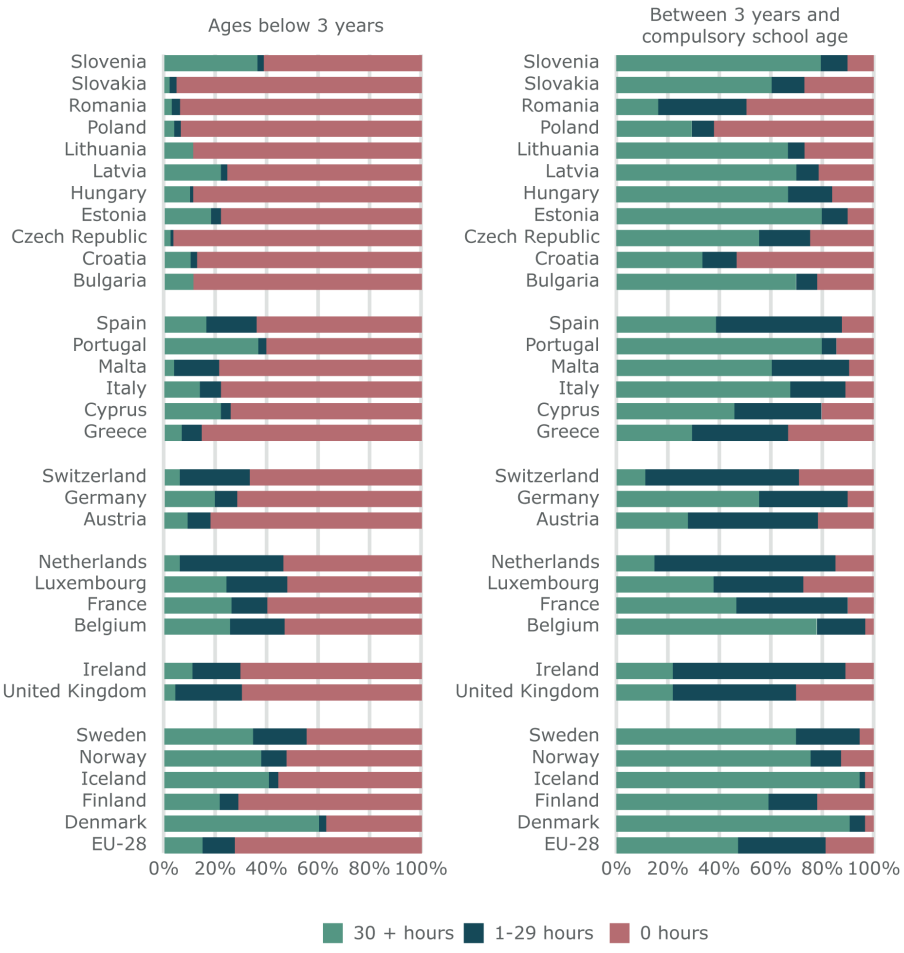
[1] Infertility generates disability (an impairment of function), and thus access to health care falls under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (www.who.int).

tence of inequality across generations and promoting inclusive growth. Researchers from *FamiliesAndSocieties* have analysed the impact of early childcare on various outcomes related to work-life balance such as mothers' participation in the labour market, and on children's development both in terms of cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Time inputs from both mothers and fathers were found to be the most valuable resources for young children, with father's time gaining more relevance as the child grows older (Del Boca et al. 2014). However, external high quality childcare proves to be a good substitute, with positive and long-term effects.

Results from multiple studies indicate that childcare availability has a positive effect on the probability of mothers' employment. For children, most studies found that attending childcare had positive effects on their development, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Brilli et al. 2016). **Investments in early education seem to lead to higher rates of return than later interventions**. The benefits gained last longer over the life cycle, and help contribute to lowering the costs of remedial policies in the later stages of individuals' lives. A recent simulation exercise for the UK has shown that introducing formal childcare for all children below age three would reduce the proportion of children with low test scores (cognitive outcomes). It would also lead to a reduction in the dispersion of cognitive outcomes, and to smaller differences in school performance among children from different social background (Del Boca et al. forthcoming).

