Families, Change and European Social Policy
A heart sheltered by a roof, linked to another, to symbolise life and love in a home where one finds warmth, caring, security, togetherness, tolerance and acceptance - that is the symbolism that is conveyed by the emblem of the International Year of the Family.
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Families form the basic units of our societies. They are fundamental to our well being as individuals and as a society, and "they are the cradle of generations to come"1. They provide the main support for the care of our children and other dependent family members, including older persons.

Families are also the oldest expression of human relationship, and have been continually adapting to change, human development and progress. The pace of change, however, has accelerated over recent decades and is having a profound effect on families, as well as on other institutions in society.

The Irish EU Presidency, therefore, decided with the support of the EU Commission, to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family by holding an international Conference entitled “Families, Change and Social Policy in Europe”. The EU Treaties do not provide for competence in the field of family policy as such. They do, however, provide competence for EU action in the social policy field in relation to social protection, employment, social inclusion and demography. The modernisation and development of social policy to meet the challenges posed by the impact of change on families was the main theme of the Conference.

Held in Dublin in May 2004, the Conference provided a forum for exchanges of knowledge, experience and best practice. The value of these exchanges was very evident, with many expressing the hope that

1 Family: Challenges for the future, United Nations 1996
ways could be found to continue exchanges with this policy focus at EU level in the future.

It was also the first Conference on social policy of the enlarged European Union. A special welcome was given to the representatives of the new Member States in our enlarged family of nations.

The Conference brought together leading experts and policy makers from all the countries of the EEA, the EU Commission, academic institutions, the social partners, and NGOs. The Irish Presidency, with this publication, is making available a full record of the excellent papers, reports of discussions and exchanges during the Conference. In addition, the papers presented at the conference are currently available on-line at http://www.welfare.ie/topics/eu_pres04/fam_conf/ It is intended in this way to ensure that the fruits of the Conference deliberations will reach a wider public.

My predecessor as Minister, Mary Coughlan, TD, who hosted the Conference on behalf of the Irish Presidency, has since assumed other Ministerial responsibilities. I wish to thank her for her leadership and overall contribution. I also wish to thank the EU Commission and in particular, the Director General, Odile Quintin, for their support at all stages.

I wish to thank all who contributed and participated, speakers, rapporteurs, chairs, interpreters, and all those who attended from all over Europe and beyond and made the Conference such a success.

A special word of thanks to Ministerial colleagues Marieluise Beck from Germany and Ursula Haubner from Austria who attended and gave us the benefit of their views and experience. Minister Roberto Maroni (Italy), although ultimately unable to attend, arranged for the delivery of the text of his speech, which made an important contribution to the deliberations.
The presence of Johann Scholvinck from the United Nations, John Murray from the Council of Europe and Willem Adema from the OECD was also greatly appreciated.

I wish to thank the staff of my own Department and technical support staff from other Departments and agencies, not least the security personnel, for their hard work in ensuring that it all happened.

My final thanks go to Professor Mary Daly who made a major contribution to devising and developing the excellent conference programme and to Dr. Valerie Richardson, who has done a marvellous job in editing the report and supplying a succinct and incisive introduction to its main themes, for which I am most grateful.

In conclusion, I hope that the report will assist with policy development to support families at both national and EU levels and thus contribute, in some way, to creating a more socially cohesive European Union.

Seamus Brennan TD
Minister for Social and Family Affairs
Ireland
Introduction to Report

Valerie Richardson  
Department of Social Policy and Social Work  
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Introduction:

Three important landmarks in 2004 provided Ireland with a unique opportunity to host a conference on Families Change and Social Policy in Europe. These landmarks were the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the U.N. International Year of the Family, the accession of ten new states to the European Union and Ireland’s Presidency of the European Union. In addition, issues concerning the family were high on the political agenda in Ireland for a number of reasons, not least that in 2003 the then Minister, Ms. Mary Coughlan T.D. had initiated a public debate concerning the family in Ireland through the establishment of a number of public fora in order to listen

‘to the heartbeat of the Irish nation on the state of its family life, as well as examining how we can work to strengthen families in the face of all the modern day challenges’.

(Coughlan, M. 2004)

The fora were aimed at giving family members, public representatives, professionals and non-governmental organisations the opportunity to air their views on family issues of importance to them and to establish how, by working together, families might be strengthened to face the many
challenges and changes which confront them. However, this was never intended to be a sterile exercise but a dynamic one which would form the basis for the development of a strategy for family policy in Ireland to be published in 2005.

This was an important starting point for the development of such a strategy. However, it is very clear that the issues facing Irish families are similar to those concerning other European countries and beyond, albeit issues mediated by their own individual cultures and development. The family, while it is recognised as the basic unit of society is not a static institution. It has changed in formation and size and, of necessity, adapted to the rapid economic and social developments taking place in our societies. The debate about families stretches far beyond the boundaries of one country or one continent. Consequently, any strategic development for families needs to be grounded within the wider experiences of a broad spectrum of countries.

In order to tap into these experiences it is essential to facilitate dialogue amongst not only families themselves but between policy makers, researchers, political representatives, the social partners, non-governmental organisations and all those working with and towards supporting families in carrying out their functions. The papers presented in this publication represent the outcome of such a dialogue on families, change and social policy in Europe.

**Themes of the Conference**

The central theme of the conference was that of change – changes in the family and society and changes in the role of the family. Changes also bring challenges, challenges for families and policy makers, particularly in the areas of social inclusion, equality and in the workplace. However, the Conference was not simply directed towards cataloguing these changes and challenges. It was concerned with addressing possible solutions by focussing on policy options already available and policy developments aimed at supporting families and family life.
The rapid and dramatic changes in demography together with changes in family structures and increasing diversification of family formation were presented. In particular, attention was drawn to the increase in single person households, fewer marriages, an increase in family breakdown and divorce, the formation of reconstituted families, the increase in births outside marriage and an increase in single parent households.

Professor Lutz discussed the dramatic demographic changes that have occurred and continue to occur across Europe and the implications of such changes for social policies. There has been significant decline in the total population of the European Union and the longer term projections indicate that this decline is likely to continue. Not only are total numbers dropping but the age structure of the population is also changing. Professor Lutz’s paper outlined the impact of dropping birth rates, together with the possibility of increased life expectancy which could result in an ‘incredible 40% of the total population being above the age of 80 years’ in the second half of the twenty-first century. The change in the ‘support ratio’ that this will produce will have a significant impact on social policies. Professor Lutz also examined the changes in the fertility rates across Europe and highlighted a new element in fertility analysis, that of increasing postponement of births or ‘tempo effect’ resulting in a significant loss of births contributing to population decline and to the ageing of the European population. He argued that the timing of births is a much more important aspect of demographic change than previously considered because of the considerable long-term consequences.

The issue of choice of family size was developed by Dr. Krieger. He presented the findings of a survey undertaken by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions that showed EU citizens greatly value their families and family life and have a strong commitment to both. He concluded that for the citizens of Europe good family relations are key demands for quality of life. Family appeared to be more important in the new Member States than in the EU-15. However, up to 30% of women are having less than their desired number of children. Such a finding is one that needs to be addressed at a policy level, not only from the point of view of the population decline but also in
order to improve the well-being of EU citizens by providing the conditions which allow them to meet their desired goals for family size. The importance of policies which may influence this phenomenon were considered.

In taking up this issue Professor Hantrais argued that the scope for policy intervention in this field is limited since there is little acceptance that public policies should be introduced aimed at directly influencing family formation, size or structure and in particular pro-natalist policies. Her research has indicated that nowhere is the public prepared to accept strident intervention into family life. As she states, ‘prohibitive and proactive policies are overwhelmingly rejected in favour of a more conciliatory stance’ which complement rather than usurp family responsibilities. While the choice of family size is regarded largely as a private concern and where direct government interference is not welcome a focus on the timing of births might be a more favoured approach with policies aimed at supporting families in their individual choices. Therefore, it seems that the most acceptable policies are those that open up options and reduce constraints. It appears that while individual family policy measures may impact on decisions about family formation a more important element is the delivery of a number of interlinked supportive policies which contribute to the creation of a family friendly society which is conducive to family building.

Professor Hantrais presented the findings of a DG Research Project which provided a critical analysis of responses to family change through adapting the EU social policy agenda. She argued that public provision of benefits and services for families were secondary considerations in encouraging family formation compared to a secure income from employment, affordable housing and a sufficient standard of living all of which were seen as preconditions for raising children.

In her paper Professor Daly addressed the significance of the changes in families and family life for social policy in Europe and the EU including the issue of unmet needs and risks associated with such change. She argues that there has been an incomplete modernisation of gender roles
and relations which is manifested in the increased participation of women within the work force but without a real sharing of the tasks within the home. This she argues places women at risk related to the overburden they carry in undertaking caring tasks while remaining active within the paid economy.

A risk assessment associated with these demographic and structural changes within the family clearly indicates that there are a series of risks involved around caring. With the ageing of the population there is a risk that the state will be unable to provide sufficient or high quality care for its older citizens or those with a handicap coupled with a second risk that families will be unable to care for their relatives or make adequate arrangements for their care outside the home. With the demographic changes influencing the balance between the older and younger generations, intergenerational solidarity becomes of central importance and raises the question of to what extent is such solidarity in family care present. Analysis of this issue presented by Dr. Krieger showed that there is a vital network of informal help throughout Europe but that it is also ‘a double edged sword’ in that it provides a welfare-mix and relieves the State of some element of its caring function but it can be a burden on those who provide the informal care.

Social inclusion is a major plank of EU policy mainly through the economic and employment policies. The research presented by Dr. Krieger showed that employment and family support are the two main pillars for social inclusion in Europe while the importance of family relationships was crucial both in terms of social inclusion and in feelings of general well-being.

Professor Daly in her paper highlighted the fact that ‘the real challenge of and for family policy is to reconcile the modernisation of family relations with the economic, social and demographic needs of the country’. A major theme throughout the Conference, therefore, was centred around how policies can support families, foster family relationships and improve access to the labour market. Work/life balance was discussed at a number of levels most notably in relation to equality,
child care, elder care and choice. An analysis of the impact of policies
designed to enable men and women to combine both work and family life
has highlighted the tensions between policy objectives and families. Both
men and women feel increasing pressure to provide economic security
and also a caring environment for their children and elder family
members. However, there is a danger that policies that seek to promote
the importance of working life may reduce the capacity of the family
members to meet the needs of their dependent members. The central
element that emerged from the papers was the importance of real,
rather than illusory choice for families in the decisions they make
regarding their work, family formation and caring functions.

The decisions that families make are often contingent on the availability
of good quality, accessible care arrangements. The findings of the
research undertaken by the OECD on child care in a range of countries
within and beyond the EU was presented by Willem Adema. A variety of
models of child care provision were examined and policy challenges
raised with regard to quality, the nature of providers, access to services
and the role of the employers in ensuring that provision is meeting the
needs of both workers and their families. These challenges were
addressed in the important contributions made by representatives of
employer organisations and the trade unions.

Implications for Policies
A central theme throughout the presentations was how should individual
countries and the EU respond to the fundamental changes in society. The
key challenge for family policy is how to reconcile the needs of families
with the economic, social and demographic needs of the State. States
need to find a balance between an interventionist approach, which raises
the possible dangers of ‘social engineering’ and a laissez faire approach,
which leaves families to their own devices and vulnerable to market
forces. The European research presented at the Conference underlines
the fact that the family continues to be one of the basic forms of social
integration. Therefore, the argument has been made that if states are
concerned with social integration then they will need policies that
address the well-being of families and implement measures to
strengthen the family and other social support systems. As Mary Daly pointed out, family policy is not a widely developed domain of policy in Europe, although there has been expansion in this area by the end of the twentieth century. Consequently it will be a difficult task for some states to develop a family policy to meet the challenges. She argues that what has been taking place is that states have a range of social policies that affect families and which take the well being of families into account.

Policy on family and family issues has developed by focussing on particular problems of family life such as gender equality, work/life balance, economic security. Daly suggests that a less fragmented approach might be to address ‘broader sets of policy goods such as family solidarity’. She questions how far current policies are designed to support family solidarity in so far as they are focussed on parents as workers while entrusting the care of their children to others. These policies therefore require parents to distance themselves from their children and thus deplete the caring functions of the nuclear family. Further development of these discussions raised the question of whether it is possible for states to formulate ‘family policy’ as such or is it that family policy is and should remain, an integral part of public and social policies.

The question was also raised concerning the competency of the European Union in relation to family policy. Madame Quintin and Mr. Vignon both reminded the delegates that while the European Union and its member states are concerned about the impact of change on their citizens the Community has no competence in family matters or family policies and consequently there is nothing resembling a ‘European Family Policy’ in place. There are however, numerous policies in existence that affect families and attempt to deal with the challenges facing families in their many functions. It has been argued that if there are strong pro-child policies, good care and support for the elderly, policies that respect the right of individuals and champion equality and anti-discrimination, policies to promote an inclusive, fair and active labour market for all together with social protection legislation then a strong family policy exists. The crucial objective of policies, whether labelled family policy or public policy, should be to provide a safe
environment for children to grow up in and to provide parents with the material and psychological means to have and raise children together with supporting intergenerational solidarity.

Possibly the most important element to emerge from the Conference was the importance of responding to change. That response needs to come from the European Union, the social partners, together with families themselves in the form of policies that promote the support of families and family life. Doing nothing is not a policy option. It was clear from the presentations that policies can make a difference where there is real choice, gender equality, proper care services, high and universal welfare and truly family friendly policies.

Meeting the challenges posed by the changes affecting families requires at national level a strategic, integrated approach involving a range of policies across employment, social protection, education, health and housing. Such efforts at national level will be greatly assisted by continuing analysis of the interaction between family and social policy across Europe. The variety of approaches being adopted by the 25 Member States with their different cultural traditions and different stages of development provides the possibility of drawing on a wide range of knowledge, experience and best practice. The contributions of Government ministers to the Conference demonstrated this diversity and their commitment to the introduction of policies aimed at supporting families in their respective countries.

Mr. Johan Scholvinck speaking on behalf of the United Nations pointed out that almost all the resolutions and other policy instruments which address the issue of family within the United Nations emphasise the importance of government policies providing a supportive environment for all its members. The contribution of families to economic development and social progress in societies is becoming recognised. This is seen in the fact that the ‘family perspective’ is increasingly incorporated into national development plans and in programmes of economic and technical cooperation or organisations of the United Nations system. Family policies need to be formulated within the
framework of socio-economic development strategies but they must also take into account the vital role families play in society. As Mr. Schlovinck put it ‘it is very important for policy makers to undertake a diagnosis of the situation and needs of families before they elaborate national developmental policies and specific programmes.’

The aim of this Conference was to contribute to the European dialogue on changes in the family and society. It is hoped that the papers presented here will stimulate further debate on how the issues raised can be translated into policy measures that truly support families in their multiple tasks while maintaining a high level of family well being.
Opening Speech

Mary Coughlan TD  
(Then) Minister for Social and Family Affairs  
Ireland

Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Irish Presidency, to welcome you to this International Conference on “Families Change and Social Policy in Europe”.

May 2004, which has seen the accession of 10 new Member States to the EU, is and will remain a period of major significance in the history of the European Union. I wish, therefore, to extend a special warm welcome to the representatives of the new Member States at this first social policy Conference of the Enlarged Union

It is appropriate, perhaps, that the theme of this Conference is related to families, because we, in the European Union, in a real sense form a family of nations. This is based on the commitment we share to supporting each other in working to achieve the greater wellbeing of the EU’s 450 million citizens and greater social cohesion within and among our countries.

There is much to inspire us in the creation of one of the largest families of nations in the history of Europe, as we come to focus in this Conference on individual families, the basic units of our societies both in Europe and worldwide.
This year, of course, is the 10th Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family. One of the reasons the Irish Presidency chose this theme was to help us at EU level join in this Anniversary year’s worldwide focus on the impact of the profound changes affecting families, and on how we can better support families, through social policy, in meeting the major challenges arising from these changes.

I particularly welcome, Johan Scholvinck, Director of the Social Policy and Development Division of the United Nations, who has come from New York to be with us for the occasion.

There are great similarities between all societies worldwide in relation to the role and functions of families. But there are also significant differences in the way these roles and functions are exercised with regard to values, traditions, culture and the stages reached in respect of social and economic development. This also applies among the countries of the European Union. Families and family life are fundamental to a country’s way of life and this helps to explain why we in the EU wish to retain sovereignty at national level with regard to family policy. As a result, the EU Treaties do not provide competence for action at EU level in relation to family policy as such.

However, the profound and rapid changes affecting families and family life, which we will be discussing later, have major implications for policies for which the EU has a certain competence, not least for social policy which we will be examining at this Conference. Likewise, many of the policies being pursued in the context of the EU have a major impact on families and on their traditional roles and functions, for which a social policy response may also be required.

One of the tasks which EU countries have set themselves, with the support of the EU institutions, including the EU Commission, is to modernise their systems of social protection. Adapting and developing the systems to take account of family change is a major part of this process and a key theme for this Conference.
One of the major changes affecting families is the growing participation of women in the workforce, a development Member States have been asked to encourage by the European Council, as part of the Lisbon Agenda. This brings with it the challenge of how to reconcile work and family life and, in particular, how care in the family for children, elderly and other dependent family members can be provided, and employment and legitimate employment prospects maintained. Significant time will be devoted at the Conference to the key aspects of these developments and the policy implications.

Profound changes affecting families put various groups at risk of social exclusion. Those most at risk include lone parent families and large families. They experience obstacles to obtaining employment, the main route out of poverty and social exclusion, and to getting jobs that will provide an adequate income to meet the needs of all their family members.

Older people, especially the growing numbers living alone, mainly women, are also increasingly vulnerable, as smaller families do not have the capacities they had in the past to provide care and support for their older members. The challenge of caring for and supporting older people is likely to intensify in the decades ahead as the ratio of those in the active age groups to older people falls from the 5 to 1 that prevailed on average over recent decades, to less than 2 to 1 in the decades ahead. This theme will also be covered at the Conference.

A first key stage in meeting a challenge is to understand its nature and scope. I am confident that our discussions and exchanges this morning will greatly assist us in improving our understanding of the changes affecting families. In the workshops and through the later presentations and responses, we can begin to examine effective ways of meeting these challenges and exchange good practices.

These exchanges are invaluable in terms of policy development. The diversity among all 25 countries of the EU is a great strength, as it offers many examples of the different actions which can be taken and of tried and tested good practice.
We hope that it will be possible to facilitate these exchanges on Families Change and Social Policy in Europe on an ongoing basis at EU level, and how to effectively achieve this may be a further theme for reflection at the Conference.

In conclusion, it is worth pointing out that families are among the oldest institutions in our society. Over the millennia they have successfully adapted to many changes. Our focus on today’s problems and challenges, therefore, should be balanced with a clear realisation of the major contributions families have been making to society and to the well being of individuals down through the ages.

Our overall focus, therefore, should be on examining how families and family life as a major resource of our societies can be better supported and strengthened in making their key contribution to society at this time of great change.

Finally, I wish you most successful discussions, exchanges and networking at the Conference over the next two days and an outcome that will greatly help us in effectively supporting families throughout the EU.
Families, Change and Social Policy in Europe

Madame Odile Quintin,
Director General of Employment and Social Affairs,
European Commission

I would like to thank the Irish Presidency for organising this conference devoted to the family and those changes that affect our societies and social policies.

It is the families, in whatever shape or form they may be constituted, who are the key players here; and yet they too are also affected by these changes - a dual reality which our social policies must take on board. Such policies must adapt to a concept of “the family” that is becoming more and more diverse, respect the way of life chosen by individual people, and provide backup and support for those with responsibility in this domain. It is a matter which concerns the European Union and its member states alike. In point of fact, the Community has no competence in family matters or family policies, and consequently there is nothing resembling a “European Family Policy” in place. There are, however, numerous policies in existence that have close links with the family, whether it be in the employment area, the struggle to combat exclusion, care for the elderly, equality between the sexes, or the free movement of workers and individuals. And none of these policies can be indifferent to the way in which families have evolved.
For some years now, “L’Observatoire Européen de la Démographie et de la Famille” [European commentator on population growth and the family] has contributed to an evaluation of the interaction between various policies and the evolution of the family. I will quote the following facts to give some indication of scale.