However, the provision of childcare is still limited. Figure 2 shows the considerable variations across EU countries in formal childcare provision in 2015. As seen, childcare is often provided on a part-time basis, if at all, which is less effective in promoting mothers' employment. For younger children, formal care is available mostly in Portugal, Scandinavia and Slovenia. In contrast, in German-speaking, Southern

Figure 2: Formal childcare, by duration (weekly hours)



Source: Oláh 2015

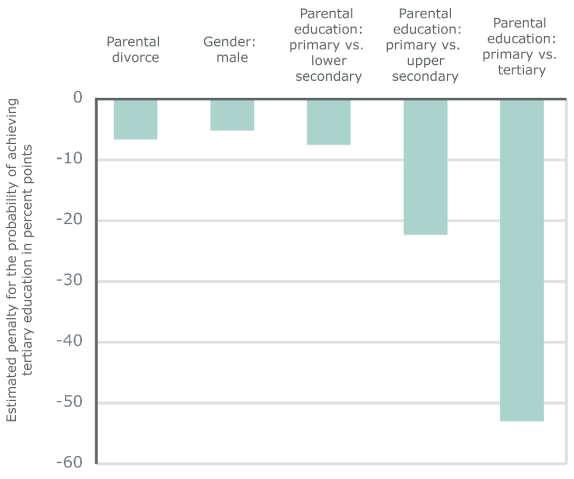
and Central-East European countries, the availability of formal childcare is still very low or the provision is confined to part-time. This helps to explain the low levels of maternal employment as well as the prevailing low fertility in these regions. The findings from *FamiliesAndSocieties* suggest that **the provision and the quality of formal childcare on a full-time basis, also for children below the age of three, should be promoted and its use among families should be encouraged** (Neyer et al. 2016).

› 7. Effects of separation and divorce on children's life chances

FamiliesAndSocieties devoted a work package to explore the effects of non-traditional family forms on children and their life chances. A consistent finding from various countries is that on average, children of divorce experience lower levels of material wellbeing, have poorer school outcomes, display more behavioural problems, have poorer mental and physical health, and their own relationships in adulthood are less stable. However, little was known on the causes underlying such disadvantages. Studies in *FamiliesAndSocieties* indicate that **associations of non-traditional family forms with child outcomes are relatively modest and play a much smaller role than was previously thought**, and other background characteristics, such as parental education or family income, play a much more important role. The modest association between growing up in a non-traditional family and child outcomes is a solid cross-national finding (Bernardi and Boertien 2016; Bernardi and Radl 2014).

For example, a study using data from the Generations and Gender Survey for 14 European countries indicates that, on average, the chances of receiving a university degree were about seven points lower for those having divorced parents than for those whose parents were not divorced. Much larger are the effects of parental education: As shown in Figure 3, the chances of children of low educated parents receiving a university degree are 53 points lower than children of parents with tertiary education, and 22 points lower than those with parents with an upper secondary education (Bernardi and Radl 2014).

Figure 3: Sources of social disadvantage



Source: Bernardi and Radl 2014

Evidence from the project also suggests that parental separation does not have the same effect in all circumstances and for all children. For most children it has no lasting major effects. A minority suffers long-term losses and a smaller minority actually benefits from parental separation, especially if pre-separation family life was ridden with daily conflicts and psychological stress. Results also indicate that the effects of a separation vary by socio-economic background. The effect of parental divorce tends to be stronger among children with highly educated parents than among those whose parents have primary education. For children from low educated families, the chances of going to university are rather low to start with, and a divorce does not seem to make a real difference. **To prevent negative consequences of family dissolution on children's development, policies should prevent economic downward mobility and provide support to children and parents to adapt to new family dynamics and forms.**

Family relations and parenting matter for the connection between family forms and children's outcomes. Most studies on parenting after divorce have focused solely on the mother and overlooked the role of fathers. However, findings from *FamiliesAndSocieties* suggest that involvement of both parents, which includes parent-child contact after a relationship breakdown is of key importance: **For children, the impact of paternal and maternal parenting is equally important to their self-esteem and satisfaction with their life**. Evidence also suggests that supportive and authoritative (high control and support) parenting is more important for

children's wellbeing than spending the same amount of time with each parent after divorce.

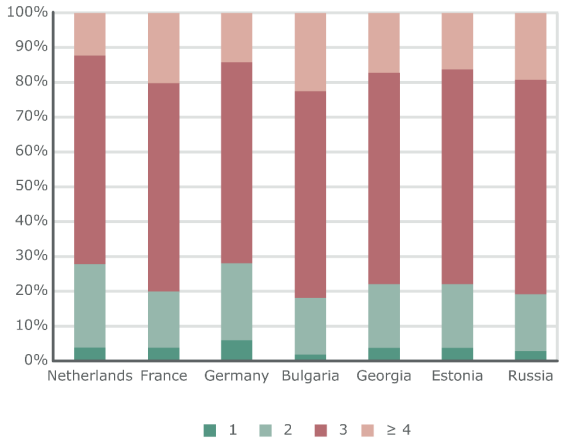
The role of a new partner in this process is also relevant. New partners can have beneficial effects on the health and wellbeing of divorced individuals. However, the new partner may hinder the parenting of the non-resident parent (mostly the father). Continued opportunities for both the biological parents and the new partners to support a child are of key importance in order to increase the life satisfaction in the post-divorce life of children and adolescents. This suggests that policies should be child-centred and designed more from the perspective of the child(ren) and in the best interests of the child(ren), rather than from the perspectives of the parents. Researchers conducting analyses on divorce and parenting also agree that **all policies aimed at reducing social inequalities and that favour the reconciliation of family life, private life and professional life will also help to reduce children's disadvantages associated with a divorce**.

› 8. Generational challenges

European countries are diverse in terms of the magnitude of population ageing. According to Eurostat data, in 2014 the share of individuals aged 65+ ranged from 12.6% in Ireland to around 21% in Germany and Italy. However, general trends are similar and population projections suggest an accelerated ageing process in Europe for the next decades - the percentage of individuals aged 65+ is projected to increase from 18% to 28%. At the same time, a remarkable contraction of the working age population is expected to take place. This group is predicted to shrink by around 13% during the years 2013-2060 (European Commission 2015), and its share is expected to decline from 66% to 57%. As a result of substantial shifts in the age composition of the total European population, the total dependency ratio would rise from nearly 65 to 95 individuals younger than 20 and older than 64 per 100 individuals aged 20-64 years. In turn, the old age-dependency ratio is expected to rise from 30 to 57 individuals aged 65+ per 100 individuals aged 20-64 (Dykstra et al. 2016).

When looking at these demographic processes, it is not uncommon to assume that we are moving towards a considerable increase in the number of generations alive within families. However, results from *FamiliesAndSocieties* indicate that extended families with four or more generations are far from being the norm: As shown in Figure 4 with data from the Generations and Gender Programme, the majority of adults in Europe are part of three-generation families. That is, grandparents, parents (children) and grandchildren. This is so because increased longevity coincides with the postponement of childbearing, and these processes have opposing effects on the generational structure of families. While older family members are living longer, delayed childbearing implies that the age gap between generations is becoming relatively large, reducing the likelihood that multiple generations are alive at the same time (Dykstra et al. 2016).

Figure 4: Adults aged 20-80, by number of family generations, selected countries



Source: Dykstra 2014

The ageing of populations across Europe has made care provision for frail older persons one of the main policy priorities. Studies from *FamiliesAndSocieties* indicate that family networks remain an important source of care to the old, especially to parents in all European countries. The expected **acceleration of population ageing and the shrinking of the labour supply will contribute to increasing care deficits in these countries**, and is expected to generate new demands on carers aged 45-69, the so-called sandwich generation. Increasing labour force participation of these people, especially of women, which is demanded in order to combat the negative effects of population ageing, will induce more tensions between paid work and care. Hence, the main burden to be faced by the sandwich generation will result from reconciling care (for either a grandchild or an elderly parent), family duties and one's job (Karpinska et al. 2016 – WP7).