The first change affects the family itself, which now takes forms that are increasingly varied and also increasingly fragmented. For example, there has been a substantial and steady rise in the number of single-person households. In 1961, such households numbered 14 million, but that figure could well exceed 60 million by 2025 and, at that stage, would represent almost a third of all family structures. Small wonder, then, that the average family unit is constantly shrinking: it consisted of more than 3 persons in 1961 but, in all probability, will be reduced to about 2 persons by 2025. Social policies must take account of this diversity, which reflects a general movement towards reconstituted families and our ageing societies. And this is all the more pressing in view of the fact that 35% of single-parent families are likely to be poor.

The fact of an ageing population constitutes a second fundamental change. Between 2002 and 2050, the number of people over 65 years of age is expected to grow by almost two-thirds, while the number of very elderly people - those over 80 years of age - will rise from 15 to some 38 million. As a result, more people will be living on their own and the vast majority of these people will wish to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. This means that they will be in need of specialist home-care services - services which today are often provided in an informal manner within the family and by its female members.

The third characteristic feature of Europe is a fertility so low that only immigration enables the population to maintain its growth. In 2002, the fertility rate was less than 1.5. Admittedly, the demographers have produced evidence of “a relatively short-term distortion” attributable to the spacing of births over several years, as a direct consequence of “reconstituted” families. Nevertheless, we are faced with the reality of an
ageing Europe without children, cut off by the Mediterranean from young societies with a dynamic demography.

These changes are already having an impact on our social policies. First of all, inclusive policies and, on a broader scale, social security systems must be adapted. The European objective of combating exclusion calls for improved access to housing, health care and education - and for policies designed to preserve the fabric of family life. It also calls for the eradication of poverty amongst children, which, incidentally, was identified in the Joint Report as a problem that must receive priority in the years to come.

Given the foreseeable growth in the numbers of elderly people requiring personal and more or less intensive care, given also the increased mobility of individuals, services on offer will have to be developed and adapted, particularly in the home-care sector. In fact, these caring services are nowadays administered by women. But, as women will be increasingly needed in the workplace, to offset the ageing factor, measures must be taken to ensure that this burden of care does not fall upon them - and that the cost of such long-term care should not be borne by families who would have no recourse but to entrust their elderly relatives to institutions.

The Commission has just proposed that national health care and long-term policies be co-ordinated, so that, based on "common objectives", member states will be enabled to develop exchange programmes, sharing experiences and examples of "best practice" that will sustain their efforts to reform and evolve their individual systems. Such "open" co-ordination will make it possible to accommodate a diversity of systems and be of mutual benefit in facing and overcoming the challenges shared by all - challenges such as ageing, the increasing variety of family structures and the claims of the elderly to autonomy.

Equally important are the policies of equality between men and women. The increased participation of women in employment is necessary to compensate for the foreseeable effects of ageing in the working
This demands reinforcement of professional equality, together with a more global policy of “active ageing”, so as to raise the employment rate of those workers commonly regarded as “old”, that is to say the over-55s, and - of more fundamental importance - to give each and every one, from their earliest years, the opportunity to remain actively employed for an extended period by developing their individual abilities.

We must closely monitor these policies of participation in the workplace, to ensure that they do not result in a lowered birth rate. We have learnt from the example of countries like Sweden and France, which have experienced a rise in their birth rate, that the employment of women is no obstacle to their having children, provided adequate and diversified forms of care and protection are put in place, together with appropriate support structures to improve the quality of working life.

Let us consider first the quality of working life and how this can be enhanced. Parents who wish to balance their professional and private life should be able to avail of part-time work or temporary employment contracts if they wish, without being penalised for so doing. There are directives guaranteeing this equality of rights between different types of work situations, and I hope that it will soon be possible to break the deadlock that exists over the proposed directive on temporary employment. There are also directives setting minimum standards that should apply to parental and maternity leave.

The second aspect is the provision of adequate forms of care and protection - for children, primarily, but also, more generally, for all dependent persons.

This is a vital element in policies aimed at promoting female employment, which was adopted by the European Council in Barcelona. It also provides a “structural gauge” by which the European Union’s progress on social policy may be measured.

We can learn much from the example of Ireland. In 1971, the Irish female employment rate was less then 20%; today it stands at over 55%. Such
progress would not have been possible without the introduction of supportive child care measures, which is a strength of Irish development policy, with €450 million being allocated to the Child Care Programme, and support from the European Social Fund.

We are also seeing the emergence of new concepts, such as “social capital”, and we must all exploit this notion fully to include the role of the family. Today’s conference should be able to shed light on political responses to such questions as the relationship between family life and working life, support for families to prevent crisis situations arising (such as falling into debt or having to give up schooling) or, again, on measures to facilitate housing and develop solidarity networks, on both a formal and informal basis.

I trust, then, that today’s exchanges will enable us to advance in a number of directions as outlined, and clarify the manner in which families themselves are agents of the social change by which they are affected. It is therefore important that they be made participants in that partnership of modernisation with economic and social change at the heart of the Lisbon agenda. In an ageing and more diverse society, our social policies must serve to integrate the evolving family unit and thereby help it play its essential part in social cohesion.
It gives me great pleasure to take part in the opening of this Conference on Families, Change and Social Policy in Europe. In particular, I wish to thank the Government of Ireland as the current holder of the Presidency of the European Union for hosting this conference in these splendid surroundings.

This year we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, but the day after tomorrow – on May 15th – we will also observe the International Day of Families. At the intergovernmental level, this confusion of terminology is a reflection of long-standing political divisions that have had the unfortunate effect of distracting attention from the very real issues and concerns that affect families all over the world.

The original observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994 represented an historic moment, where local, national, regional and global entities resolved to raise awareness of the important role played by families and to support that role through a range of policies, programmes and strategies. The World Summit for Social Development convened in Copenhagen a year later drew attention to family responsibilities in the context of social integration. The Copenhagen Summit stressed the importance for wide-ranging social and economic policies designed to meet the needs of families and their individual members, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members, with particular attention to the care of children. Emphasizing the need to promote mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation within the family and within society, the Copenhagen Summit also stressed the importance of ensuring opportunities for family members to understand and meet their social responsibilities. From a political standpoint, therefore, the tenth anniversary of the Year provides an important opportunity to strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of efforts at all levels to carry out specific programmes within the framework of the objectives of the Year.
We all recognize that the family is an ancient institution, but at the same time ever-changing and evolving. Being the basic nucleus of any society, the family takes numerous forms and therefore defies precise definitions. One common denominator, however, is acknowledged by everyone: irrespective of the variety of its existing forms, the family provides crucial support for its members, and remains essential for the well-being of children or older persons, women or men, highly-educated and not so educated, in short, for everyone. At the same time, changes in demographics and family behaviour represent a significant challenge for contemporary society: they modify demographic structure, increase social risks and have a long term impact on stability and social protection systems. In this sense, policy makers and civil society are confronted with new and highly complex policy options.

There is no shortage of scholarly attempts to explain changes in family and also of reproductive behaviour, and to link them with shifting life values and cultural changes. Sociologists often speak about deeper cultural changes in the postmodern society—changes towards individualization of values, changing lifestyles, changing roles of men and women in society. Some emphasize more active participation of women in the labour force, while others underscore that fulfillment of parental aspirations can be realized, in many cases, with fewer children. Consequently, other life choices can win over parental aspirations. To use an economic concept, an “opportunity cost of having a child” in relation to other individual choices has increased dramatically.

Shifting life values is not the only significant social change that impacts on the family behavior. On the one hand, contemporary society and the global economy give more individual freedom and choice to family members. On the other hand it causes new insecurity and risks, e.g. employment insecurity, income insecurity, and insecurity in family relationships. Risks are becoming complex and often “block” individual choices. Family policies in EU countries have to cope with all these challenges, reconciling welfare state interventions with declining fertility and labour market participation rates.
For better or worse, in many countries being unmarried is increasingly the norm, while cohabitation patterns differ. Apart from the need to protect the legal rights of people living in these households under different types of consensual union, there is one category of people whose needs are of utmost priority in any family policy. Needless to say, I am talking about children. In some European countries unmarried couples who live together with children make up the fastest growing households. That there should not be any discrimination against children from unmarried parents is firmly recognized as a policy goal on European agenda.

I would like to remind the audience, that in almost all resolutions and other policy instruments which address the issue of family within the United Nations, the need is underscored to assess government policies through the prism of providing a supportive environment for all its members. A corollary and another important dimension is to ensure the availability of appropriate legal, social and physical infrastructure, to support caregivers, mothers and fathers, families at large in strengthening their capability to provide care, nurturing and protection in the best interest of the child. Actually, in many countries the crucial objective a family policy is to create a safe environment for children to grow up and to provide parents with the material and psychological means to have and raise children.

Children, however, are not the only component of the family. We also have to consider older persons. As the number of older persons is increasing not only in relative but also in absolute terms, longer average life has a great impact on inter-generational relationships within the family. Higher life expectancies mean older persons live longer and better lives; in this sense, we should keep in mind that older persons are not necessarily needy or burdensome. On the contrary, longer life and better health in old age are prompting a redefinition of the ageing process in relation to employment as well as in regard to family relations. The Second World Assembly on Ageing held in 2002 and the ensuing Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing underscored the need to recognize the enormous value of participation of older persons in society,
acknowledging the value of their skills, experience and wisdom. The need to strengthen solidarity among generations and intergenerational partnerships, keeping in mind the particular needs of both older and younger persons, was also recognized in Madrid. Older persons may be and often are a resource for younger generations, both in terms of supporting their children well into adulthood, and in terms of offering care for their own grandchildren. On the other hand, family care for older persons is often provided informally, and the level of public obligations differs quite substantially between countries, having a considerable impact on the resources and rights of those needing care.

Everyone seems to agree that there is a need to “support the family”. What it means in real life remains an open question. The precise role of government should be defined in a specific national context, taking into consideration the existing patterns of family obligations, availability of legal means and pressures from changing social values, including gender relations. One cannot, of course, forget existing budget constraints—a very important factor for policy makers in many countries in the face of globalization and increasing international competition.

More and more often governments are required to introduce family policies which should be pro-active, meet expectations of the electorate, but most of all which should foster competence and independence of family members, allowing them to develop their own adaptive strategies and retain maximum independence and autonomy at all stages of the life-course. This, I would venture is the real challenge faced by all governments, developed and developing alike.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, it is important to recognize one of the most far-reaching achievements of the Year, which is the greater awareness of what families contribute to economic development and social progress in societies all over the world. This “family perspective” is becoming an important factor for development, a fact that is increasingly reflected in national development plans and in programmes of economic and technical cooperation of organizations of the United Nations system. The formulation of family policies must take place within the framework of overall socio-economic
development strategies but, more than this, those development strategies must also take into consideration the very vital role played by families. Thus, it is very important for policy makers to undertake a diagnosis of the situation and needs of families before they elaborate national developmental policies and specific programmes.

Families, in whatever form people choose to consider them, will continue to be essential for human well being. Policies and programmes will increasingly recognize this role and seek to support it. A successful family programme, whether at the national or international level, will require both integration of a family perspective and advocacy of family issues. The United Nations will continue to fulfil this function at the international level, and will promote it at the national level as well. This is the commitment my Division has made and will keep in the years to come.
Section 1: Changes in the Family and Society

Emerging Demographic Issues in and for Europe:
The consequences of delayed childbearing

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Europe’s demographic trends are more in the news now than they used to be. This has, at least, the positive effect that more people know what demography is – a word that used to be unknown to many. But demography is also blamed for a lot of bad things these days. When people go to the streets to protest pension reforms, the politicians say that neither their past nor current policies are to blame, but rather that demography is to blame. I hope that by this, they do not mean the science of demography that has clearly pointed at the problem of population ageing for more than 20 years, but received little attention until recently. I hope, rather, that they point at the demographic trends themselves that cause slow but very significant structural changes in our societies that cannot be easily influenced by short-term policies.

What are these major population changes that seem to cause problems?
The least sophisticated, but still informative way to talk about population change is to simply look at the change in total population numbers. For certain issues, such as the size of a market, this is an important indicator. We can observe that the total population of the EU increased from 370 million in January 1994 to 380 million in January 2004. This increase of 10 million over 10 years is just 2.7 percent, or about one quarter of a percent per year. Over the same 10 years the population of
the United States grew by around 8 percent. In the US, this rapid population growth is expected to continue due to higher fertility and greater immigration levels than in the EU. Over the next three decades the American population is likely to increase by another 20 percent. For Europe, the longer-term projections see a likely decline in population size. But for the European Union something remarkable happened recently to the trend of total population size. Just within the last month, the EU population size increased by 20 percent, an increase that will take the US 30 years to achieve. This clever strategy of averting population decline by expanding the Union may well have a similar effect as traditional population growth when it comes, e.g., to economic effects of the size of a market. Over the rest of this century, we expect the US population to increase by about 50 percent. In order to keep pace with this, the EU – with expected negative natural growth – following the same strategy as last month, would have to include not only Turkey and the Balkans, but the Ukraine and Russia as well.

But total population size is only one crude indicator of population trends. Many other social and economic issues depend crucially on the age structure of the population. One recently very prominent example is the sustainability of current pension systems. But there are many other consequences of population change that will be mentioned during this meeting.

**Age Structure**

Figure 1 (next page) gives the population pyramid of the European Union in 2000.

It has women on the right hand side and men on the left, ordered by single year age groups. This pyramid reflects the history of the last 100 years. The consequences of the two world wars are clearly seen as cuts in the age profile, but the most dominant feature is the large size of the cohorts born during the 1960s, the so-called baby boom. After that we see the consequences of the fertility decline that resulted in the fact that today, for instance, there are 50 percent more women aged 35-39 than aged 0-4. The age pyramid narrows at the bottom.
How will this process continue in the future? Much of the population change over the coming decades is already embedded in the age structure today. There are only three uncertainties that influence the future shape of the age pyramid, namely, the future trends of fertility (birth rates), mortality (death rates), and migration. All three trends are uncertain, but the likely range of their future levels is not unlimited. This is why we produced probabilistic population projections that translate the uncertainty distributions of future fertility, mortality, and migration into a probabilistic age pyramid.

Figure 2 (next page) shows this pyramid for 2050 calculated on the basis of the EU-15.

The picture presents a nice summary of the different kinds of uncertainty by age. The orange area gives the 95 percent uncertainty ranges. The green area shows the inner 60 percent, and the blue area shows the inner 20 percent of the uncertainty distribution. The black line indicates the median. The graph clearly illustrates that the numbers of people aged 50 to 60 in 2050 (i.e., those born between 1990 and 2000) are the
least uncertain. There is no fertility uncertainty because we already know how big these cohorts are. There is not yet much mortality uncertainty because they have not yet reached the main mortality ages. Hence, the range given is mostly due to migration uncertainty. For the older population, the uncertainty significantly increases, because we do not yet know whether life expectancy increases are likely to level off soon (in which case we will have fewer elderly) or whether we will see significant further reductions in old age mortality (in which case we will have significantly more elderly people). There is a major scientific battle going on at the moment between scientists who believe that we are already close to the maximum life expectancy and others who think that if there is a limit at all, it is well above 115 years. This scientific uncertainty is reflected in these projections.

When it comes to the age groups that have not yet been born, the uncertainty about the level of fertility becomes a major factor. This uncertainty increases the further we go into the future. When it comes to those born after 2030, the uncertainty is particularly large because both
the number of potential mothers and their fertility rates are uncertain. This differential uncertainty is very relevant for various policy issues. For example, it is much more uncertain how many places in elementary schools will be needed in 2050 than how many people will reach a given retirement age, whatever this age will be in 2050. The figure also shows that in all likelihood in 2050, the baby boom cohort born around 1965 will still be the most numerous cohort alive. In other words, there will be more women aged 80 than in any other age group of the population.

Figure 3 shows the uncertainty range of an important population variable called the "support ratio". Here it is defined as the number of people aged 15-64 per person aged 65 or above. It shows that currently there are about four people of working age per person of retirement age. Since not everyone between the ages of 15 and 64 is currently paying into the pension system, the actual support ratio is lower than this demographic ratio, which is only indicative of the pension burden. But the trend is very clear: there is almost no uncertainty that the support ratio will significantly decline to about half of its current value over the coming decades. This is because most of the future change is already embedded in today’s age structure.

If we look even further at the possible future population, the changes for
Europe look even more dramatic. Figure 4 gives the results for Western Europe from IIASA’s recent probabilistic population forecasts to 2100. It shows the proportion of the population above age 80. Currently, only about three percent of the population is in this very old age group and, as the figure shows, we expect only a slow increase over the coming years. But when the big baby boom cohort born around 1965 enters this high age group around 2045, we will see quite dramatic increases of 10 to 15 percent of the total population in the median of the distribution. But the even more conscious aspect of this graph is the very wide uncertainty range, particularly during the second half of this century. This reflects the great scientific uncertainty about future trends in old age mortality that I mentioned earlier. If the pessimists are correct, and we will not see much future improvement in life expectancy, then the proportion above age 80 may well stay under 10 percent. If the optimists are correct, and we experience significant future mortality reductions, then an incredible 40 percent of the total population may be above age 80. When trying to imagine what such a society would look like, it seems questionable which of the paths should be called optimistic and pessimistic.
Fertility

But the main focus of this paper will not be mortality, but rather fertility. This is partly because this conference is about families, and partly because birth rates and family changes are intimately linked in many respects. Also, fertility in the long run is quantitatively the most important determinant of population trends. Finally, over the last few years, there has been an interesting new development in fertility analysis that may have great implications for family policies, and may add new elements to the traditional portfolios aiming at improving the compatibility between work and child rearing. It has to do with the fact that the increase in the mean age of childbearing that results from the ongoing postponement of births (the so-called “tempo effect”) results in a significant and lasting loss of births that greatly contributes to population decline and ageing in Europe. I will attempt to explain this rather abstract and technical issue in a few simple words, and point at possible policy implications.

Before considering the tempo effect, let us have a closer look at the recent fertility trends in the different member states of the EU. in Western Europe. This rate can be interpreted as the average number of children per woman, calculated on the basis of data from one calendar year. One observes the fertility rates of women of different age groups in one calendar year and then sums them up to calculate the mean number of children a hypothetical average woman would have, if subjected to this set of age-specific fertility rates. We see that during the baby boom of the 1960s, these rates were mostly above 2.5 children per woman. During the 1970s, these countries began a steep decline that was spearheaded by Germany, Luxembourg, and Austria, but soon the others followed. There are some remarkable differences today: while Austria has a fertility level of around 1.3, France has one of the highest levels in Europe with 1.9.

The Southern European countries began their descent later and fell to even lower levels (Figure 5). The new member countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Figure 6) had remarkably high and stable fertility levels until the transition in 1990, when they began a precipitous decline. Today they have the lowest fertility levels in Europe. Northern Europe (Figure 7)
Figure 5

Western Europe, total fertility rate, 1960-2001

Figure 6

Central/eastern Europe, total fertility rate, 1960-2001
– except for Ireland, which is a very special case – had a very early decline, starting in the mid-1960s, but never fell to such low levels as Southern or Central Europe.

There has been a lot of research about the reasons for this decline, but there is not one single, most important factor that can be named. It has been the result of a complex change in social and economic conditions as well as in values. The notion of the Second Demographic Transition has gained prominence as describing some of these changes that range from changing attitudes towards sex to the changing role of marriage and the position of women in society. Unfortunately, this paradigm does not tell us where the transition will end or what sorts of further changes we can expect for the coming decades. While it is difficult to pin down the reasons for these trends, it is easier to demonstrate which of the popular explanations that are often heard should not be blamed for the very low fertility levels. Let’s have a quick look at the proportion of birth outside marriage and the female labour force participation rate.