Policy recommendations on intergenerational relations

√ National policies should seek to support intergenerational care without reinforcing gender inequalities.

√ Reconciliation of work and care over the life course should be a priority in social policy agendas. More attention should be paid to the interdependencies of care for older individuals and the employment of those aged 45-69.

√ Tax, direct benefits (encompassing in-cash and in-service benefits), and regulations on care leaves allowing individuals to care for elderly relatives and other dependents should be made available by governments.

√ Companies should be encouraged to allow workers to take care leaves and to guarantee their return to work, independent of their gender.

√ Officials processing requests on public care must be aware of possible gender bias when deliberating, as they might be inclined to perceive older men as less able to provide care to their spouses than vice versa.

√ Partners should be trained to care for their spouse, at least in cases where their own health is not the limiting factor.

√ Migrant care workers often work under precarious conditions. Policies should strengthen their working terms and conditions.

Source: Dykstra et al. 2016.

› 9. Partnership dynamics and childbearing behaviour of immigrants

As a result of international migration, European societies have become increasingly diverse over the past decades. Today immigrants, their children and grandchildren form a significant part of the population in many European countries. The project devoted a work package to exploring partnership dynamics and childbearing behaviour of larger ethnic groups compared to the native population in selected European countries with high levels of immigration over longer periods (Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the UK). A series of case studies and comparative analyses indicate a **significant diversity of partnership patterns and family forms** distinguishing between three broad groups:

The first group consists of South Asians in the UK, women of Turkish origin in Belgium, France, Germany and Sweden, and those of North African origin in Belgium, France, Spain and Sweden. Their main characteristics are the prevalence of intra-group marriages and conservative partnership forms with high marriage rates and low cohabitation and separation levels. Many of them have large families with three to four children.

The second group consists of immigrants from Caribbean countries in the UK and those of Sub-Saharan origin (mostly Ghanaians) in Western Europe. Some of them are in endogamous unions, whereas a significant share is in a relationship with natives or other ethnic minorities. They have low marriage levels and high cohabitation and separation rates. The diversity of partnership patterns is also reflected in their family forms: Some women have small families, whereas others have families with three children.

The third group is formed mostly by immigrants from other European countries and their descendants, and Latin Americans. Many of them are in exogamous unions with natives and their partnership and fertility patterns are similar to those of natives with only a few exceptions (e.g., Russians in Estonia, Romanians in Spain).

Partnership and childbearing patterns of the descendants of immigrants were found to be in-between those of immigrants and natives, and varying across groups. **Most descendants of immigrants from other European countries show partnership and childbearing patterns similar to their respective natives**, which can be attributed to cultural similarities in their origin and destination countries. By contrast, women of Turkish and Maghrebian origin in Belgium, France and Spain, those of Turkish and Arab Middle Eastern descent in Sweden, women of South Slavic and Turkish origin in Switzerland, South Asians in the UK, and the Russian-speaking population in Estonia show similar partnership trajectories across generations,

particularly in the choice of partnership mode (marriage over cohabitation) and the type of union (endogamous unions over exogamous partnerships). Their patterns are also significantly different from those of the respective natives. However, their separation levels and fertility patterns stay between those of immigrants and natives. Although Sub-Saharan Africans in France and Caribbeans in the UK exhibit similar patterns across generations, there is a large internal variation related to a relatively large share of mixed marriages. Overall, the studies thus suggest that the mainstream society, as well as the minority subculture, shape the family patterns of ethnic minorities, although the role of minority subculture seems to prevail more strongly among some groups, i.e., individuals of Turkish and Maghreb origin in France and Belgium, those of Turkish descent in Sweden, and South Asians in the UK (Kulu et al. 2017 – WP8).

A critical question for the project was whether partnership and childbearing patterns are an indicator of cultural diversity or (also) of the poor economic and social integration of these ethnic groups in their respective countries. Conclusions derived from empirical analyses indicate that **the most important factors influencing those patterns are not differences in educational levels and employment-related characteristics, as it would be expected, but socio-cultural and normative elements, such as the number of siblings in the origin family and religiosity, explain most of the differences compared to natives for these groups.**

Researchers emphasise that the diversity of family forms is here to stay, and immigrants and their descendants are overrepresented in 'non-standard' families. Rapid changes in partnership and childbearing patterns among immigrants and their descendants are not expected: Some changes are faster, others may take place across generations, particularly if patterns reflect cultural preferences and minority identities. Historical research has shown that **diversity in family forms, if appropriately supported, can co-exist with the successful labour market and social integration of migrant minorities and native majorities alike** (Kulu et al. 2017 – WP8).

Policy recommendations on ethnic minority families

√ Large minority families must not be stigmatised as a sign of the lack of social integration. They are an asset for low-fertility societies and policy makers should ensure that social and housing policies support such families. Ensuring access to quality and affordable housing of adequate size is of key importance.

√ Children from large immigrant families should have the same educational opportunities as those from 'standard' (two-child) families.

√ Policy-making should be sensitive to the needs of minority youth, for example in terms of more active educational counselling and in addressing cases of discrimination in the labour market. Equal treatment, non-discrimination and equal opportunities should be secured.

Source: Kulu et al. 2017 – WP8.

› 10. Four new databases on regulations related to family life in Europe

Within the framework of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project, new and updated information on family policies was collected in four databases: The Population Europe Resource Finder and Archive (PERFAR - www.perfar.eu), the LawsAndFamilies Database (http://www.lawsandfamilies.eu/), the European Union Family Policy Dataset (EUFamPol – www.suda.su.se), and the database on Assisted Reproductive Technologies in Europe. Policies, norms, and values (ARPNoVa - https://osf.io/awydj/). These databases provide detailed information on the content of regulations on childcare, divorce, family allowances, marriage, cohabitation and registered partnerships, maternity protection, parental leave and assisted reproductive technologies.

PERFAR was launched on January 2015 and offers comprehensive information about policies, a catalogue with links to socio-economic and demographic data, and an online repository for related research results. These tools enable the user to conduct comparative analyses of policies over space and time. Furthermore, PERFAR offers the opportunity to find

key graphs and tables from diverse data providers, which is particularly attractive for journalists and policy experts interested in family policy issues. In the framework of *FamiliesAndSocieties*, information for 879 family policies and a total of 1023 family-related laws with regard to childcare, divorce, family allowances, marriage and registered partnerships, maternity protection and parental leave were compiled for 16 European countries for the time since the 1950s up to today. This collection was organised by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, in close collaboration with consortium members of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project, the Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy, and the partners of Population Europe.

The *FamiliesAndSocieties* project also shed more light on the relatively new and understudied domain of same-sex partnerships (Neyer 2017). The past decades have seen significant changes in the way same-sex families are regulated in European countries, albeit discrimination and heterosexism are still occurring on a daily basis. Researchers from *FamiliesAndSocieties* explored the regulations on same-sex unions in Europe, and how laws are perceived to impact one's relationships and one's parental project. It has been acknowledged that although discrimination is still present at different degrees, the existence of laws on access to marriage and parenting is regarded by many as crucial for fostering inclusion (Digoix et al. 2016). In order to provide evidence to foster appropriate regulations in all countries, a key product from the project is the LawsAndFamilies Database, a database of legal issues of same-sex and different-sex families in over 20 European countries. This database was prepared by the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED, France) and Leiden Law School (Netherlands). The database distinguishes between three broad categories of legal family formats for different-sex and/or same-sex couples: Marriage, registered partnership and cohabitation. The questionnaire – which has been used to interview selected legal experts – focuses on the legal consequences (rights and obligations) that are attached (or not) to these legal family formats in six wide fields: Formalisation, income and troubles, parenting, migration, separation and death. It also asks about the possibilities for entering into or exiting out of legal family formats (Waaldijk et al. 2016).