Figure 8 plots the current level of fertility against the proportion of live births born out of wedlock for all 25 EU member countries. If one expects
that the more traditional societies, where most children are born to married couples, have higher overall fertility rates, this is clearly contradictory to the empirical evidence. If a relationship can be identified, then it is in the opposite direction for the old members (marked in black), where the countries with the highest fertility rates (the Nordic countries, France, the UK, and even Ireland these days) have the highest proportion of births out of wedlock. On the other end are the Mediterranean countries (Greece, Italy, Spain, Malta) that have very low proportions of children born outside of marriage, combined with very low fertility. This picture is somewhat distorted by the new member countries, with their combination of very low fertility and a generally high proportion of children born out of wedlock. What could be the explanation for this unexpected pattern? One plausible hypothesis is that in countries with more traditional norms concerning family and fertility, young women find it hard to combine children and career, and have to make a choice. Not surprisingly, an increasing number of women choose career first. It is, therefore, because of these traditional norms that women postpone or even forego having children.
Figure 9 (Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004) takes a closer look at the relationship between fertility and female labour force participation rates. It shows how the cross-country correlations of these two variables change over time. Strong negative correlations up to 1980 indicate that indeed in countries where a higher proportion of women worked, the fertility rate was lower. But around 1985 – when the Mediterranean countries entered the very low fertility group – the nature of the correlation completely changed to a strong, positive one. As a result, those countries in which a higher proportion of women work have higher fertility rates. In these countries, it is clearly easier for women to combine work and family due to better childcare facilities, maternal and paternal benefits, and more general social support for working mothers. This helps to explain the seemingly contradictory situation that in the more conservative societies, fertility is lower.
I will now focus on a more technical reason why the fertility rates as measured in calendar years are so low in some countries. It is the tempo effect, caused by an increase in the mean age of childbearing, which in course is the result of a postponement of births. Figure 10 shows that after initial declines in the mean age of childbearing, the mean age has been strongly increasing in Western Europe since 1980. A similar pattern appears for Southern Europe (Figure 11). For the new member countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Figure 12), the increase began only after the transformation. In all cases, the increase in the mean age of childbearing coincided with periods of very low fertility as shown before.

Now let us look at the theory behind this. (Figure 13)

The main point is that the current fertility depressing effect of an ongoing increase in the mean age at childbearing will have a significant and lasting effect on population dynamics in Europe, presenting a force towards population decline and accelerated population ageing. This so-called tempo effect on fertility has recently received much attention in the
Southern Europe, mean age of childbearing, 1960–2001

Central/eastern Europe, mean age of childbearing, 1960–2001
It is based on the analytical insight that fertility is currently low in Europe for two different reasons.

1) Women are delaying births to later ages, resulting in fewer births in the calendar years during which this delay happens (the tempo effect).

2) Even after adjusting for this tempo effect, fertility is below replacement level (the so-called “quantum of fertility”). If women do not forego postponed births altogether, delayed childbearing does not affect the total number of births women have over the course of their lives (the cohort fertility), but still lowers period birth rates as long as postponement is going on and hence contributes to further population ageing and decline.

In the context of tempo analysis, much of the demographic work so far has focused on estimating fertility rates that adjust for this tempo effect, seeing it as a disturbance that should be eliminated in order to come up with a “purer” fertility measure, the tempo adjusted total fertility rate (TFR). Lutz, O’Neill, and Scherbov (2003) turn this approach upside down and focus on the tempo effect not as something that should be ironed out, but rather as something that is the focus of interest and could provide a point of leverage for possible attempts to influence the level of period
birth rates, something we call “tempo policies”. Quantitatively they show that at the level of the EU-15, a hypothetical end to postponement would bring the period TFR up from currently 1.5 to 1.8, a development that over the coming decades would significantly moderate population decline and ageing. It is shown that about 45 percent of the calculated population decline in their scenarios is due to the tempo effect (see Figure 14).

In terms of ageing, it is shown that a continuation of the tempo effect for the next 10-40 years would imply that an additional 500 to 1,500 million person-years of workers would be needed to support the elderly population over the rest of the century, as compared to a no-delay scenario (hypothetical immediate end to the tempo effect). This clearly demonstrates that the changing age of childbearing represents a very important force of population dynamics in Europe that requires special attention.

In real life some of the postponed births will never be born and increases in the mean age of childbearing tend to reduce the quantum of the fertility of the concerned cohorts. This can be for various reasons, ranging from instability of partnerships to involvement in the work force, but particularly due to declining fecundability (the probability to get pregnant) with age, a decline that accelerates after age 35. This “tempo-quantum interaction” is an additional important factor when it comes to studying the consequences of postponement on fertility rates.
After this bit of theory, let’s look at empirical numbers of fertility in the current 25 member states. Figure 15 shows the relationship between the average annual increase in the mean age of childbearing and the current level of fertility.

There is a very clear and strong relationship: countries with the highest increase in the mean age of childbearing have the lowest fertility. Roughly speaking, an increase in the mean age of childbearing by 0.2 years (i.e., one-fifth of a year) causes the fertility rate to be depressed by 0.3. For example, instead of 1.5, it would be 1.8, if there were no further delays. This is approximately the level of the tempo effect that we currently have on the EU average.

Since this is a somewhat complicated story, let’s recapitulate the main points.

Why should there be a policy focus on the tempo of fertility? Four main points can be made here:

a) It is well established that in a period when the mean age of childbearing increases, the period TFR is depressed relative to what it would be without such an increase.
b) So far the tempo effect has been mostly considered as an undesired disturbance that needs to be ironed out (tempo-adjusted fertility rates) in order to have a purer measure.

c) The tempo effect greatly matters for the number of births born in any given year. It has a lasting effect on the age structure and size of a population.

d) Tempo policies aim at influencing the tempo effect and its lasting impacts on population dynamics.

Will this fertility depressing effect of delays in childbearing continue in the future? Some countries whose mean age of childbearing is already around 30 years have recently seen a levelling off of the increase. France, the Netherlands, and Spain are examples of this. But as Figure 16 shows, many countries, particularly in Central Europe, still have much lower mean ages at births. If we assume some sort of social convergence in Europe, this would imply that some of these countries may well experience many more years of increasing ages at childbearing and hence, a fertility depressing tempo effect. And there are currently very strong social and economic forces in our society that exert pressure toward later childbearing. I just want to mention the expansion of education, high youth unemployment, and an increasingly competitive work situation for those young people who do find a job (see Figure 17).
Can policies do anything to influence this trend? While choice of family size (quantum) is largely considered a private matter, where direct government interference is not welcome, a focus on the timing of births might be more favoured, particularly because there is a strong health rationale against further delays (risk of not getting pregnant, risks associated with late pregnancies).

There are essentially two ways of affecting the mean age of childbearing:

a) change the typical sequence of life cycle phases (e.g., having children while still at university)
b) shorten the duration of those phases that typically precede childbearing (e.g., shorten the study time to a certain degree).

Let’s think a minute about the possible impact of education reforms on the mean age of childbearing. In many European countries, it is currently under discussion to shorten the study time needed to reach a certain education level. In Bavaria, for instance, the duration of high school was recently cut from nine to eight years. There are also discussions to begin elementary school at a younger age. Although these considerations about education reform are, at the moment, completely unrelated to fertility considerations, such reforms may have the effect that women leave the education system with the same qualifications at a younger age. There is convincing empirical evidence that this implies a younger age at childbirth. Some recent hypothetical calculations along these lines show the results for Italy (Figure 21; Lutz and Skirbekk 2004)

We defined six scenarios that study possible demographic consequences of a school reform that will bring down the mean age of childbearing by two years, starting with the cohorts born in 1995. There is no time to go into this in detail, but the results on the right hand side of the figure indicate that there are indeed significant long-term consequences on the demographic structure that result from changes in the timing of fertility.

**Conclusion**

All these numbers on the consequences of tempo should not be taken as realistic forecasts. The only message I want to convey here, is that indeed the timing of births is a much more important aspect than previously considered. It has very significant demographic long-term consequences, and can possibly be influenced by changing some of the conditions of the life courses of young adults. I want to make it very clear that such possible tempo-related policies should not be seen as replacing the currently emphasized, very important policies that aim at expanding childcare facilities and improving the compatibility of work and family. Here, the fertility-related rationale is that such policies would help young couples to close the gap between higher, desired family sizes and the actual low fertility (thus addressing primarily the quantum of fertility).
There is no contradiction between the two, and both types of policies are needed. They mutually reinforce each other when it comes to the level of fertility.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the third component of population change, in addition to fertility and mortality, namely, migration.

Figure 19 [Lutz and Scherbov 2003] shows some data on the often discussed question: to what degree can immigration compensate for Europe’s low fertility? It gives alternative projections for the old age dependency ratio based on a wide range of different fertility and migration assumptions. Fertility is assumed to be constant over the period at the indicated levels, ranging from an unlikely low 1.0 to an equally unlikely 2.2 children per woman. The migration assumptions also cover a very broad range, from zero migration gains to annual net migration gains of 1.2 million people. The black line shows the 2000 level of the old age dependency ratio. We see that no matter what the future level of fertility or migration will be, we will have to expect very significant population ageing over the coming decades. But the future levels of both migration and fertility do make a difference when it comes to the speed of ageing or to the specific level of the dependency burden. These dramatic demographic changes that we expect in Europe over the
coming decades will affect European families in many important ways, ranging from the necessary care for the elderly to burden sharing when it comes to raising Europe’s future generations. As demonstrated, future changes in family patterns will also possibly have sizeable impacts on Europe’s demographic future.

References


Introduction:
Despite many changes in family formation and a growing trend of individualization, the family remains a cornerstone of European societies, of old and new Member States. Recently, the discourse on stronger and more coherent support for the family has come alive. It has crossed the traditional ideological dividing lines between the ‘left’ and ‘right’ in Europe. Both sides seem to agree on the need to strengthen the family unit through specific actions and programs. Issues that continue to create the dividing lines include whether to use a wider or narrower definition of family, whether to focus intervention on family structures and resources or to focus exclusively on family resources, whether to support families with care responsibilities (children and elderly) by promoting an effective work-life balance for women (i.e. by making it easier for women to work) or by supporting a male breadwinner approach (i.e. making it more possible for women to remain in the home) and lastly whether to focus reconciliation activities exclusively on women or on both men and women over the whole life course.

There is wide agreement that the family, its arrangements, its condition and its support, is an important component in the design of a successful economic and social policy. It is important to achieve
• Higher quality of life for all
• Increased employment levels, especially for women and older workers
• A better gender balance
• A more sustainable fertility level
• Higher levels of social inclusion
• Improved coverage and quality of care for children and for the elderly and
• A more cohesive society by avoiding a ‘war’ between the generations
However, despite the importance of the family, family policies have in many countries a low status relative to other policy domains. Family policy is often the vehicle for the delivery of objectives of other policy areas. As many family issues are regarded as private matters, family policy all the time has to achieve a fine balance between private and public responsibility. Governments have to decide whether to intervene in response to challenging family issues, what policy options are available, and finally how those responses should be used, resourced and implemented. As far as the European treaties are concerned the European Union has no role as such in the development of a European Union family policy. However, it plays an important role in closely related policies on employment, care, social inclusion, modernization of social protection and equal opportunities between men and women. More specifically on family policy as such the EU can support an exchange of experiences and policy reflections for mutual benefit of the Member States.

The results I am presenting are based on two large attitudinal surveys carried out in the 25 Member States and the 3 candidate countries. The first data set is a compilation of seven Eurobarometer studies on quality of life between 1999 and 2002. Altogether more than 100,000 respondents are included. The second data set is based on the European Foundation’s quality of life survey from autumn 2003. It provides data collected at the same point in time and using the same research instrument. Altogether 26,000 respondents are included in the latter survey.

**Quality of Life and Family**

Let us look first at how European citizens view the importance of family for their quality of life. Family is a key facet in a multi-dimensional concept of quality of life of Europeans. Having family support is regarded in EU15 as the third most important determinant of quality of life, which is only preceded by ‘good health’ and ‘sufficient income’ as the No.1 and No. 2 priorities. In the NEW10 and CC3 it is even the No.2 priority on an equal footing with ‘sufficient income’.
Living with a partner is seen by nearly 85% of the respondents in the NEW10 as an essential part of quality of life; in the EU15 the figure is slightly lower. In the NEW10 it is the number 2 priority, in the EU15 it is the number 7 priority. This is a first indication that family issues have a higher importance in the NEW10 than in the EU15.

Having children is much less important as a pre-requisite of quality of life with nearly 75% in the NEW10 and under 60% in EU15 mentioning this item. Again we see a relatively higher relevance of family issues in the NEW10 for quality of life.

How then is satisfaction with family life? Europeans have a high relative and absolute satisfaction with the quality of their family life. E.g. in NEW10 nearly 85% are very satisfied and satisfied with family life. The high degree of satisfaction with quality of family life in NEW10 helps counterbalance the overall lower life satisfaction in these countries, which is negatively influenced by larger degrees of dissatisfaction with income, employment and the health care system. Family is therefore an important stabilizer of overall life satisfaction in the NEW10.
First conclusion: For the citizens of Europe, good family relations are key demands for their quality of life. It is more related to the availability of family support and living in a partnership than to having children. It seems to be more related to the availability of positive outcomes of family life than to the long-term commitment to family via children. However, family appears to be more important in the new Member States than in the average of the former Member States. A more detailed comparison reveals a similar importance of family in the NEW10 as in the Southern Member States of the EU15.

Fertility aspirations
Decreasing fertility is seen as a key policy challenge in Europe. It underlines the longstanding disadvantage in this regard vis-à-vis other major regions, especially the US where fertility is now 40% higher than in Europe. While it is possible that this is temporary, there is concern that Europe may need concerted actions to raise birth rates. At the same time, the right to control one’s birth rate is regarded as a private matter.

The particular focus this morning is on fertility aspirations of women with completed fertility aged 40 to 64. Their ideal fertility in the EU25 is 2.34, whereas their achieved fertility is 2.05. That amounts to a fertility gap of nearly 0.30. Within the two country groupings 55-60% of women achieve their ideal fertility, around a third under-attain and around 10% over-attain. In consequence, a third of women would be a possible target group for additional family support policies.

Under-attainment varies strongly in relation to education. In NEW10 and EU15 over 40% of women with highest level of education report fewer children than desired.

The high under-attainment would make high-qualified women a specific target for policy intervention. It can be assumed for this group that the provision of appropriate childcare provisions to support a ‘normal’ career path and a more even sharing of household responsibilities inside the family would play a more important role than the level of replacement income during parental leave or the level of child allowance.
The second conclusion: Under-attainment exists, particularly for highly qualified women. However, the scope of policy intervention in this field according to the research of Hantrais and others (2003, p.23) is limited. Respondents did not accept public policies aimed at influencing directly family formation, size or structure, especially pro-natalist measures, e.g. through prohibition of abortion, making divorce difficult, promoting marriage etc. It seems to be that the only positive, acceptable pro-natalist measures in a democratic society are those, which open up options, reduce constraints, not those which close options or enforce a certain pattern of behaviour.

Intergenerational solidarity
Due to the demographic developments (decline in fertility and higher life expectancy) and due to the financial constraints of the welfare state, European societies depend largely on family support for provision of care to the elderly. This is particularly true in welfare regimes, which are strongly based on family solidarity or which are seriously financially constrained. Thus the question is, to what extent is intergenerational solidarity in family care alive, well and sustainable?

Intergenerational solidarity is also important in regard to the distribution of costs of care between the younger and the older generation. Do we have a generational conflict between young and old, as often predicted, or can one observe a ‘fair’ burden sharing between the generations.

Analysis of this issue reveals a remarkable vital network of informal help throughout Europe. In the new Member States, roughly 25% of the respondents are engaged in some form of regular help to someone who is ill or dependent. In the EU15, the figure is around 20%. The similar aggregate levels conceal somewhat different structures of help. In the new Member States, help is much more concentrated within private households and within the family system. On the other hand, EU15 citizens are more active outside their private households and outside the kinship system than respondents in the NEW10.
In both parts of Europe, the informal care activities of citizens peak at prime age in the middle of the life cycle. The level of support is almost as high among economically active persons as among pensioners or the unemployed. In this sense, people outside the labour force do not effectively lower the burden for working people who frequently have to juggle work and caring roles. This puts individual care-givers under heavy strain. Relieving economically active people of some of the care responsibilities or coordinating formal employment more effectively with the informal care activities would be good for both companies and workers. This is an issue often forgotten in the debate on work-life balance.

When Europeans are asked whether they would consider it good or bad if in future years working adults would have to look after their elderly parents more, groups known to be the present or likely suppliers of care – women and younger persons – endorse the idea of family support to similar or even higher degrees than those who are likely recipients of care. Women who give care more frequently than men advocate extended family responsibilities even more frequently than males. Even among younger people, a majority is in favour of extended family support in the future. In general people who are caring for elderly persons tend to express positive views about extended family responsibilities.

All this supports conclusion number three: The strength of family support is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can certainly help to unburden the welfare state and find new welfare mixes. On the other hand, it also puts a heavy dual burden on the shoulders of economically active persons especially on middle aged women, who are now expected to remain longer in the labour market.

The strength of intergenerational relations becomes evident when Europeans are asked who should pay for the care of elderly parents. The choice was between the options ‘their children’, ‘the elderly parents themselves’ and ‘the state or other public authorities’. In NEW10 and EU15 countries, older respondents tend to be more in favour of shifting the cost of care to elderly persons than younger persons. In 24 of the 25
European countries, shifting the burden of financing to the elderly is more popular among older than among younger respondents.

Older citizens are willing to shoulder their part of the cost of care, and do not advocate shifting the cost to the younger generation any more frequently than do the young themselves. The younger generation, in turn, seems to be willing to shoulder care tasks and to advocate extended family responsibilities even where they would have to carry the resulting burdens themselves.

Conclusion number four is: The results reveal a much higher degree of intergenerational solidarity than reflected in the public debate on the ‘war between the generations’ and a realistic view on a fair burden sharing.

In our recent survey we looked more generally at perceived tensions or cleavages in regard to differences between the younger and older generation. Europeans in the EU15 and in the NEW10 give the generational cleavage a low importance: Around 15% see a lot of tension between young and old and within a collection of five major societal cleavages (rich and poor; worker and management etc) the generational cleavage has the second last importance. In comparison: In the EU15 nearly half of the citizens stress racial and ethnic tensions as the most important cleavage, whereas in the NEW10 more than half of the population perceive strong tensions between rich and poor as the main dividing line in society.

The conclusion number five is clear: In the perception of 85% of the population in the former and new Member States no strong generational conflicts are visible.

Family and social inclusion

EU policy puts strong emphasis on effective social inclusion through permanent and long-term involvement in paid employment over the life course. This is also supported by the results of our surveys, which show unambiguously that unemployed and people with financial difficulties are much more likely than the population at large to feel socially excluded.
However, the absence of social support within or outside the family clearly adds to the feeling of marginalisation in a situation of economic deprivation. In short, lack of social support impacts on subjective feelings of exclusion to the same degree as various economic deprivation factors.

Our research analysed the relationship between five different factors that determine social integration and the perception of social exclusion: Being part of the labour market and having control over basic financial resources were included as socio-economic drivers of integration; social network support outside the family, family integration, and perceived participation chances in society were included as social factors. The analysis confirmed that solvency problems and unemployment are aggravated in respect of social exclusion, if they are accompanied by lack of family support or wider social support. It also shows that economic hardship has less effect on social inclusion, if social buffers like a well-functioning family network are available. A more complex statistical multi-variate analysis identifies the influence of each of the five factors on perceived social exclusion as shown in the graph.

Based on this result we arrive at the **sixth conclusion**: Family support is beside paid employment the second pillar for social inclusion in Europe. Although participation in the labour market is certainly a crucial means of social inclusion, alone it is not sufficient. Also participation in a meaningful web of relationships, particularly in relationships with one’s own family is crucial. Furthermore, families are often a means of financial support, particularly where the welfare state is weak.

**Difficulties in reconciling work and family life**

In regard to the reconciliation of work and family life the main focus is on the question, how to improve sustainable labour supply through appropriate measures to improve the work-life balance mainly of women with children or elderly dependents. W. Adema from OECD will deal with this. Let me briefly focus on the question, what is the perceived difficulty to reconcile work and family and what is the effect of working time arrangements in this respect.
Two indicators have been used: coming back from work too tired to do household work and having difficulties to fulfil family responsibilities due to the amount of time spent on the job. The following figures cover respondents who report these difficulties several times per week. Overall in the EU15 22% of employed persons are coming home from work too tired to work in the household. The lowest share is in Austria with 12% and the highest in Greece with 29%. The figures for the NEW10 are slightly higher with an average of nearly 30%.

The number of respondents claiming difficulties to fulfil their family responsibilities due to excess time spent on the job is lower. In the EU15 10% and in the NEW10 15% report those problems. Again we find a wide range within the 25 countries ranging from 5% in the Netherlands, Finland and Austria to under 30% (27%) in Latvia. Surprisingly, there is no significant gender difference in both country groupings.

As expected respondents with children under three years of age have most problems to fulfil their family responsibilities. Creating a ratio on reported difficulties for those persons in comparison to all employed persons shows for the EU15 a 40% and for the NEW10 a 30% increase in reported difficulties. Some country results are outstanding and reflect well the public debate in those countries: German parents with small children report 3.4 times more difficulties than the average German employee, Austrian parents find it two times more difficult to fulfil their family responsibilities. In the NEW10, the highest difference is reported in Estonia (2.5 times) and in the Czech Republic (2 times).

To summarize this in **our seventh conclusion:** There is a problem with work-life balance ranging on average between 10 and 20% of the working population. Families with small children report significantly more problems and should be a key target group for policy measures.

The effect of working time on perceived difficulties of fulfil family responsibilities is shown in the following graph and supports **conclusion number eight:** Very long working hours have a strong detrimental effect on the possibility to fulfil family responsibilities.
Policy directions for families with children in Europe

At the end let me briefly report, how the citizens of Europe reflect on the possible direction of family policy to cope best with the existing challenges? Family policy is defined as a coherent set of policies, which identifies the family unit as its target. It defines specific actions and programs, which try to have an impact on family resources and family structures. Beside these core aspects it also targets issues as gender equality and intergenerational solidarity. It uses explicit/direct measures as provision of child allowance and indirect measures as privileged access to housing for families with children.

The following question was asked: ‘In order to improve life for families with children, which three of the following should the government make their priority?’

- Parental leave
- Childcare arrangements
- Benefits, child allowance
- Benefits during parental leave
- Flexible working hours
- Availability of suitable accommodation
- Lowering the cost of education
- Tax advantages
- Reducing unemployment
- Available contraception

Let us first look at the results for the EU15:

Based on the public debate the expected result would be that flexible working hours, childcare provisions and the provision of parental leave (duration and payment) are seen as the most important measures to improve the situation of families with children. Whereas the importance of the first two measures is confirmed, it is astonishing that the respondents give by far the highest priority to the fight against unemployment as the most important measure to improve the situation of families. In 6 out of 15 former Member States it has the highest
priority and in 12 out of 15 it is within the top three of relevant measures to support families. The level of child allowance, the cost of education, the duration and level of benefits during parental leave is for most of EU15 citizens of minor importance to improve life for family and children. Just to be clear on this point: The level of parental leave benefit is seen probably as important for the actual conditions of families, but is not identified as a policy measure by the citizens, which needs further improvement relative to other measures.

The NEW10 show a different pattern. The emphasis is much more on child allowance and the level of replacement income during parental leave, i.e. on measures covering costs related to the up-bringing children. The fight against unemployment moves into fourth position just behind initiatives to contain the costs of education of children. However, flexible working time arrangements and available childcare provisions, which were high on the agenda of the citizens in the EU15 play no role.

The question is, how do these overall results for the whole population compare with the point of view of families with children in Europe? Unfortunately, we can only analyze more in detail the results for the NEW10. Surprisingly the results for respondents under 50 years of age with children is nearly the same as for the whole population. The only major change is an even higher relative emphasis on the level of child allowance as the most important means to support families and children. In 6 out of the 10 new Member States the level of child allowance is regarded as the most important measure for family support.

The overall results for the EU15 are also confirmed by a comprehensive DG Research Project led by Linda Hantrais, which deals with policy responses in an enlarged Europe to socio-economically determined family changes. It concludes that public policy in general would appear to have a greater indirect influence on decisions taken about family life than do specific family policy measures. In the 8 EU15 countries, which were included in this research 'public provision of benefits and services for families were secondary considerations in encouraging family formation, whereas a secure income from employment, affordable housing and a
sufficient standard of living were widely seen as preconditions for raising children’ (p.27)

This research also confirms partly the results for the NEW10 when it concludes that ‘the reduction in the provision of benefits and services previously mediated through the workplace was perceived as a disincentive for family building’ (p.28). It differs, however, from our results by putting more emphasis on access to employment as number one priority.

**To finish with conclusion No.9:** The preferences in regard to various policy measures to support family and children in the mind of the citizens of Europe re-affirm the basic rationale of the European employment strategy: the reduction of unemployment and an increase in the employment rate is the best social policy for all including families with children. In addition citizens in the EU15 stress the importance of flexible working hours and available childcare provisions. The citizens in the NEW10 have different priorities: They suggest government initiatives, which primarily increase child related income and reduce child related costs.

**Conclusion**
To conclude: I hope that this brief analysis provides some in-sights into important underlying issues for family policy in the new Europe of 25. For the citizens of Europe family support is important for their quality of life and for their social integration. The family functions well in many respects and provides an important buffer for individuals and for societies in times of major challenges and turmoil. It needs, however, support, protection and the re-design of its interface with other parts of society, in particular with paid work. It needs protection against the effect of long working hours and stressful working conditions, it needs support in financial terms and in the provision of social services, and it needs a conceptual and factual modernization by developing e.g. more integrated policies considering the whole life course and not only life phase specific effects of family related initiatives. This includes also the analysis of long-term effects on social security provisions.
Section 2: Changes in Society and the Role of the Family

Unmet Needs and Risks: The Significance of Changing Family Life for Social Policy in Europe/EU

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This contribution takes family change and the risks associated with it as its departure point and focus throughout. Its intention is, on the one hand, to identify the risks attaching to contemporary family life and on the other to problematise the matter of whether and how the state should respond to these risks. The paper is intended to provoke thought on the matter of the future of family policy, rather than providing a comprehensive and detailed review of the many issues involved in family change and family policy. It should be read therefore along the lines of a summary of the key issues and the dilemmas or challenges that they raise for policy makers, with some emphasis on those that are most extreme or pressing. The paper is divided into three sections. The first describes the main changes and trends affecting family life in Europe in the last decade or two. The second seeks to identify the main risks that arise from these changes and the third draws attention, briefly, to the challenges raised for the state and public policy in general by these changes as well as raising issues around how (and whether) the state should respond.
1. CHANGE AND FAMILIES

Before we begin the discussion of change, we should note one insight from existing work which cautions against seeing family as a receptacle, in the sense of a passive object of changes occurring elsewhere. To quote Strohmeier (2002: 344): “families are remarkably autonomous, self-determining social systems”. Among other things, the resistance that there is to attempts at social engineering warns us against seeing family as always ‘acted upon’. Scholarship today highlights how family is itself a source of change, especially in regard to family-related roles and relationships among family members (e.g., changes in parent child relations, changes in spousal roles). With this in mind, this contribution suggests that we need a differentiated approach to family change. When reference is made to family change, most often it is the structure or form of families that is focused on. I suggest that this is too narrow or incomplete and intend to use a three-fold framework to analyse family change. This differentiates between change in the structure or form of families, change in family practices and family organisation, change in family relationships and values. In essence then, demographic changes need to be seen as associated with and accompanied by changes in social practices, relations and values.

1.1 Change in Family Forms

As economic welfare increases in more countries, people have less need to share their living arrangements and be part of the same household (De Jong Gierveld 1998: 31). These and other trends have an expression, and to some extent cause, in demographic behaviour.

One strong trend in Europe overall is towards living alone, a historically unique form of living. The number of household units in Europe has increased sharply and is predicted to continue to rise in the future. In 1961 the EU-15 had 92 million households with an average of 3.3 persons per household; by 1995 the figure had risen to 148 million with an average of 2.5 persons per household (EUROSTAT, 2003b). The main cause of the increase is the sharp rise in the number of persons living alone – there are now 42 million persons in this living situation across the EU-15 countries. Living alone is mainly a Northern European trend...
phenomenon. Although the number of one-person households has grown in almost linear fashion since the 1960s in almost all EU member states, Germany and Finland are the two countries that have seen the largest increase. Looking to the future, Ireland, closely followed by Spain and Luxembourg, are predicted to record the largest increase in one-person households in the coming years (ibid). This trend is associated with a change in the structure of households. One element of this change is a move away from multi-generational households.

A second trend is a fall in fertility. This trend, while varying from region to region, is quite robust and has resulted in under-replacement fertility levels as the norm in Europe. Between 1980 and 2001 the total fertility rate in the EU-15 fell from 1.82 to 1.46 (EUROSTAT 2003a). As is well known, the countries of Southern Europe (in particular Greece, Italy and Spain) have not only seen the largest fall but they have now the lowest replacement rates in the European area. Ireland continues to have the highest fertility rate – at 2.01 it is considerably in excess of the next highest country (France at 1.88) and of the EU average (1.46). The fall in fertility, together with an increase in life expectancy, has resulted in a dejuvenation and aging of the population (De Jong Gierveld 1998: 38). The number of older people is increasing in relative and absolute terms, so much so that many countries have seen a shift in the age distribution.

Thirdly, there has been an increase in extra-marital births. This too, however, varies regionally – in 2002 over half of all births were outside marriage in many parts of Northern Europe whereas in other countries (especially the Southern countries) the proportion was below 20% (EUROSTAT 2003a). Thinking socially, this kind of change has meant that the interweaving of marriage, sexuality and procreation has been unpicked (Matthijs and Van den Troost 1998: 112).

Fourthly, there has been a downward trend in the number of marriages. Kaufmann (2002: 423) speaks of a growing disinclination towards marriage and an increasing social recognition of alternative forms of partnership and parenthood outside of wedlock. For the EU-15 the crude marriage rate fell from 6.3 to 4.8 between 1980 and 2001 (EUROSTAT
2003a). It is hard to discern a regional pattern here – for example Denmark has not only seen an increase in the marriage rate since 1980 but as of 2001 had the highest crude marriage rate in the EU whereas Sweden saw a small fall and had the lowest marriage rate of all member states. The overall trend in divorces is upwards, the crude divorce rate per 1,000 population increasing from 1.4 in 1980 to 1.9 in 2001 (ibid). Matthijs and Van den Troost (1998) characterise it as a ‘divorce explosion’ and draw our attention to the fact that the high rate of divorce which now exists in many countries is completely new. There is a discernible regional variation in the prevalence of divorce, however, and it is in the expected direction: divorce rates are lowest in the Southern countries and highest in Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Belgium. Alongside and associated with these changes, there has been a growth in cohabitation. Contained within this trend towards partnership and cohabitation is a new type of relationship. Known as Living Apart Together or LAT relationships, this kind of relationship exists when couples live apart. Its current extent is unknown.

All of these changes are leading to and accompanied by increasing variation in the composition of households and families. The kind of change involved here is encapsulated in the literature by the term ‘new family forms’ or ‘new biographical models’. This is meant to refer to the growth of cohabitation or partnership (including among same-sex couples) and the many combinations of family type that these lead to. Lone parents, for example, in 2001 comprised 9 per cent of all households with dependent children in the EU 15 (varying from 22 per cent in Sweden and 17 per cent in the UK to 4 per cent in Italy, Greece and Portugal and 3 per cent in Spain [EUROSTAT 2004].

Looked at overall, while there are strong similarities, it would be ill-advised to make a simplified argument of convergence among EU

1 An LAT family form is here the two members of a couple live separately. One definition of LAT relationships is provided by Trost (1998:210): “The definition of a LAT relationship is a couple, where the two do not share the same household, each of them lives in his or her own household, in which other persons might also live, they define themselves as a couple and perceive that their close surrounding also does.
countries, not least because convergence implies similarity of outcome. Boh’s (1989) term ‘convergence to diversity’ still seems appropriate. In terms of trends, countries are moving at their own pace and developments are embedded in national cultures and traditions. Kuijsten (2002: 50) summarises well with his observation: “pluralization is everywhere but everywhere it has another face”. In terms of patterns, cross-country differences persist. One must in particular draw attention to the fact that there are (at least) two kinds of patterns in Europe, following (loosely) a North/South grid or continuum. In Northern European countries, especially Scandinavia, in comparison to those further South, there are more people living alone, average household size is smaller, there are fewer marriages and a greater diversity in and prevalence of alternative living arrangements.

1.2 Changes in Family Organisation/Practices
In this regard, one of the main motors of change is the increase in labour market participation among women. This is one of the most dominant and persistent trends in European countries over recent decades (Daly 2000; EUROSTAT 2002a). While it might be somewhat premature to proclaim the disappearance of the housewife, the counterpoint of increased employment among women has been a decline in the traditional household form of a male breadwinner and female homemaker and a growth of households where both partners are employed. The latter has now become the dominant form in most EU member states, at least among households with two people of working age. For the 10 member states for which data are available, households with both partners in the labour force were in 2000 almost twice as numerous as those with only one, averaging around 62 per cent of the total (EUROSTAT 2002a). A marked divide is evident, however, between the Northern member states, together with Portugal, where two-thirds or more of households were dual-participant, and Spain, Greece, Ireland and Italy where the proportion was less than 50 per cent. In both groups of countries, however, the 1990s saw an increase in the prevalence of dual participant households. The growth was particularly pronounced in Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.
Dual participation is rising most among couples with children. However as always, one must probe the amount of participation, in terms of the hours worked for example. Here the data is very illuminating and shows considerable variation, although the most common form of dual participation in all countries apart from the Netherlands\(^2\) is one where both participants work full time (ibid: 3). The one and a half model – where he works full-time and she part-time – is found in about 30 per cent of all couple households in the ten countries. Overall as this report indicates there is little evidence of the emergence of household working time arrangements that are compatible with a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work (ibid: 5). That is, rather than both partners being engaged in some combination of medium hours full-time work or long part-time work, there is a large disparity in the average hours worked by men and women (although Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands are exceptions here). One important point to note is that the educational attainment of women seems to have a significant effect on whether they as well as their partners are employed and whether they have part-time or full-time jobs. Women with higher education are more likely to be part of dual-earner households as compared with their less well-educated counterparts.

It should also be pointed out that women are more likely than men to live in what are called workless households, that is those where neither partner is in employment (EUROSTAT 2002b). Much of the gender difference in this regard is attributable to the larger proportion of women without employment who live alone as compared with men. The underlying pattern here is that one-person households are more likely to have no one in employment in comparison to couple households.

1.3 Family Relations and Values

Not alone has the average number of household members fallen sharply over the past century but the lifestyles of those who share the same household have also undergone significant changes. The emphasis on nuclear family living that has been so prevalent over the past several decades is now being challenged by the growth of living arrangements that include children who live with neither of their parents. This trend is particularly evident in countries where dual-earner households are more common and where the number of single-parent households has increased significantly.

\(^2\) Which is quite exceptional not just in terms of the low proportion of households where both partners are employed full-time (36 per cent) but the high prevalence of the male full-time/female part-time arrangement (58 per cent). The Netherlands is effectively a new and distinct model in the European context, wherein part-time work is increasing for both women and men.
household have also changed. Research suggests that there are fundamental shifts underway in the social organisation of intimacy and sociability and that the trend is on the one hand towards increasing individualisation and on the other towards increasing diversity of relationship practices (Giddens 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995).

In comparison to the past, families today are arguably more complex, more heterogeneous and in constant flux and mutation (Matthijs and Van den Troost 1998: 111). “The modern family in most European countries has turned from an authority-oriented family to a negotiating one” (Du Bois-Reymond 1998: 59). The balance of power within families is changing. This has at least two dimensions: relations between partners/genders and those between parents and children. Women have gained an increased amount of power in their relationships with men. While it is premature to pronounce a radical change in this regard, there has been a move towards more egalitarian family roles. Women and men are now normatively oriented to a combination of family roles and participation in paid work (Schulze and Tyrell 2002: 100). In addition, children today have more influence on their own and the family’s life than ever before. Some scholars have gone so far as to chart a divergence between the development of the two domains, so much so that they speak of increasing tension between partnership and parenthood (Tyrell and Schulze 2000). These is happening at the level of emotions and desires as well as at a more practical level in terms of life organisation. Partnership and parenthood are not just two different types of social relationship/institution but they are becoming increasingly detached. The percentage of partnerships or marriages without children is growing for example and being in a partnership or having children are increasingly seen as independent choices. Hence we see a move away from the biographical pattern of love relationship leading to marriage and then more or less immediately to child bearing to the sequence of romantic relationship and partnership/cohabitation to parenthood that may include marriage or to continued partnership without children. These authors suggest, further, that partnership and parenthood are becoming increasingly incompatible. Partnership demands mobility and typically is not founded on a long-term commitment whereas the increasingly child-
centred family of today requires immobility and stability from parents who are put under increasing pressure around the quality of their parenting.

One has to question the extent to which the state, through its laws and policy provisions, is contributing to an increasing disjuncture between partnership and parenting. The two domains are certainly receiving different treatment in policy. For whereas the growing equality between women and men amounts to a deregulation of the family sphere, the growing insistence on children’s rights and the increasing concern with standards of parenting contributes to re-regulation (Kaufmann 2002: 424). So, as marriage loses its institutional character, parenthood is gaining in institutionalisation.

2. The Significance of These Trends especially in Terms of Emerging Risks and Unmet Needs

There is no doubt but that families present a complex environment for social policy because as Gonzalez-Lopez (2002: 23) points out, the map of living arrangements and the individual life cycle have become more difficult to predict and read. However while a wider range of options for private living have opened up, it is also true that the current changes are patterned (lending some assistance to the analyst and policy maker). “The trend is not towards a world of singles but towards a variety of forms of private life in which among which those with children form a specific sample” (Schulze and Tyrell 2002: 75). Cantillon (1998) is right to point out that a new relationship is being forged between needs, risk and risk coverage. This is true in two senses: the occurrence of the risk events traditionally covered by the social security system (unemployment, sickness, old age, death of a breadwinner) no longer lead automatically to a situation of need and new risks have arisen which are not covered by the risk events traditionally covered by social security and incomes policy. Social protection she says has to be adapted to the new family context (1998: 230). What risks are we talking about?
Taking these patterns together, and focusing on their implications for state, family and society, I venture to suggest that they lead to five key ‘risks’.

2.1 The Disappearing Family: Lack of Readiness to commit to Parenthood

Whereas in the past policy could take the existence of the family for granted, it can no longer do so. For people’s readiness to form families at all is now at stake. One result is that we have a shrinking family sector. It is insightful to take the perspective of the young couple. Huinink (1997), cited in Kaufmann (2002: 451), identifies three problems that young couples are facing before they commit to parenthood: the problem of coordinating the long-term perspectives of both partners; the problem of insufficient resources to have children; the problem of the compatibility of public and private commitments, especially in regard to the relationship between family and work. Not only are children an investment but couples today weigh up the pros and cons of having children, in which a material calculus is at least partly involved.

While fertility and choices around size of family is a complex area, there is evidence that people across Europe wish to have a larger number of children than they have (Alber and Fahey 2004). In other words, there is a gap between people’s actual and ideal family size (of about 0.29 children for the EU 25) (ibid: 45-6). It seems that circumstances are perceived to be preventing people from having more children. When women who do not fulfil their fertility aspirations were asked why they had fewer children than they wished, they pointed mainly to reasons of a broad economic character. The authors are keen to point out that this is less a matter of a lack of resources in an absolute sense than of opportunity costs in terms of a mother’s time and career in the labour market. This kind of interpretation is supported by other work, especially research that tries to link fertility to policy. This is a notoriously difficult relationship and so needs to be treated with great caution. However it is the case that

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3 Fertility patterns, for example, are an outcome of at least three behavioral elements: childishness, average age at birth of first child and propensity to remain single (Fahey and Spéder 2004).
countries with higher gender equality exhibit higher fertility scores than those with lower gender equality (Kaufmann 2002: 450). Moreover, a positive relationship is observed between the supply of child care and fertility. The patterning involved is summed up by Kaufmann (ibid) in the following terms: in countries where women face difficulties in reconciling both an independent life in the workplace and family obligations, fertility seems substantially lower than in those committed to gender equality.

Integral to why people may be reluctant to commit to children is their chances of achieving their desired family arrangement. The evidence suggests that people in Europe do not have what they want in this regard. Despite significant focus on reconciling work and family life and reform towards this end, there exists a wide divergence between the actual employment/family arrangements that people have and those that they would prefer (OECD 2001). In general across Europe the model that people have too much of is the traditional male breadwinner model (of employed father and home-making mother). In Germany, for example, this is the actual arrangement of 52 per cent of the population but for only 6 per cent is it their preferred arrangement; similar levels of dissatisfaction with employment/family arrangements are to be found in Italy. The model that is too seldom available across Europe as a whole is the ‘one and a half earner’ arrangement whereby the man works full-time and the woman part-time. In general, the two earner family form is more sought after than the traditional model of a male breadwinner/female caregiver. One has to ask how sustainable such a gap between expectations and reality is, especially in countries such as Germany and Italy, and to a lesser extent France and Ireland, where the opportunity for people to realise their preferred family/employment arrangement is very compromised. At root is a more profound question about the assumptions that state actors make about family and whether they are any more capable now than they were in the past of delivering people’s preferences in relation to family life.