The EUFamPol dataset comprises family policy-related preparatory acts and legislation at the European Union level. The database has been produced by the Stockholm University team (Sweden) with contributions from the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED, France). The data were retrieved from EUR-Lex spanning the period from 1974 to 2015. Complete words, word stems, parts of words, or combinations of words were used in title searches and in text searches to retrieve the documents. EUR-Lex provided codes and checks of the original texts were applied to eliminate non-relevant documents. The dataset includes family policy-related, legally, binding acts (regulations, directives and decisions) and preparatory acts (COM) issued by the European Commission that are relevant for all member states of the European Union (excluding documents directed only to one country).

Finally, the ARPNoVa database, produced by the University of Oxford, comprises 1) policy information and 2) information about norms and values regarding partnership, family and childbearing, with a special focus on assisted reproduction for forty, mostly European countries. The data set draws on policy reports from the International Federation of Fertility Societies (IFFS), Surveillance reports (1998–2013), and information collected from large-scale, cross-national surveys — the European Values Study (EVS), the World Values Survey (WVS), Eurobarometer (EB), and the European Social Survey (ESS) — from 1981 onwards. An extensive data manual provides basic descriptive statistics, as well as methodological details such as question wording for the dataset.

› 11. Conclusions

Four years of in-depth analyses of family trends in Europe with the best data available has shown the need for acknowledging the diversity of families, that gender equality and social equality are fundamental principles of sustainable societies, and that economic, social, and legal security are crucial for families and individuals in Europe (Neyer 2017). Consequently, **a modern European family policy should be a coherent mix of measures that provide state support – materially, institutionally, and legally – to a diverse variety of families during their entire life course, and across all European countries**. Equal treatment, non-discrimination

and equal opportunities are essential goals towards sustainable development with respect to families.

The findings on legal family formats underline the importance for national and European lawmakers and officials to reform any existing laws that (without convincing justification) still exclude same-sex and/or unmarried partners. The findings stress the need to include a wider variety of families when introducing any new laws, and also to recognise more fully foreign, legal, family formats for same-sex or unmarried couples that have become available in other countries (Neyer 2017). The databases created in *FamiliesAndSocieties* constitute an indispensable instrument when tackling these issues from a cross-national perspective.

Strengthening men's contribution to care and domestic tasks and women's position in paid work should be a priority for modern societies. To achieve this objective, policy makers should be aware of the complexity of the different issues to be tackled. Empirical studies in *FamiliesAndSocieties* have underscored the importance of incentive policies for active fathering, the daddy quota, the use-it-or-lose-it policy, and the daddy care bonus. Studies also highlighted the key role played by job flexibility as a policy measure for balancing work and family demands. Equally important is that fathers actually take the leave and participate in family life as much as mothers. This is determined by leave regulations, but also by various labour market factors such as job stability, features at the company level (work organisation, organisational culture, occupation, job prestige, managers' attitude), as well as individual characteristics of partners and the couple's family situation (Oláh et al. 2017).

Studies from the project also indicate that **more direct support to vulnerable groups is needed.** For instance, young individuals need strong support to reach self-sufficiency, immigrant families need strategies for social inclusion that address educational disadvantage and discrimination in the labour market, and single mothers need policies compensating for disadvantages. Individuals should also have capabilities and agency to start a family and achieve desired family size (Hobson et al. 2017 – WP11). From the view point of practitioners participating in *FamiliesAndSocieties*, policy measures to support families in need and to prevent/reduce the reproduction of vulnerability from one generation to another should focus particularly on education and the reconciliation of family and working life (Mynarska et al. 2016).

Finally, a number of analyses in *FamiliesAndSocieties* suggest that life chances of children depend more strongly on the socio-economic background of their parents than on the family form they are living in. **Mitigating the effect of parental socio-economic background on children is one of the major challenges for family policies** (Bernardi et al. 2014).

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