2.2 A Polarisation between Family and Non-family
In many countries there is occurring a dislocation between partnership and family. This is not equivalent to an ‘us and them’ development -
partners versus families with children - but it seems as if they are two quite different sectors of the population. The motors of change are the (younger) age cohorts and the (upper) social classes and so the likelihood of having or wanting children is structured around these two axes. To risk some exaggeration, it seems that the younger generations and upper classes of Europe are prepared to wave goodbye to family life with children. The task of reproduction is left increasingly to the lower income groups and to immigrants. The polarisation then is taking a variety of forms – e.g. in regard to gender, the big trade-offs for women in combining employment and motherhood; in regard to socio-economic differences the fact that families with children have a much higher likelihood of being one-income rather than two income, in regard to nationality, the gap between fertility levels of immigrants vis-à-vis nationals.

2.3 Socio-Economic Inequality

Whether one or both partners works outside the home has also become a (new) factor in social inequality. As Matthijs and Van den Troost (1998: 113-114) put it: “some of the single earners are elbowed into lower income groups while the double earners climb into the higher prosperity groups.” Double income, therefore, has become the wealth norm today. The main reason why couple families with children are one income is because the second partner is involved in care. In other words, at least some families are low income because care or unpaid work more generally is not considered a legitimate social risk for social security and other purposes.

This may be linked to a process which Strohmeier (1993, cited in Schulze and Tyrell 2002: 88) describes for Germany as a movement towards class-specific family structures. It is the lower classes who most adhere to a traditional life style, that is, they are married, have two or more children and are more likely to have a homemaker mother as compared with those in the upper classes.

A further relevant development in terms of inequality and pressures around finances is that elderly persons, including the very old, show an
increasing inclination towards maintaining their ‘personal life strategies’, including the wish to remain independent for as long as possible (De Jong Gierveld 1998: 35). This raises issues about guaranteeing income to elderly people (including matters of financial stability of pensions and the financial wellbeing of elderly women in particular).

2.4 Overburdening of Women

There has been an incomplete modernisation of gender roles and relations. One of the main consequences and manifestations of this is that the movement of women into the labour force has not resulted in a real sharing of home-based or labour-market work between women and men. The evidence indicates that women continue to be responsible for work in the home and that the average women does between two and three times the amount of unpaid work carried out by men (Gershuny 2000). In addition, we have seen earlier that there is a large disparity in the hours worked by employed women vis-à-vis their male counterparts. ‘Work/life balance’, such a widely-used term today, takes on a completely different meaning in this context.

Recent research in Ireland suggests that women are finding it increasingly difficult to combine their two worlds (Daly 2004). A national consultation exercise with more than 700 people found that the role of mother is far from settled and is a source of considerable tension (if not dissatisfaction on the part of women. The difficulties are not just material or logistical in nature (especially in the sense of managing childcare), they are also emotional. Ambivalence is the lot of many mothers and they feel torn between children and work. One of the most strongly and consistently expressed views was that mothers must have more options or choice around whether they want to take up paid employment or not and the conditions under which they make either choice.

2.5 Risks Around Care

As is well known the dejuvenation of the population and the stretching of life at the upper end raises issues (for states, families and individuals) around care. There is a series of risks involved: that states will not be able to (afford to) provide quality care in the volume needed, mainly
because of resources. A second risk is that family members will not be able to care for or see their relatives cared for in a manner that satisfies them. Here it is important to note that a strong ethic of care and family care is integral to the European value frame and that informal care is quite widespread. Recent research by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Alber and Fahey 2004; Alber and Köhler 2004) shows that about 4 out of 5 people across the EU-25 would consider it a good thing to strengthen family responsibility in looking after elderly persons. Domestic care for older people is almost ten times more popular than residential care. This same research reveals a remarkably vital network of informal help throughout Europe. In acceding and candidate countries, roughly a quarter of respondents are engaged in some form of regular help of others; in the EU-15 the proportion is about 21%. These results lead Alber and Köhler (2004: 70) to speak of a ‘strong and rather unbroken tradition of family support in Europe’. I would agree with this and suggest that policy makers should regard these attitudes and practices not just as a resource to be harnessed but also as a set of expectations or wishes that have to be fulfilled.

Among the issues that states have to keep a close eye on is the production of welfare, and especially care, within the family. In this regard, the ‘care potential’ is critical: the availability and ability of people to care for their relatives. Research on care patterns suggests that what really matters is the presence of spouses (de facto the main carers of elderly people) and of daughters and sisters (De Jong Gierveld 1998). Willingness to care of course also comes into question and here what seems to matter (in terms of the next generation’s willingness to care) is the quality of the relationship between parents and children.

3. HOW SHOULD THE STATE RESPOND? PROBLEMatisING STATE INTERVENTION

One can say that the key challenge of and for family policy is to reconcile the modernisation of family relations with the economic, social and demographic needs of the country (Kaufmann 2002: 462). However, it is
an open and difficult question of how much the state should ease the passage of families. Arguments against an interventionist approach are easily marshalled. If families are left to their own devices perhaps they will be better able to weather whatever storms they encounter. Interventionist policies can also be charged with social engineering. However, counter arguments are also compelling to the effect that the development of their family policy will be integral to the future success of European welfare states. The latest European wide research underlines that the family continues to be one of the basic forms of social integration (Alber and Fahey 2004: 52). So if countries are increasingly concerned with social integration, then there is a strong likelihood that they will have to address themselves to the wellbeing of families and to measures to strengthen the family and other social support systems.

The challenges are not just one way however – there are challenges also arising from how the welfare state in Europe has configured itself or been configured over the last decades. The changing family constellation challenges states to take on new responsibilities at a time when other pressures are forcing states to shed responsibilities. For some countries it will be a major challenge to develop a family policy at all. This is not a widely-developed domain of policy in Europe, although the 1990s saw quite a lot of expansion and innovation in this area. Very often what states have in place is a mix of arrangements and benefits which take the family implicitly into account, falling far short of a well-defined and elaborated policy on the family (Bahle and Pfenning 2000: 1). When thinking of policy responses, Kaufmann (2002: 434) suggests that we should take a holistic approach to the life situation. He identifies four main dimensions of human assets constituting the life situation: rights, economic resources, accessible opportunities and personal capacities. This is indeed a radical vision, not least for policy on family in Europe which is often under-developed and fragmented.

Gauthier (1996) suggests that, looked at historically, there is evidence that concern about declining fertility has been the strongest motive for governments to take action on matters of family policy. From a policy perspective, the information presented in this paper suggests that
fertility may have to be (again) foregrounded by states. In addition, the evidence suggests that pronatalist policies would have greater effect if targeted (also) on families where the opportunity costs of children are highest (women with high earning power). The probability that more money would per se result in more children is low (Strohmeier 2002: 355). The context here is that allowances cannot offer enough money to motivate someone in the higher income category to have a child. As Strohmeier (2002: 355) says in relation to Germany: “Despite the particular emphasis on economic intervention in the national policy profile, lack of money is a bottleneck only for those who already have children, but it is not the main reason to be childless of those without children”. The problem as he says is one of restricted social and economic participation of women and of traditional patterns of the internal division of labour in families. The advice given to legislators who want to raise fertility, then, is to support a simultaneous combination of gainful employment and family obligations for women and men (Kaufmann 2002: 356). Therefore what are called ecological (mainly service centred) responses are more appropriate, in their full extent a new policy profile for quite a number of countries.

For all the diversity that there is on the family/household front, there is a clear model of family informing policy today. This is the working family wherein men fulfil their obligation to be a good father and women act as good citizens by being employed. Economic theory is driving many aspects of contemporary policy, sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly. This is true not just in the obvious way of making the family friendly and responsive to the economy but also the fact that most policy is founded on economic values and assumptions about rational behaviour. Homo oeconomicus rules.

The matter of redistribution and in particular the balance between horizontal as against vertical equity continues to be important. Traditionally family policy was quite a distinct domain of social policy in Europe, with strong anti-poverty and horizontal equity orientations (the latter in the sense of compensating families for having children). These are now generally less visible as principles of family support in Europe as
a closer relationship is forged between family policy and employment policy. The rubric ‘reconciling work and family’ is now the dominant frame in European and especially EU policy on the family/work relationship. Hence, given the increasing linkage between family and low income, the redistributive aspect of family policy needs to be looked at again. It would seem on the one hand that there is a need for policies to focus on vertical equity but then, as Alber and Fahey (2004) and others point out, measures must also have a horizontal cast (in terms of redistributing resources and opportunities between those with children and those without). The diversity of needed policy responses (in terms of services and leaves as well as cash) is underlined.

Policy on family and family life is at the moment very instrumental in the sense of being oriented to particular ‘problems’ of family life (mothers’ employment, parental responsibility, gender equality) and it usually addresses these in a fragmented way. It might be better for states to orient themselves to a broader set of policy ‘goods’, such as family solidarity (the propensity and capacity of people to defer gratification for the good of others or the collective unit). There are good grounds to question the extent to which current policy is generating family solidarity. While parental care has some place as a component of contemporary perceptions of solidarity, a dominant interpretation of family solidarity on the part of the state now is that parents should be prepared to entrust their children to others so that they themselves can be workers. This form of solidarity actually requires mothers and fathers to distance themselves from the care of their children. What we are seeing, then, is a process whereby the engineering of family solidarity by the state leads to a certain ‘emptying’ of the nuclear family of some of its caring and exchange activities. By subjecting families to state policies designed to shape behaviours in the direction of more market participation, more employment, more purchased or extra-familial (or indeed extra-neighbourhood/social network) care for ‘dependants’, the state subjects more of social life to the logic of the market, of calculation, of rationality thereby diminishing affect, emotion, and traditional norms.
Bibliography


The topic covered in this paper is taken from an ongoing research project being undertaken on behalf of the European Commission, the Directorate for Employment and Social Affairs. This is work in progress and therefore interpretations of the findings so far must be approached cautiously. However they might provide food for thought and for discussion during the conference.

I intend to present some of the common trends, different models of family policy, something about education, European values and then finally address the question of what modernization of social policy in Europe is really about. So, what are the common trends with which we are familiar? These can be summarized as:

• An ageing population: more old people who are living longer
• The total marriage rate is down
• The mean age at first marriage is up
• The mean age at first birth has risen
• The number of extramarital births has risen
• The divorce rate has risen
• Female labour force participation is up
• Inequalities in society have risen
• Total fertility is up

However, we have also seen that other changes in families are not very clearly related to the decline but possibly to an increase in fertility rates in some of the countries or maintained at fairly decent levels.
The question is that across Europe we can be sure that we will have more people above 80 years of age and that the elderly dependency rates will increase. Possibly populations will decline unless we are successful in affecting two of the factors that Wolfgang Lutz mentioned, fertility and migration. We can also ask if these patterns that we have seen in family formation will continue or will they change. My argument is that this is at least partly linked to policy and should be linked to policy.

First we shall look at the predicted rise in elderly dependency rates across the EU 15 for the year 2050:

It is of great importance to address these issues and the whole concern here is that we will face increased difficulties with the ageing of populations and this is a figure which is dramatic in the sense that if you look on, if you can see that in the middle of the figure we’re now in around 2000, 2005 and the steep hill is sort of in front of us. This also shows that it will take another 40 years before Ireland catches up with Luxembourg in terms of old age dependency.
When we see the same prediction for the new member states the pattern is very similar, a steep hill upwards. Now what I’m trying to argue here is that we need to rethink both social and economic policies in the face of this. The reason is that since social security is strongly redistributed for the life cycle, this pure ageing societies will be placing the public finances under considerable pressure. Since social security is strongly redistributive over the life cycle of individuals, the ageing of societies implies tough financial constraints on social policy.

In addition, it will not be just pressure on providing financial support through pensions but countries will also need to provide elder care. While pensions and pension policy is my particular subject area, I must admit that in discussing the political and economic challenges of an ageing population we have perhaps been unduly focused on pension reforms and capital accumulation (i.e savings) to ensure future living standards for the elderly rather than fully recognising that this ageing process has a number of repercussions both on the macro and micro level. Consequently we should focus more on how social policies interact with education, fertility and other fundamental determinates for the future tax base, and the tax base that is necessary if you want to share the costs of caring for the elderly population. In addition, we need to think more deeply about the social system and its connections to economic resources in order to design sustainable social policies for the
future. If we do this then we hopefully might find solutions that will make this burden of the ageing societies easier to bear.

Previous speakers have talked about whether we should intervene when it comes to family formation. I think there are a number of reasons why we should intervene and have polices for addressing the need for improving the human capital stock in future societies. Human capital is not just the number of persons but also their skills and resources. I would argue that if we start from a welfare perspective, and here I am drawing on my Scandinavian tradition of welfare research, which looks on welfare not as equal to the welfare state but that welfare encompasses the kinds of resources and scope for actions which individuals can command. This is very similar to an individualistic approach to welfare. Welfare should be judged on the individual level. Here it is a matter of ensuring that all individuals have the resources necessary to affect their own circumstances and steer their lives in the way they want. Consequently these resources have to come not only in terms of income but also in health, social connections and education. All kinds of institutions we have such as families, welfare states, private insurance companies, can be important assets for individuals to cope with the kinds of risks that modern life bears. Therefore in order to develop a sustainable welfare policy we must look at goals and means:

**Sustainable Welfare Policy: Goals and Means**

**Welfare**
- Individual resources making it possible to control living conditions
- Several dimensions: health, work, income, education etc
- Institutions as individual resources: state, family, market

**Family Policy Design**
- Adequate social provisions in ageing societies
- Supportive of reproduction - Fertility, Human Resources
- Supportive of labour supply - Incentives, Human skills, Social Services, Opportunities

“capacity for fulfilling social objectives in a good fit with employment concerns”
As can be seen from the above table, we now have a gap between the number of children that people want to have and the number of children they actually end up with. This is one great challenge from a welfare perspective. This is very close to Hubert Krieger’s approach that we should see policy as enabling, not as intervening, in decisions but provide the necessary resources for people to actually be supported in their decisions regarding their own lives. The next table represents what citizens want governments to do to address this issue:

**What Europeans think**

**Governments should prioritise**

**To influence the number of children**

- Reducing employment, Flexible working hours, Childcare
- Family Allowances, Tax advantages
- Cost of children’s education, accommodation
- Paternal leave, maternity benefits

Source: Eurobarometer
Therefore, I would argue that the family policy design is very critical. It is important in several ways. It can be framed in terms of looking for a sustainable family policy. A sustainable family policy is a policy that provides the adequate social welfare provisions for children and for families in ageing societies. It also means supporting reproduction or making it possible for people to have children and still maintain a normal life. It is important for redistributive purposes to give children of poor families the necessary life changes so they can pursue the lives they would like to choose to lead.

However, I would argue that sustainable family policy is also linked to supply. We cannot rely on the family to bear the entire burden of an ageing society. We need to find ways of improving the tax base so that we share the cost of ageing societies. And here I think it’s important to deal with incentive structures, to deal with human skills, invest in education, but that’s not enough. We also need to have adequate social services making it possible for people to combine care responsibilities with work on the market.

Thus, we need to rethink associated economic and social policies. We can look, therefore, at a number of issues affected by different family policy models. The next diagram gives four types of family policy approaches presented in a matrix dual earner support and general family support. This produces four types of family support models: the general

<table>
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<th>Dimensions and Models of Family Policy</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Family Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>General family policy model</td>
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<td>Market-orientated family policy model</td>
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family policy model, the contradictory family policy model, the market orientated family policy model and the dual earner family policy model. With these four types we can plot various countries within this model and then analyse how each of these approaches affect support for families.
Finally, it is important to consider the role of employment as either a threat or an issue for people when deciding to have more children. Employment opportunity is a critical factor. The next series of figures show the relationship between female labour force participation and fertility as affected by the family policy models proposed.
Thus the relationship and interaction between female labour force participation, fertility, child poverty and family policy can be plotted as demonstrated diagrammatically in the next figure.
While the female participation rate has been increasing it can be seen from the above table that women remain the main worker in the home where the youngest child is between 0 and 6 years. This fact appears to have an effect on the rate of female participation of women in the labour force, or at the least the perception of Europeans is that there are negative consequences on employment once children enter the equation. The Eurobarometer (1998) findings on the views of men and women in relation to the perceived consequences to family formation among Europeans (EU-15) are presented below.
It can be seen that for both men and women the quality of life was perceived as improved as a consequence of family formation but the impact on working life was perceived as being more negative for women than men.

In order to increase female participation in the labour force we need also to invest in people’s skills, education and the provision of social services. However we also need to provide opportunities. The importance of educational opportunities to increase the possibility of participation in the labour market and the development of human capital must be stressed. Education is an investment in the future. Measures need to be taken to ensure that education is equal in quality and distribution across social backgrounds, that a philosophy of life long learning starts at day one and that parental labour force participation and performance be supported across the genders to develop sustainable family policy in an ageing society.

**Conclusion:**
In order to promote inclusion there is a real need to modernise family policy. To conclude, therefore, a number of conclusions may be drawn from my paper:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Questions in Eurobarometer 1998</th>
<th>Men &lt;44</th>
<th>Women &lt;44</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cut short education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited promotion chances</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced work time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took a break from working life</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took a job below qualifications</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopped working for good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved quality of life</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved social networks</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Policy and policy design matters.
• If politicians do not respond European achievements will be jeopardized.
• Modernisation is about gender and work in ageing societies.
• A need to extend social inclusion goals in terms of the situation of children: reduce family poverty and increase educational opportunities.
• Enhance the rights and responsibilities of European Citizens.
• Serious monitoring of the changes in society in line with changes in family and social policies.
The relationship between socio-economic change and social policy is interactive and complex. Family forms are continually evolving, and national governments across Europe are constantly adapting their policy provisions to take account of the diversification of family living arrangements. The interactive nature of the relationship between socio-economic change and government policy has long been recognised at national level. When national censuses were first introduced, they were designed to collect information on which to base policy decisions. When family issues moved onto the agenda of the European Commission in the 1980s, it was in the context of growing concern about the implications for society of demographic trends and, more especially, changing family structure (COM(89) 363 final, 08.08.89). Ten years ago, at the time of the first International Year of the Family, the 1994 ‘White Paper on European Social Policy’, which set out to offer a response to Europe’s need for ‘a blueprint for the management of change’, explicitly recognised that ‘demography ... will impact on and interrelate with social and economic policy’, acknowledging that ‘comparable trends ... lead to common problems and challenges’, and hence to the need to develop common policy responses (COM(94) 333, 27.07.1994, pp. 7, 47).

Hitherto, the European Commission, like many national governments, has tended to address issues concerning family life indirectly, through policies on employment, equality of opportunity and social inclusion/exclusion. Irrespective of whether the target is the family unit, research shows that public policy, including that emanating from the European Union, can have an impact on family life, although not necessarily in the way intended or expected. The recent introduction of the concept of rights for family members into European law through the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in the draft European Constitution has invited closer scrutiny of the implementation
of policies influencing family matters. It also entails careful analysis of the procedures adopted for monitoring the impact on family life of policies in other areas, through a process of what might be described as ‘family mainstreaming’. At the same time, the notion of family rights provokes questions about how to ensure respect for diversity in an area where the principle of subsidiarity is paramount. It raises the issues of how policy makers can achieve a balance between top-down EU legislation and the bottom-up demands and expectations of families as they go about their everyday lives. The lack of consensus within and between EU member states about the legitimacy and public acceptability of policy intervention in family life can act as a constraining force for both national and supranational policy. The paper takes account of such constraints in examining the extent to which policy measures at national and European level can be effective in meeting the challenges arising from the socioeconomic changes shaping family life. It briefly reviews how public policy is responding to family change in EU member states, before going on to look at the perceptions that families have of the impact of policy on their lives. In conclusion, it considers the potential for further development of family policy as part of the European social policy agenda.

**From comparable trends to common policy responses?**

A basic premise in the paper is that the timing, rate, pace and, in some cases, the direction of sociodemographic change vary markedly between and within European countries, as do reactions to it. These variations undermine predictions about how different policy actors, not least families themselves, will respond to external pressures in the longer term, and they call into question the appropriateness and feasibility of achieving common policy responses. A second underlying premise is that families, in the plural, do not form and develop in isolation from wider societal contexts. Rather, they are socially, economically, culturally and,

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1. This paper draws on data collected in a number of international studies and research projects, including a Framework Programme 5 project, carried out in 2000-2003 (see Hantrais, 2004). The contents of this paper do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the Commission. The author takes full responsibility for the interpretation of the data supplied by partners in the funded projects.
it can be argued, politically constructed by the environments within which they evolve, and where policies are formulated and implemented, implying the need for policy responses to remain sensitive to national and subnational contexts and to the demands and expectations of family members.

This section briefly examines the extent to which the policies being pursued by EU member states can be said to offer common responses to comparable socio-demographic trends that have created common problems and challenges. The analysis focuses on population growth and ageing insofar as they affect families, on changing family structures and the family–employment relationship.

POLICY CHALLENGES FROM POPULATION DECLINE AND AGEING

Eurostat and Council of Europe data show that not all EU25 member states were affected to the same extent in the course of the 20th century by the population decline and ageing resulting from the combination of declining fertility, greater life expectancy and the fall in net migration. Figure 1 plots composite indicators for total fertility and population growth rates on the vertical axis, and for life expectancy at birth and population under 15 and over 65 on the horizontal axis2.

By 2000, in relation to the EU15 mean, Italy, Greece, Austria and Germany could be identified as the EU member states where population decline and ageing had been taken furthest. Spain and Sweden were also experiencing above-average population ageing, while Ireland and Cyprus were outliers due to their younger and expanding populations. Only Luxembourg was ensuring continued population growth due to the compensatory effect of high net migration. The other EU15 member states were enjoying a temporary respite in population ageing in the early

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2 In Figures 1–3, for each indicator, the standard deviation has been calculated for the dataset. For each country cell, the deviation of each data point has been calculated from the mean for EU15 (x-mean) and has been compared with the value of the standard deviation (SD) for each indicator. Positive or negative values have then been assigned according to the number of SDs (0.5 points for 1/4 SD, 1 point for 1/2 SD, 2 points for 1 SD, 4 points for 2 SDs). The scores for each group of indicators have then been added together and plotted on the x and y axes.
years of the 21st century pending the point at which the postwar baby boomers will reach retirement age. A striking feature of the situation at the turn of the century was that the Central and East European (CEE) countries, which were set to become EU members in 2004, were experiencing negative natural population growth but, compared with EU15 member states, they were not yet suffering to the same extent from population ageing, due largely to their relatively low life expectancy.

The 20th century provides an abundance of examples of the challenges for policy resulting from disruptions in the age structure of the population as the cohorts contributing to the peaks and troughs progress through the life course (Coleman, 2000, p. 80). European demographic profiles were severely affected by high mortality in the two world wars, followed by high fertility in the postwar period (baby boom), and then by declining fertility in combination with greater life expectancy. The result was the postwar labour shortages, at the same time as high demand for places in schools and housing. In the 1970s and 1980s, the need was to adapt to falling rolls in schools, the bulge in higher education and the demand for jobs at a time when the world economy was suffering from the effects of the oil crises of the early 1970s. Already during the 1990s, in a climate of welfare retrenchment, questions were being raised about the negative social, economic and political impacts of population ageing.

Figure 1


![Diagram showing population decline and ageing in EU25 member states (2000)]


From the mid-1990s, in its demographic reports, the European Commission [1995, 1996, 1998] had been alerting member states to the longer-term effects of population decline and ageing. By the turn of the century, governments across EU25, including member states [Ireland, the CEE countries] that were not yet suffering the full effects of population ageing, were addressing the issue of how to ensure the longer-term sustainability of pension and healthcare systems. Concern was growing about the impact that greater life expectancy and population ageing were having on attitudes towards multigenerational living, and on solidarity between the generations. The strain on the generational contract was being felt in several countries, in particular in southern Europe, where families are under a strong moral and legal obligation to care for their relatives. After many years of dependence on the state for welfare, in the CEE countries, the reforms under discussion were premised on greater self reliance, which was creating further challenges for governments and families alike against the background of fundamental economic restructuring.

In EU15 member states, attention was being paid to the implications of the slowing down of natural population growth for migration from third [non-EU] countries. In most cases, the prospect of large scale inward migration following enlargement was seen as a problem for the host population rather than as a solution to labour shortages. A potential danger associated with EU membership for CEE countries [EU8] was that it would stimulate outward migration of younger people in search of better living and working conditions, endangering both the age balance and the skills base.

Analysis of political and media debates at the turn of the century showed that the EU15 member states most affected by negative population growth were not, however, the countries most concerned about population decline per se. In some cases, reactions reflected traditional national attitudes towards demographic issues. For example, despite its relatively high completed fertility rate and more favourable age balance, both public opinion and decision makers in France were voicing fears about the threat of population decline for economic and political power.
Interest in the issue was more strongly justified in many of the then accession countries; they were looking for ways of stemming population decline and out-migration. In Estonia, for example, even though completed fertility was above the EU15 average, the falling birth rate was seen as a major threat to the survival of the nation and, in Hungary, it was interpreted as a sign of low morale.

POLICY CHALLENGES FROM CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES

The hallmark of the second demographic transition, which had begun in the 1960s and was still gaining momentum in some parts of the Union at the end of the 20th century, was the deinstitutionalisation of family life, involving high levels of divorce and growing rates of unmarried cohabitation as an alternative to marriage, and entailing rising levels of extramarital births and lone parenthood. Figure 2 plots composite indicators of delayed family formation (late mean age for women at first marriage, and at first child and all childbirths) against measures of family de-institutionalisation (extramarital births and crude divorce rates) in relation to the EU15 mean. The figure identifies Denmark and Sweden as having gone furthest by the end of the century in delaying family formation and adopting de-institutionalised family forms. In Italy, Spain and Ireland, the postponement of family formation was combined with more traditional family forms. The picture was also diversified for the CEE countries, although none was characterised by delayed family formation. Family deinstitutionalisation had been taken furthest of all in Estonia, whereas Poland and Slovakia were the countries most prone to combine conventional timing of family formation and traditional family forms, followed by Slovenia and the two island states of Cyprus and Malta that also joined the Union in 2004. In relation to the EU15 mean, all the other CEE countries had gone further in developing alternative family forms.

The cumulative effect of changing family structures in combination with population decline and ageing has been to create the need for shifts in policy focus. The issue of how society might deal with the consequences of non-institutionalised and de-institutionalised family forms is all the more salient in a context where the realities of social and, more
especially, family life for a growing number of Europeans, correspond less and less to the normative assumptions that underpinned policy during much of the 20th century. The decline in fertility and the reduction in the time devoted to childbearing and childrearing, theoretically, make women less dependent on the formal marital relationship for their livelihood and the male breadwinner model on which most social protection systems were based. The instability of marriage and non-marital cohabitation may, in turn, accelerate the reduction in fertility levels and result in smaller family size and an increase in the incidence of lone parenthood, which is often associated with financial hardship, calling for more targeted forms of policy intervention. Unmarried cohabitation, repartnering and family reconstitution can lead to more complex family living arrangements, for which no provision is made in existing legislation.

Disagreement between social historians, sociologists and moral philosophers about the consequences for society of the changes undergone by families during the 20th century is reflected in the lively debate in the media and among policy actors about the future health of society. The main question raised by changes in patterns of family formation and dissolution concerns their impact on the future of the family as a basic social institution, and the role the state can and should play in shaping family structure through its economic and social policies.
The countries where family de-institutionalisation has been taken furthest are not, however, those where the media, social scientists or policy actors have been most preoccupied with the risks to family stability. The Nordic countries, in particular, provide examples where alternatives to the married couple and male breadwinner family have resulted in relatively stable living arrangements supported by the state. In France, where de-institutionalisation had not been taken so far, the long tradition of support for families as a fundamental social institution has not been called into question by the development of alternative living arrangements. However, public opinion and governments are interested in modernising family law to bring it into line with changing behaviour. In countries where traditional family forms had long been upheld – Greece, Ireland, Italy and Poland, as well as Germany – greater concern was being expressed at the turn of the century, on religious and moral grounds, about the extent to which family de-institutionalisation poses a threat to a social order founded on the commitment to the marital bond within heterosexual couples and the married two-parent family. Where it has been recognised that the spread of unmarried cohabitation and divorce, and the growing number of extramarital births cannot be prevented by public policy, attention has turned to questions regarding the rights, duties, responsibilities and obligations of family members towards one another in de-institutionalised families. Although no consistent data are available for all EU member states to enable tracking of the growth in the number of reconstituted families, issues were already being raised in the 1990s about the rights of children in the first family in relation to those of subsequent families, and also the economic consequences for children of living in reconstituted families. In several countries, debate has moved on to consider the formalisation of contracts between same-sex couples and the even more contentious issue of adoption by such couples.

Across the Union, much of the discussion about alternative family forms has focused on the critical issue of the consequences of family breakdown, in particular the risk of poverty, low educational achievement, underemployment and other forms of social exclusion that tend to be associated with lone parenting following divorce. Another issue
that was attracting growing attention in the media across EU25 at the beginning of the 21st century was how to deal with violence within the home, often associated with dysfunctional families. Findings about the increasing numbers of children in need of care because of neglect or abuse by their parents have shifted emphasis in welfare systems towards helping children at risk, rather than the family as a unit, in line with the child-centred approach already being adopted in the 1990s. The debate has thus been heightened about whether governments should intervene to try to reduce the incidence of family breakdown and promote particular family forms that are considered to be more socially secure in the interest of protecting children. The change in focus away from families as units for policy attention has also reopened debates about the relative advantages and drawbacks of targeted as compared with universal provision and, less overtly, about the merits of moving away from ‘family’ policy to ‘social’ policy.

POLICY CHALLENGES FROM THE CHANGING FAMILY–EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

It is difficult to understand the impact of population decline and ageing, changing family forms and structure without examining changes in the relationship between family life and paid work. Again, different patterns can be identified based on the available statistics. Figure 3 plots composite indicators of labour market integration (employment and part-time rates for women aged 25–54 and full-time equivalent employment rates for women of working age) against indicators for attitudes and practices with regard to the gendering of the family–employment balance (whether pre-school children with working mothers suffer, acceptance of dual earning, and time spent by men and women on household tasks and childcare).

Compared with the EU15 mean, the three Nordic states, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, can be seen to combine a relatively high overall level of labour market integration for women with what is generally considered to be a more equitable family–employment balance. At the other extreme, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands display low rankings for both indicators. The situation in the CEE countries again distinguishes
them from most EU15 member states, due to the relatively small gap between male and female employment patterns and, with the exception of Latvia and Poland, their stronger commitment to working mothers in both attitudes and practice. Malta and Spain are the only countries to combine low labour market integration with acceptance of women as working mothers.

The distinction between waves of EU membership is further reinforced when reference is made to the direction of change. Whereas EU15 member states saw an overall growth in female employment rates during the 1990s, particularly among women aged 25–49, in the CEE countries (EU8), female (and male) employment rates fell steeply as women were forced out of the labour market and back into homemaker roles. From a situation where a larger proportion of women in the CEE countries, compared with EU15, had been in employment at the same time as they were raising children, a stage had been reached where jobs were in short supply. Couples could ill afford to have children, both for financial reasons and because motherhood would further reduce women’s chances of finding a job or remaining in work. In EU15, family responsibilities helped to explain why more prime-age women were not economically active, particularly in Greece, Italy and Luxembourg (van Bastelaer and Blöndal, 2003, p. 3). By contrast, women in the CEE countries, especially women with children, were more likely to be inactive because they were being denied access to jobs (Pascall and Manning,
It can be argued in their case that, if they are seeking to establish a balance in their lives, it is more for ‘self-preservation’ than out of ‘self-interest’ (Glover, 2002, p. 262).

A major issue for policy debate in most EU member states is the extent to which the greater propensity of women to enter and remain in employment is affecting their availability to carry out the caring roles traditionally assigned to them, and calling into question the long-established inequitable distribution of household labour. While de-institutionalisation of family life and the growing participation of women in the labour force is welcomed as part of the solution to the problem of the age imbalance in the population, it is also seen as part of the problem, by making women less available for childrearing and contributing to the deficit in family caring, without noticeably affecting the gender distribution of domestic tasks.

Differences in the direction of employment trends imply that policy actors are not facing the same challenges. The question that policy actors are mainly concerned with in most EU15 member states is how to improve the quality of work and make employment more compatible with family care, so that larger numbers of women are willing and able to enter and remain in the workforce, and can find jobs that pay a living wage, thereby bolstering the labour supply, without foregoing motherhood or neglecting family life. In the Nordic states, and to a lesser extent in France, however, the main issue for governments is how to promote greater gender equality in working conditions and pay, while ensuring a more equitable distribution of caring tasks in what are, in comparative terms, women and family-friendly societies. The CEE countries (EU8), for their part, are contending with a situation where their top priority must be to improve job security and pay, with a view to raising the living standards of families and developing alternatives to the occupational welfare that was assured under the Soviet system, while at the same time safeguarding the demographic future of the nation.

The challenge governments are facing today as a result of the socio-economic change described in this section is whether to seek to prevent,
accompany, encourage or simply ignore change. Policy makers remain divided within and between countries over the question of whether public policy should address the consequences of change for family life. As further argued below, for some governments, direct intervention in family matters is taboo or a low priority, while for others family life is a constant concern, and policy intervention commands a high level of public acceptance.

**Perceptions of the impacts of public policy on family life**

In democratic societies, politicians have to carry their electorates with them if they want to remain in power and be in a position to implement policies that will shape developments in the longer term. Families are not simply passive recipients and beneficiaries of policy measures, they are also agents and actors in the policy process. Their behaviour, in terms of family formation, development and dissolution, and their attitudes concerning the legitimacy and acceptability of public policy can influence the decisions of politicians, who are, therefore, interested in tracking public reactions and expectations, and monitoring and measuring the effects of policy. The benchmarking requirement of the Open Method of Coordination has exposed governments to greater external scrutiny and placed them under an obligation to meet internationally agreed performance targets and criteria. Although it is not difficult to find lowest common denominators in the underlying socio-economic trends and concerns of governments, the examples above show that not all the countries in the enlarged Union are starting from the same base. They are not all advancing at the same pace, they are not all reacting in the same way to socio-demographic change, but nor do they all have available the same financial, technical and political resources with which to respond. It is questionable whether the same targets and criteria could be applied across the Union, and more especially the enlarged EU25. This section begins by examining the characteristics of the family–policy relationship across EU25, before looking at the perceptions that families in different countries have of the impact of policy on family life.
Figure 4 clusters together countries according to whether family life is familialised, partially familialised, defamilialised or refamilialised, where ‘familialisation’ is taken to mean the extent to which individuals have to rely on the support of family members or can maintain a socially acceptable standard of living independently of one another due to the generosity of policy provision (McLaughlin and Glendinning, 1994, p. 65; Lister, 1997, p. 173; Esping-Andersen, 1999, p. 45).

Countries in the first cluster, described as defamilialised, have in common that, in relative terms, their family policies are explicit, coherent, co-ordinated, legitimised, institutionalised and supportive of working parents; benefits and services are usually provided on a universal basis at a relatively generous level. In the partially defamilialised grouping, family policy is more often implicit or indirect, rhetorical, partially legitimised and less co-ordinated and coherent, and benefits and services are mostly less generous than in the first grouping. In the familialised cluster, family policy is fragmented, weakly legitimised, non-institutionalised, unco-ordinated and underfunded, and family members are expected to rely on one another for mutual support rather than on the state.

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This is also the case for the cluster described as refamilialised, which refers to the situation in most of the CEE countries that have recently joined the Union, following the transitional period of the 1990s. As in the partially familialised countries, their family policies tend to be indirect/implicit, unco-ordinated, but semi-legitimised and institutionalised. As in the south European countries, policy is underfunded but, in contrast to most EU15 countries, it is more overtly pro-natalist.

Findings from studies and surveys of public opinion point to the shifts that were occurring in the value systems and attitudes of Europeans in the latter part of the 20th century and to the changing perceptions that the public has of the impact of policies on their lives. According to European Values Surveys for 1999/2000, only in Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and Malta did scores for the importance attached to politics reach double figures, reflecting the low level of confidence and trust that most Europeans, particularly in Estonia, Slovenia and Finland, have in the ability of politicians and public administration to deliver a high standard of benefits and services. Although ‘family’ remained by far the dominant value across Europe, and had become more important during the 1990s in some countries, most notably Portugal and Germany, a distinctive characteristic of attitudes in Europe was the movement away from collective responsibility and duties towards what has been described as a post-material conception of individual rights and personal autonomy (Lesthaeghe, 1995; Coleman and Chandola, 1999; Herpin, 2002; Abela, 2003), again suggesting that policy targeting individuals rather than families as units might find greater support. While governments were giving increasing priority to employment and labour market policies during the 1990s under the influence of the European employment strategy, the EVS showed that Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK shared with the Nordic states the declining value attached to work. Religion was also of diminishing importance for Europeans, and remained a central value only in Ireland, Italy, Portugal and, more especially, Malta and Poland.
Despite the immense socio-economic and cultural diversity across the Union, some similarities can be found among the opinions expressed in small-scale surveys by European families regarding the influence policy has on decisions taken about family life. Most people believe that it is not the level of benefits that determines whether or not they decide to raise a family, but rather the wider socioeconomic climate and their personal circumstances. In any case, benefits for families are pitched at too low a level to replace income from work as the main source of family livelihood or, particularly in the southern European and CEE countries, to prevent them from falling into poverty. Although a few examples can be found of couples marrying to gain entitlement to social benefits and services, family members are rarely responding to isolated policies in a calculating way. Whereas individual family policy measures may have only a limited impact on decisions about family formation or living arrangements, bundles of supportive policies would seem to contribute to the creation of a family-friendly society conducive to family building.

Just as family life is generally subordinated to economic imperatives at EU and national level, decisions couples take about family formation and living arrangements are frequently determined by economic factors other than income from family benefits. Although economic rationality is not the primary driving force, a precondition for embarking on family life is economic security, which the state is expected to deliver by ensuring a high level of employment and by guaranteeing a living wage or minimum income through work that pays. The lack of economic security is seen as a factor preventing family formation, particularly in CEE countries. Labour market and employment policies, therefore, appear to have a greater impact on family decisions than policies specifically targeting family life, a finding supported by a recent study of the quality of life in Europe (Alber and Fahey, 2004, p. 48).

Over 3000 family members were asked about their take up of benefits and services in a small scale survey carried out in 2001-02 as part of a project funded by the European Commission, covering eight EU15 member states and three CEE countries (see the Methods Note in Hantrais, 2003, annex 2, for further details.)
Similarly, whether mothers enter paid work and remain in employment would seem to depend less on the availability of public care provision than on access to suitable jobs and convenient working arrangements. The amount and quality of public care facilities and other forms of support for children and older people are cited as factors influencing the strategies adopted by couples for combining paid work and family life, rather than decisions about whether or not to work. In CEE countries, despite the strong attachment to family values, women need to be in employment to ensure a decent standard of living for their families, but they have little choice because so few jobs are available. The ‘enforced’ choice of working motherhood under Soviet rule is considered to have offered women greater security through their attachment to the enterprise. Today, by contrast, women are being forced to turn to family networks for the resources needed to replace the support they have lost. If family members are to be in position to choose how to organise and manage family life, they need to have different options and choices available, but choice is a relative, complex and ‘contingent’ (Glover, 2002, p. 263) concept, which is heavily influenced by cultural norms and practices, and personal factors. Public policies and working regulations can both facilitate and obstruct choice. Women’s choices about living and working arrangements are clearly more constrained than those of men by family factors, and in some countries more than in others. Even among women who, objectively and from a comparative perspective, appear to have a high degree of individual choice, as in France, a recurring theme in interviews is the demand for more sensitive public provision to extend options.

Analysis of the impact of policies designed to enable both men and women to achieve a more equitable balance between employment and other activities reveals tensions between policy objectives and within families. Women feel under growing pressure to increase their labour market participation, while at the same time being expected to bear children, stay at home to raise them in their early years and then subcontract childcare as they grow older. Men are under pressure
to become active fathers, to share household tasks and maintain children financially if the couple relationship breaks down. Policies that seek to promote the economic activity of parents may divert attention away from the best interests of children.

Paid parental leave seems to offer parents a choice about whether they care for their own children when they are young, and it can be seen as a form of social recognition of the value of parenting. Since take up of leave by men is so limited, it can also be interpreted as confirmation of women’s homemaker role and a means of restricting their employment opportunities. Either way, it is not gender neutral, and choice may be illusory. Efforts to involve men more centrally in childcare through legislation on parental and paternity leave are contingent on a more fundamental shift in attitudes and power relations, both at work and in the home, than can be achieved through family policy alone. Flexible working arrangements such as reductions in working hours for parents and short full-time working hours may be a helpful solution to the problem of juggling the schedules of family members, but such arrangements confirm the traditional gendered distribution of caring and household tasks. They can only be effective if they include the synchronisation of opening times of schools, shops and other services, as well as appropriate provision of public transport, implying the need for joined-up, or lateral, policy thinking. At the same time, too much family friendliness and too great an emphasis on active parenting is felt to exert undue pressure on individuals to conform, thereby contributing to the refusal of parenthood and family responsibilities. When family-friendly and equality legislation is seen by employers as costly to implement, it may have negative side effects for women, by leading to discrimination against them as actual or potential working mothers.

Individuals differ both within and between countries in what they feel they have a right to expect from society and, more specifically, state, enterprise and family. A recurring demand across the Union is for the state to deliver a combination of shorter working hours, less rigid working arrangements and longer opening hours for public services as components in a package that would facilitate their arrangements for...
managing paid work and childrearing, while also improving the quality of everyday life. However, findings from European comparisons, such as those about the relationship between households, work and flexibility, point to a paradox between objective situations and subjective perceptions. EU member states with a long history of policies to help balance work and family life, and which report the greatest degree of sharing of domestic labour, have been found to be those where the family–work conflict is felt to be most difficult to manage. Although they are working the longest hours, because they have no expectations of equality, respondents in CEE countries do not, on the whole, claim to experience family–work conflict, (Wallace, 2003, pp. 38–9). Findings from crossnational analysis of perceptions of social exclusion also suggest that the level of hardship is not necessarily closely correlated with feeling socially excluded (Alber and Fahey, 2004, p. 21).

Despite, or maybe, because of the growth of individualistic values, analysis of attitudes towards public policies for families suggests that, across and within EU member states, policy measures are more readily accepted if they are provided on a universal basis and are not seen as intrusive, prohibitive or mandatory. Families as units want to maintain their autonomy, while family members want to be given greater freedom of choice. They acknowledge their moral obligation to look after their relatives but do not want to feel compelled to do so by law.

The potential for family policy development on the European social agenda
Notwithstanding the differences identified in the paper in the timing, nature and intensity of socioeconomic change, the challenges facing policy makers and the policy environments in which they are responding to change, analysis of public perceptions of policy and the expectations of families suggests some commonalities that could usefully be taken into account in developing the European social policy agenda. Although they have not been written into European legislation, in the area of what might be broadly described as ‘family’ policy, widespread support can be found for the Union’s objectives of creating an economic and social environment where children and older people are not considered as a
burden for individuals or society, where family life is positively valued, and where men and women have equal opportunities in their public and private lives and a work–life balance conducive to family solidarity. It is, however, questionable whether, at the beginning of the 21st century, the enlarged Union or its individual members were in a position to deliver policies that would be effective in achieving these objectives. Faced with severe economic constraints, governments, including those in the Nordic states, had turned increasingly to private (market, civil society and family) solutions as an alternative, or supplement, to public spending and provision. Even in countries where the legitimacy of government intervention in family matters goes unquestioned, markets and civil society are not considered by public opinion to be acceptable substitutes for the state as a family policy actor. When governments are shown to be inadequate or inappropriate providers, the preference is usually for families to assume responsibility. Rather than reversing the trend towards decommodification and defamilialisation, pressures to increase the labour supply, in conjunction with welfare-to-work programmes and offloading to the private sector, have had the effect of increasing the burden on family members, while also creating large numbers of low-paid, short-hours jobs that are mainly taken up by women. Payments to parents to stay at home to raise children, or to family members who leave work to care for older or disabled relatives, although they too are usually relatively low, are bringing carers into the labour force and giving recognition to the care function, thereby blurring the distinction between paid and unpaid family care work. While they bolster employment figures and move countries closer to the Union’s targets, such jobs often contribute little to public funds, and the pressure on women to take them may create as many problems as it resolves.

The concept of ‘social care’ (Daly and Lewis, 2000, p. 296) has been used to portray the growing importance of the market as an intervening factor in the state–family relationship, thereby diluting another of the possible functions of family policy. Whether the distribution of benefits specifically targeting families is a sufficient justification for preserving a designated family policy domain then becomes a moot point. The analysis reported in this paper suggests that, for families, what really matters is for
governments to ensure that support in cash and kind is available for individuals and families as units when they most need it. Most European families seem to want such support to be offered as a complement rather than a substitute for family provision. They are, therefore, interested in services that are affordable, accessible, adaptable, reliable and of good quality, which few governments at the turn of the century seemed in a position to deliver within the narrow confines of a family policy remit, and more especially through policy measures proposed at European level but implemented by national and local government in widely differing environments.

Across EU25, people are looking to the state to provide conditions that allow them maximum choice without creating further dilemmas and tensions. Nowhere is the public prepared to accept heavyhanded intervention in matters concerning family life. Prohibitive and proactive policies are overwhelmingly rejected in favour of a more conciliatory stance that goes with the grain of socioeconomic change, complementing rather than usurping family responsibilities. Instead of imposing conditions, public policy is expected to be responsive to changing needs and non-intrusive to enable maximum choice. The need seems to be for a more holistic and integrated approach to policy for families, extending across employment policy, working practices and time structures for all individuals throughout the life course, whereby the family impacts of policy are mainstreamed, and economic, political and civil society actors can look to one another for examples of policies that are effective, without being named and shamed if they do not meet global targets.

References


Section 3: Challenges Facing Contemporary Social Policy in Europe from the Perspective of Families and Family Change

Introductory statement by John Murray, Head of Social Policy Department, Council of Europe

Family Policy and Social Policy: a Council of Europe Perspective

Our task in this session is, first, to consider in greater depth the key question of how to help people cope with the twin demands of working life and family life and, second, to start the process of summing up and drawing conclusions from the Conference as a whole. That gives us plenty to do, but the organisers have asked me to start by presenting the Council of Europe perspective on family policy and social policy, so I will now try to give you the essentials in a suitably condensed form.

Two particularly distinctive features characterise the Council of Europe’s contribution to debate on these questions: human rights as the starting-point, and a pan-European viewpoint which has to take into account the situation of 45 member States covering the whole of geographical Europe.

The Council of Europe’s approach to social policy issues is based on the concept of social cohesion as set out in our Strategy for Social Cohesion, a fundamental conceptual document which has just been agreed in a revised form taking account of the experience of our last few years’ work. We define social cohesion as follows: the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. We deliberately talk about social cohesion rather than social inclusion or social exclusion because we don’t want to focus only on people and groups with problems but
on society as a whole: how to create solidarity in society such that exclusion will be minimised.

It is, as I said, a human rights-based approach. Rights provide the firmest foundation for social policy because they put all members of society on an equal footing. Social policy interventions are thus not a matter of charity or welfare directed at the less fortunate but rather a matter of ensuring that each person in reality benefits fully from rights that are the same for everybody.

Social rights and family rights are enshrined in two of the Council of Europe’s most important legal instruments: the European Convention on Human Rights (in this context I would mention especially Article 8 on the right to respect for private and family life) and the Revised European Social Charter (which provides in particular for the right of the family - and of children and young persons - to social, legal and economic protection and also the right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment).

The Strategy for Social Cohesion highlights the need to take determined social policy action in order to guarantee genuine access to their rights by individuals and groups which are in situations of vulnerability: among others, children, young people, the elderly and “families in precarious life situations, especially single-parent families”. Much of our work over the last few years has focussed on access to social rights, and I should like to pay tribute here to the leading role played by Professor Mary Daly in enabling us to draw together the results of this work in our Report on access to social rights in Europe.

However, an exclusive stress on the rights of the individual cannot form a sufficient basis for social cohesion. A society is cohesive only when people are prepared to accept responsibility for one another; indeed, individual rights will be best protected in societies where people feel a shared responsibility for the rights and welfare of all. Here we have a problem with our contemporary values: the market economy tends to put a premium on competition rather than on the social virtues of cooperation; and our current stress on the individual’s right to self-fulfilment also means that the language of solidarity and mutuality risks seeming somewhat counter-cultural.
Be that as it may, the Strategy for Social Cohesion calls for the development of a new ethic of shared social responsibility in which government, social partners, civil society, individuals - and families – all play their part in building a cohesive society.

“Families”, according to the Strategy, “are the place where social cohesion is first experienced and learnt”. The fact that there is a greater variety of family models than in the past does not in any way detract from the social role of families, “which remains as fundamental as ever”. Of particular importance is the family’s role in preparing children for life in society.

This is why family policy and policies on children have been, and will continue to be, key parts of our intergovernmental activities on social cohesion. Institutionally, this commitment is expressed in the existence of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs; and of an intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Children and Families, for which new terms of reference should be agreed next week.

Without well-functioning families, it is very unlikely that society can be cohesive. Without well-functioning families, it is far more difficult for children to grow up into mature and responsible members of a democratic society. This is why we have been preparing a new project entitled supporting parents in the best interests of the child.

Being a parent has never been easy! In some ways it is now more difficult than ever. With the push to get as many adults as possible into work, the question of the work-life balance becomes ever more pressing. Many people find their working lives increasingly stressful, whether because of excessive hours of work or because of reduced job security in flexible labour markets. Reconciling working life and family life was, indeed, the theme of the last session of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs, which took place in Slovenia in June 2001. Among many other recommended measures, the Ministers called for men to take their fair share of family and domestic responsibilities so as to avoid the whole burden falling on women. Change in this respect is, however, slow in coming, particularly perhaps in Central and Eastern European countries.
where, moreover, formerly good workplace-based childcare facilities have largely been dismantled.

Without wishing to paint an unduly gloomy picture of family life, it cannot be denied that factors such as poverty, unemployment, marital breakdown and the pressures on children to become consumers all add to the difficulties experienced by many parents. All these can have repercussions on the family unit and particularly on children’s well-being and development and commonly form part of the background to problems such as violence and abuse, delinquency and anti-social behaviour, educational under-achievement and poor mental and physical health. When family life becomes unbearable it becomes necessary to take children into care, a remedy which, while sometimes unavoidable, must always remain a last resort.

Confronted as we are in all European countries with problems of this kind, the Council of Europe expects to work during the next two or three years on the following questions in particular:

a. support for good parenting through various kinds of training schemes;

b. developing effective support systems for families under pressure;

c. how to protect children from violence and in particular how to enable social services, caught as they often are between the need to respect family life and the need to protect children, to intervene in the right way and at the right time;

d. developing alternatives to institutional care for children needing protection, a particularly pressing need in countries of Eastern Europe where there are often still far too many children living in unsuitable institutions.

The Council of Europe is strongly committed to working to strengthen and support family life, and to achieving much fuller respect for the rights of children in European countries. We see this as an essential part of our core commitments both to human rights and to social cohesion. We therefore welcome the holding of this Conference and look for inspiration to the conclusions that we shall be drawing this morning.
"Babies and Bosses": Reconciling Work and Family Life

Why does it matter?

Willem Adema
OECD

The first part of this presentation will deal with the background development of the work of the OECD on the integration of work and family life leading to the "Babies & Bosses" research work.

In 1998 there was a conference of ministers responsible for social policy who actually decided the OECD hadn’t done anything on families and that it was about time that the OECD started to do some work on that. But there were a fair few sociologists present yesterday and they can, far better than we can do this, analyse the sociological changes, changes in divorce rates, etc. But we do have some expertise in the analysis of labour markets and economic trends. So we came up with the match of the two issues, the study on the reconciliation of work and family life. And it is actually very important that people are capable of both working and maintaining a satisfying family life because it gives the parents the opportunity to explore his or her own individual abilities to the full. It generates income for the family which reduces the poverty risk which is very good for child development, a point to which we will come back. And it also has obvious implications for the shape of future societies.

The work that is done in this project with the OECD is to look at the parental labour outcomes as they exist in countries and then analyse these cross-country differences or the existing national outcomes in terms of three broad policy areas

• child care
• tax benefit policies
• workplace practices and workplace policies.

We have published already two "Babies and Bosses" reviews. In October there will be another volume forthcoming on New Zealand, Switzerland and Portugal, three interesting countries in their own right. We are
currently engaged in the last “Babies and Bosses” review. We have already been to Finland, Sweden and Canada, and next week we will be in the United Kingdom to finish the project. In preparation for the next meeting of ministers of social policy in March/April 2005, we will publish an overview report of the countries that have been included in the project together with key indicators of other countries in this area.

An important point to make at the outset is that countries are widely different. If you look at this chart which shows female employment in four European countries. I have just taken these countries rather than all 15 or all 25 or all 30 OECD countries for the sake of simplicity. First of all the black lines between the two bars – the first bar is 1985 the second one is 2002 – indicating a trend in the fertility.

It can be seen that in Denmark the birth rate has gone up as in the Netherlands and in other countries, illustrated by Ireland and Portugal, the birth rate has gone down. However, in all countries female labour force participation has gone up. So it is not necessarily true that increased female workforce attachment actually increases or reduces birth rates.

Trying to match birth rate trends with part-time work doesn’t lead to any
significant conclusions either. The countries where part-time work has grown dramatically, Ireland and the Netherlands, have different patterns in birth rates. So there again clear conclusions can not be drawn. What is interesting here, is that one can see that countries have a very different solution; parents in different countries are finding very different solutions to the work and family balance issue. The Dutch and the Irish women have gone for part-time work. In Denmark and in Portugal, another country with very high female employment rates, that is not the case at all for wildly different reasons. In Portugal both parents in families have to work to sustain family income otherwise the poverty risk is very high. In Denmark, there is a fairly developed and comprehensive support model throughout the life course, which encourages both parents to work and it would be foolhardy for them to ignore it.

Family friendly policy is influenced by a wide range of conflicting policy objectives and countries are faced with finding an appropriate balance in pursuing these different objectives.

These objectives are centred around the need to increase family resources, reduce the risks of poverty, reduce joblessness among households and promote gender equality. Promoting gender equality and autonomy has to some countries been on the political agenda for thirty
years but in others it is a phenomenon of the past ten or twenty years.

The policy objectives can be summarised as:

- supporting parental choice between work and care
- reduce non employment among families
- child development
- what do children actually want
- labour costs and worker protection
- future labour supply concerns.

The whole debate about policy issues is the tension between these policy objectives. For example there may be tension between gender equity and labour market objectives, gender equity and child development objectives.

These tensions need to be addressed. Let us take a couple of practical examples of these tensions. If you have a long leave system of about, let’s say a year. If you entitle a parent to take leave upon a child’s birth to take care of the child at home for a year, what are the important points here? From the labour supply angle there is actually evidence emerging that for the career of the parent, taking time off does affect a future earnings profile and career progression. The evidence that is emerging from the study is that would actually be best if the mother returns to work after five months. Does that coincide with what is happening in countries? Not necessarily. A parental leave model for one year may actually be what the child wants. It may actually be a good one from a child development perspective although the jury is out on that too, because there is conflicting evidence as to how long a parent, not necessarily the mother, should be with the child to give it full personal care. I think there is consensus in the fact that full-time return to work before the age of six months may not be beneficial for the child. There also seems to be consensus on the fact that after two and a half years, three years of age it is good for children to participate in kindergartens or playschools or nurseries. In between that you have a grey area and policy makers do not explicitly address that area at all but they do make the decisions about it.
How do they implement these decisions? This can be pursued through three broad policy models:

- comprehensive but expensive public family support throughout life
- the promotion of employment generally, while financial incentives contribute to parent(s) staying at home until the child is three or of pre-school age
- a mixed model of public transfers, some public childcare support for private childcare providers, often in conjunction with workplace-based work/family reconciliation solutions

So taking these three models, how do we address the tension between work and family life? What are the choices that are being made by systems?

Taking the first model, there are a couple of countries in the OECD area in Europe which provide comprehensive family support. When the child is born, there is paid parental leave for the parents. After that time the child is provided with a place in a child care centre or kindergarten followed by pre-school and regular school. University follows and then employment. Once the individual reaches retirement they receive elder care and then die. Thus throughout that period there is constant support of the public authorities. That in broad terms is the comprehensive Nordic model in Sweden and in Denmark. In that model, which was developed in the 1970s as a response to the pressure of gender equity, the paid parental leave point is put at one year. So implicitly it has been decided that it is the best model to maximise child development and the mother goes back to work full-time which is the norm in those countries not part-time, after one year.

The second model, is for instance the Austrian and Finnish experience. In this model there are strong financial incentives through the tax benefit policies for the second parent, i.e. the parent with the lowest income which in general is the mother, to stay at home until the child is aged three either through extended parental leave benefit or home care benefits. At that age thereafter the system immediately reverses and
gives strong incentives to both parents to go to work. This model, therefore, is implicitly based on the view that from child development concerns it is best for a longer period of family care. Of course it has implications, as does the first system of long leave for one year for the gender equity. There is a problem. Both these models result in a very strong segregation of women in the labour market and the gender wage gap in these countries has not diminished at all over the last ten or 15 years. It seems to be very difficult to make the final push in this gender equity thing. Maybe Swedish and Danish men are not as modern as people suggest they are. This is interesting. At this moment what happens is that a lot of Swedish men actually have started to take up parental leave. They don’t do this when the child is born. They do this when Christmas holidays are finished or when they wish to share a special event with their children such as the European Football championship! The cultural behaviour in the old tradition remains. Therefore the Swedish debate is on a different level. Swedish policy makers are starting to look at a system of increasing the individual right of fathers to parental leave. I am not sure whether this will occur but you can imagine a system where the current system of 15 or 16 months leave is being reduced to a system of 12 months leave to serve the interest of child development and just cut it in two. Such a system would give six months to the father and six months to the mother and if the father doesn’t use it he loses it. This raises a very different issue in the debate. The third model where policies are a mix of transfers, services and importantly a greater focus on workplace based work and family solutions. Thus we can analyse this area in three broad policy areas and child care policy is one of them. There are many issues here but I just want to highlight a few of them.

First of all there is a difference in the debate, there is confusion in the debate in Europe and in the OECD. When the average Dutch man talks about child care he thinks of care being to facilitate the father or the mother to go to work. When you have a child care discussion in Sweden, it is about quality, it is about child development. The Swedish child care system is actually incorporated in the education system. The debate takes place at a different level. The underlying policy objectives are
different. In Sweden child care is seen much more like education as a public good. Hence the payment by the state and the financial contribution, is fairly high. In the Netherlands but also in Ireland you have this question, a very fundamental question, why would the government pay this? Why should the government pay for someone to go to work and therefore pay towards child care facilities where someone else who has decided with his partner not to have children, or for one partner not to work, doesn’t get that money? This is a fairly fundamental question. We know that if people work the risk of poverty is lower. It also generates a tax revenue for the government. So there is actually an economic pay off to the investment of Government money in child care. However, the argument for the government to pay more than a share of the investment in child care is limited. So the Dutch model actually purports that the Government pays one third, the parents pay one third and employers pay one third of child care. That is a completely different perspective on child care and it’s development as prevails in Denmark and Sweden where there is the work focus is also present in the system but there is also a great emphasis on the socialising of the child, on the child development aspect in childcare which is why the Government is willing to pay so much money towards it.

The other level where the debate is so different is that in many countries, particularly in countries where childcare is in its infancy, the debate is about creating capacity. In Sweden and in Denmark the whole debate is about improving quality. So these countries are, in a way, ahead of the game.

A further issue is related to leave for parents. This is an issue which raises heated debate. However, it is generally only one year at most, and in my own country it’s only a couple of months, in a child’s life. Childcare covers two, three, four years or more. The whole issue of work and family reconciliation lasts much longer. There is little emphasis on the need for out-of-school hours care or an integrated daily programme of schooling which actually exists in countries like Sweden, Denmark and Canada (Quebec). It exists sporadically in other countries. This is a key issue which does not get debated to the same degree. I would argue that we
must widen the focus of the childcare debate to include the out-of-school hours care debate. In my own country these problems are endemic. School hours are short and if the teacher is ill children are sent home. This happens not once, this happens in 50% or 60% of the schools per year. In such a set up, work and family reconciliation is a big problem.

The issue of engaging parents in employment is of particular interest in relation to lone parents. Countries which do not have any specific support arrangements for lone parents but just treat them as anybody else in their social protection system do much better in generating high employment rates among lone parents thereby reducing their poverty risk and the poverty risk of their children. In countries such as Ireland and the UK, who have a special benefit structure for lone parents it seems to be counter-productive.

One of the issues which has always been raised is why don’t we leave these issues to be addressed in the workplace. One is led to ask, is work and family reconciliation an issue that is primarily a matter between the employment contractual partners, the employer and the employee. There is something to be said for that argument. There is actually a business case as to why employers may be interested in all this. It may motivate workers, it may reduce turnover rates, and it may reduce sickness attendance. However, it is actually interesting that so far hard evidence on what the introduction of family-friendly policy measures actually means to firms in terms of productivity gains or profitability gains is actually very thin. Intuitively the case is very strong and there are actually some studies emerging. However, more research in this area is needed to improve the case but even then the business case is not strong for every worker at the same time. It pays for an employer to do his best to maintain a high-skilled worker in his workforce. It pays less to do so for an unskilled worker who is easily replaceable. As a result, if we leave it to employers and employees this will only come off the ground in a limited manner. And this is what you see in practice. We have found it to be the case in the Netherlands, in Ireland, in Switzerland and in other countries. There are employers who are interested in this. Leadership is actually key. Without the top management or the CEO or the board of managers...
actually saying, "Listen, we should introduce more family-friendly workplace practices in our workplace", without that move nothing is happening.

Firm size is important. The argument that small sized firms do not have the financial capacity to deal with long leaves of one and a half years in Sweden or a year in Denmark or three years in Austria, that argument is not without basis. Unions, in the past certainly, have not been overly progressive in advocating family-friendliness at the workplace. This is changing. It seems that in discussing family friendly issues with unions and employers it is still all about wages. However, I am more than happy to be convinced otherwise but I think that in terms of priorities, when it comes to hard-nosed bargaining at the work floor, in terms of priorities pay related matters play the major part.

Therefore to conclude I would just summarise with the following points:

Key Policy Challenges are:

1. Child care:
   - childcare and out-of school hours care
     - affordable quality provisions
     - an integrated daily programme
     - public and/or private providers
     - support to parents or providers
   - Ensure that parenthood does not ruin careers
   - Increase paternal engagement in personal care
   - Reduce non-employment among [sole] parents to limit the poverty risk for children

1. Workplace Issues
   - Is there a strong business case?
     - Productivity, health, work-related stress
     - The role of leadership, firm size, unions
– What type of measure, working time, child care will maximise output?

• How can we move forward in policy terms?
  – Tax incentives
  – Family-friendly audits
  – Framework legislation
The European Trade Union Confederation
A Perspective

Ms. Catalene Passchier
Confederal Secretary of the ETUC

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in the name of the European Trade Union Confederation on a subject that is so close and I must explicitly say to the contemporary trade union movement as Mr. Adema has some questions about how much the trade union is dedicated to the issue I’ll try to say something more about that later.

First I would like to give some information about the ECTU. The European Trade Union Confederation does not only represent the trade union federations of the EU 15 and not just those of the EU 25 but we have our membership in 35 European countries, including some countries that are still waiting for membership and some other countries that are members of the Council of Europe. The European Trade Union Confederation has been in existence since 1973 and tries to play a role vis-à-vis the European Commission, the European parliament and employers on a European level. 40% of our membership and the membership of all federations together is 60 million over Europe, 40% are women. Women, and an increasing number of men, are very much dedicated to issues of equality and solidarity and the well-being of their families.

Last year I travelled a lot to old and new member state affiliates and one of the things that I think I must say at the beginning of my speech is that what I see is a lot of members, citizens in our member states, who are having an increasing sense of insecurity stemming from rapid changes in their lives, their surroundings, restructuring of their working environment, losing jobs, severe cutbacks in public spending, also influencing their possibilities, for instance reconciling work and family life. They are looking to Europe and what they see is a very ambiguous ally. The ambiguity is being influenced also by politicians and employers’ organizations and employers individually because politicians tend to blame Europe for the fact that they have to cut down on a lot of things
that are important for people in general and workers in particular, saying that they need to do so for macro economic reasons and a lot of other things, economic stability pacts and so on. In addition, employers say that we need to do so because we have increasing competition and if we don’t restructure our firm we will lose out.

That is what they see and they turn away from Europe. Mr. Adema was referring to the Swedish situation not being ideal. Of course, we do not have paradise anywhere in this world. There are many women in many member states that would be jealous of having a Swedish situation on the one hand and on the other hand there are a lot of Swedish women feeling threatened by the developments all over Europe and turning away from the European Union exactly because they think that what is happening is also threatening at least their level of what they have reached which is perhaps not ideal but at least some steps ahead of some other countries.

We ETUC are meeting all the organizations and trying to explain to them that what we need is more Europe and not less Europe. What we need is more competencies for Europe and what we need is a more social Europe and a Europe that takes responsibility for a lot of aspects that are now left behind economic policies and, for instance, a lot of measures with regard to reconciliation of work and family life are in that area.

This was just as an introduction because my second remark would be that I have a little ‘bible’. It is derived from the OECD. It is a report by a high-level expert group issued in 1991 and they have very interestingly drawn attention to the role of women as economic actors and the need to take that into account in shaping structural change. For instance they say:

‘women’s experiences are a mirror for the future. Women experience first hand the extent to which the current institutional framework, including labour market structures and the social infrastructure, has failed to keep pace with the changing technological economic, social and political realities. In adjusting their own lives to juggle labour market participation with family
and other responsibilities, they give us insight into where future social and economic adjustment is needed.

This is a text of 12 years ago but it is still very much something which we take to heart because the report argues that although a necessary condition for achieving gender equality, anti-discrimination and equality opportunity measures have a limited impact. More systemic led solutions are needed that address the contradictions and tensions between households, community and employment structures and this will benefit not only women, but enhance also choices for men.

This is important to realise in a period when we are all faced with very nice, high-level reports on decisions by Lisbon councils, Barcelona councils and other councils, telling us that we really need increased female participation on labour markets. But I think they would also admit on the European level and on the level of member states that we do need increased birth rates. Because of falling fertility rates, we have a demographic problem and sometimes it seems as if they want to have the cake and eat it which is something I learned from English colleagues that you cannot do.

Indeed there is a situation in which we do have increased labour market participation in various forms, as Mr. Adema demonstrated in his paper. However, in many of our member states female participation is in low wage jobs, it is in precarious jobs, it is in gendered employment, it’s in dead end jobs and there is an increasing, not a decreasing, gender pay gap not only in the old member states but in the new member states. Many women are faced with choosing either a career or choosing to have children and if they do not want to choose they juggle. If they juggle they always lose out on something. That is the reality that most women are facing and an increasing amount of men are also facing if they want to take part in these choices and take part in the responsibility for raising their children.

All these things signal that we do not do well. Besides gender gap we also have a child gap. The gap between how many children people would
like to have and the number they actually have. If women had the number of children they wished for all over the European Union we would have a birth rate of 2.4 per woman. However, the reality is something between one and two per woman.

I sometimes draw the comparison with a situation where you have a backpack and in the backpack you have children, old parents, handicapped relatives, neighbours, the community and there are workers. In a traditional division of labour it is the woman who carries the backpack and for that reason it is the husband who goes out for work. Also in the backpack is taking care of this husband. He works long hours so that he cannot clean his own clothes, cook his food or care for the house.

What we are now seeing is a situation where women are supposed to go out and also do the paid work but they do not share the backpack. So they are competing with men on a labour market where of course we know that if one person runs and carries a backpack and one does not, then the one with the backpack will lose. We seem not to be in a situation to decide that the backpack should be shared. What we do is we just do not look at the backpack and we just think that everyone is. So we are investing a lot of things in equal treatment, but we do not invest enough in how to share the backpack. If we do not share the burden equally it is not only women that lose out but it is also children who will lose. In addition, it is the handicapped relatives that do not receive care, it is the elderly and there are a lot of societies who in general will lose out in the end.

So indeed, it is indeed what the OECD report says. Equal treatment is not enough. It is important but not sufficient. We have focused too much on formal equality and access to labour markets but not enough to taking into account the quality of women’s and men’s lives, quality of jobs and cultural barriers to development. That is what we should focus on now.

In the last ten to ten to fifteen years in the trade unions in Europe a lot of things have changed. A lot of things have changed because there were
more women within these trade unions asking for change. And that is part of the game. We should not see trade unions as old male structures that always will support an old male structure for the future. If there is a 40% women’s membership and there are changes in labour markets, there are changes in trade unions and changes in the leadership of trade unions.

In the ETUC on the European level we have developed over the last 10 years many issues and some of them we have been able to take on board in negotiations. We have negotiated with employers on a European level a framework on parental leave. Unfortunately, we won the right to parental leave but we did not achieve paid parental leave. It is something that many of our affiliates are still struggling for in their own countries because without payment parents cannot afford to take up parental leave and this is true especially for low-paid parents. If it is taken up it is taken up by women.

We have also tried to get into the agreements some provision for taking care of sick children. Of course, this is not just in relation to small children. We have children with us until they leave home perhaps when they are 18 and even then they continue to make have demands on parents, sometimes forever. This is a very difficult issue. It has only been tackled in a very limited way and it is an issue that is very important. At the present time only some countries and in some enterprises has it been possible to find solutions for that.

We also need a lot of things around school age children. This is complicated by the different school systems, length of the school day and school holidays. What is often forgotten is that flexible time and reduced working hours are of major importance. We have made an agreement on a European level about part-time work which is not only about equal treatment of part-time workers but also about the right to change the working hours from full-time to part-time but also again back to full-time. That part of the agreement until now has only been used in a limited way in member states. It is also about equality of part-time jobs and it is very important to understand that we do not think that part-time work is the solution for all the problems. We think that working time in
general is an issue that should be in the forefront of our debate, that we are very disappointed that at this moment the working time directive is under revision. Actually it was meant to be under revision to get rid of some derogations which allow for very, very long working hours but at the moment what is happening is that there is so much pressure to extend working hours in order to have more flexibility. However, we are very much afraid that in the very short-term the Commission will come up with a proposal to extend, or at least to keep, derogations which allow for long working hours and at the same time only have a few lines saying that they will encourage social partners to do something about the reconciliation of work and family life. We think that is the wrong approach.

I would like to conclude on some comments about what the social partners can do. We would agree with Mr. Adema’s point that all the solutions cannot be left to the social partners to find. We are actually very unhappy if member states would say we don’t have to organize anything anymore, no framework of legislation, no supportive framework, and you just see how far you can get by negotiations. For several reasons we find it quite difficult to argue with enterprises on the business case even though you can find some arguments and find some best practice. Some good enterprises agree that there is a business case for introducing systems to reconcile family and work life. One of them is British Telecom who recently in the negotiations that we are having at the European level on a framework of actions and gender equality, explained that for them the business case is that if they want to have more women in technical jobs and managerial jobs, they should actually focus on changing men. If they do not do this it is really going to be a waste of time and resources. They try to invest in women. If these women do not find a different approach at home from their husbands and by men in the workplace also, it is going to be a waste. So that’s part of the business argument. However, the best practices are mostly in big companies who can have a long-term view for selective groups of workers. So there is an important reason to not only invest and go on investing and negotiating for family-friendly workplaces, but also to demand supportive frameworks policies and legislation.
Another reason is that even if we try very hard to do so we find we do not cover all workers. In many member states collective bargaining covers perhaps 40%, 50% or 60% or 70% of our workers. That means if you want to reach all workers, especially sectors with low unionisation, new service sectors, workers who are vulnerable, we will need also the help of supportive framework legislation.

My last remark is that I was listening yesterday to the debate on the importance of choice and free choice which should include the choice to stay at home. We are actually faced at this moment with two ideological demands for free choice. One is the choice that women should have to stay at home and not go out for paid work. The other is in the discussions on working time that men should have a free choice to make long hours. The ETUC understands these demands. In a situation where men who have low wages and who need overtime payments to bring a decent wage home, which is the reality for many men in the UK and where women are faced with a high family burden, no facilities, a husband with long hours and no prospects for a satisfactory job with a career it is very understandable that among our affiliate members there is the demand for choice. However, as a trade union movement we think that this is not the way to go.

In general, therefore, we would argue that there is a need to address this situation. What is needed is a supportive framework, accessible, affordable provisions of care, leave facilities, time facilities and policies that take into account that every worker, also a single worker, also a worker with no children, always has to take care at least of him or herself and of other people around and of the community around and that it is in the interest of societies in the long term to provide for a situation that is conducive to that, to allow people to carry out their caring functions. Therefore, that is exactly what we are striving for as a European trade union movement and I hope that the European Union and the employers will adopt this approach after further debate.
I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak at this important conference and I would like to congratulate Minister Mary Coughlan, T.D. and her Department on organising such an excellent and thought provoking event.

IBEC, is the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, we are the largest representative body of employers in Ireland. We are also an active member of the European Employers Body, UNICE. I hope to intertwine both the Irish and EU perspectives in my short address today. The topic relates to the challenges facing social policy in Europe from the perspective of families and I would like to focus on three areas that we consider to be crucial:

1. Employment
2. Female participation in the labour force
3. Work life balance

**Employment**

It is recognised by Member States that unemployment is a key economic and social challenge and that overall rates of employment in the EU are too low. Boosting employment levels would have a positive impact on both our macro and micro economic situation. The important review and subsequent report from Wim Kok on employment in the EU Member States highlighted the level of importance placed on this topic by all Governments and made specific recommendations for each Member State. The Kok report, which has been endorsed by the social partners, recognises that availability of and access to quality employment is the most practical and far reaching social policy we can aim for. Employment, where possible, is the most constructive route out of
poverty for citizens and access to employment is a key factor in giving the citizen the opportunity to participate fully in community life.

Increasing employment rates however, is not an easy task. Under the Lisbon Strategy the target is to achieve a participation rate of 70%. Such an achievement would require a stable macroeconomic climate, a regulatory system that encourages business and employment creation and an efficiently functioning and flexible labour market.

A well functioning labour market is one that:

- Encourages people to enter and stay on the labour market. (This may necessitate tax and benefit reform in some cases);

- Encourages job creation. (In the EU today there are many instances where high labour taxes and social charges still make it very expensive to hire workers and this together with a too heavy regulatory and administrative burden can mitigate against employment)

**Female Participation**

Governments set themselves targets at the Lisbon European Council of a 60% participation rate for women by 2010. It is interesting to consider the Irish experience.

One of the driving forces to our economic success and growth in the 1990’s was our access to highly skilled labour. Our labour force over that period grew phenomenally, from 1,000,000 to approximately 1,800,000. In the thirty years between 1971 and 2001, the number of females at work in Ireland grew by 140%, as opposed to 27% for males.

According to ESRI forecasts we can expect employment growth to continue as our economy is expected to grow on average between 4 – 5% until the end of the decade. FAS estimates that over the same period the bulk of job growth will be in skilled areas. If we are to be in a position to fuel the potential for economic growth, we will have to continue to access increased labour - female participation will be a key to this.
We know that Ireland’s female participation rates between the ages 25-29 have reached 80%. But in the older age groups there is a marked decline. We also know that Irish people are having their children later in life, many in their 30’s. Today the peak of our population is in the 20 – 24 age group so in ten years time many of these will be working parents.

In terms of education we also know that today over 50% of women are going onto third level education compared to only 40% of men. It is imperative that we encourage these highly qualified people to continue to participate in our workforce and adequate childcare facilities will be a key requirement for this to actually happen.

There will always be some parents who will choose to take time out for family reasons however, in terms of our labour policies, we must aim to give people a real choice in the matter so that continuing to work becomes a realistic option for both parents.

Ireland has an infrastructural deficit in terms of quality and affordable care facilities. It is apparent that greater levels of investment are required to fill this deficit. The issue of affordability needs to be addressed from a public policy perspective.

Work and parenthood create conflicting pressures. Many parents in their 30’s and 40’s today have become known as the ‘sandwich’ generation as they share both childcare and eldercare responsibilities. This results in very real problems for both employers and employees, such as, employee anxiety, decline in productivity and absenteeism and ultimately decisions by one of the parents to take time out of the workforce in order to deal with their home responsibilities.

Female labour force participation in Ireland is projected to grow by 218,000 by 2011 and at a minimum; the number of children in childcare will increase by some 40,000 or 27% from its current level of 146,000. In Ireland, Government, the business community and society as a whole will have to prepare for the challenges ahead by making choices now and identifying key priorities if we are to be ready for the changes that will result.
Greater employment levels create challenges for family life and for the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

Implementation of public policies, however, must be firstly addressed at the national level, according to existing practices and systems. This is important as the key drivers and priorities are very diverse and differ from one country to another.

**Work Life Balance**

Flexibility is the key factor to deal with the impact of rapid technological, economic and societal changes on labour markets. By promoting flexible working arrangements, various categories of persons, such as women, older workers, people with disabilities, unemployed and especially long-term unemployed, could be brought into and/or kept on the labour markets. Flexibility can help find solutions to both employees’, family and companies’ needs and therefore matching labour supply and demand.

IBEC’s last HR Survey (to which almost 500 companies employing over 143,000 employees responded) indicates that 4 out of 5 companies provide some element of flexible working arrangements. Part time work accounts for a substantial part of employer’s use of flexible working arrangements in that 62% of companies surveyed have such arrangements. Flexi-time operated in 36% of companies, job sharing in 29% and personalised hours in 26%. Less frequent incidence was recorded in areas such as offering a compressed working week (10%), teleworking 5 days per week (7% although an additional 12% operated teleworking 1 or 2 days per week) and term-time working operated in 5% of companies.

The advantage of flexible work arrangements is that they can be tailored to meet specific business and individual needs and can be introduced without substantial investment.

An interesting EU development is the ‘Framework of Actions on Gender Equality’ currently underway at EU social partner level. It has an objective to finalise a "framework of actions" on equal opportunities by
OECD Report

The OECD report entitled, "Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life" contains a very good analysis of the current situation in Ireland in relation to work-life balance. While IBEC does not agree with all of the recommendations, we do agree with the OECD in that work/family outcomes are strongly influenced by a range of social policies which can have a positive effect or a negative effect on the family. It is our view however, that the root of the problem in Ireland will not be addressed through more legislation rather, we believe that actual the root of the problem can be found in the architecture of the Irish childcare system and the challenges of our transport systems.

The Irish childcare system remains seriously underdeveloped, unaffordable and fragmented both in terms of quality and service levels. Childcare is a key element of social infrastructure without which families, and women in particular, have difficulty in participating in the labour market. The Irish childcare system is not sufficiently integrated, and parents with children of different ages face an uphill struggle to co-ordinate full-time and after-school care in particular.

Whilst employers have a role to play in supporting and endorsing certain childcare facilities, 98% of businesses in Ireland are SME’s with limited resources for the provision of childcare facilities. In addition, investment in developing a company based a crèche facility is only likely to be appropriate in a limited number of companies. The fundamental responsibility for regulation and for ensuring that there is a satisfactory supply of childcare therefore rests with the State.

In summary whether you’re an employer or an employee, Work Life Balance initiatives have a crucial role to play in terms of the workplace of the future. IBEC is involved in a broad range of initiatives to promote this awareness and encourage companies to pilot solutions to meet their...
needs. All of our research shows that ‘one size does not fit all’ and that voluntary initiatives developed in partnership between employees and employers yield the best results.

Business, however, cannot meet all of these challenges facing working families alone. Research is showing us that we face cultural and societal challenges too. As a result it is mostly females who are availing of work life balance flexibilities. There are also issues of concerns about the long term career implications for those who avail of the flexibility’s and research evidence to show that long periods of time spent out of the workforce do impact on career progression. Against all of these issues we must also consider the expectations of those at work who do not have care responsibilities. It is not an easy task but it is important for us to discuss the matter now and to identify appropriate solutions to fit in with national priorities.
WORKSHOP 1
MODERNISING SOCIAL PROTECTION IN LIGHT OF FAMILY CHANGE

Facilitators: Professor Donati
Professor Antoine Math

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis Crowley

Professor Donati

This paper presents some of the ideas currently in Italy on the issue of modernising social policies in respect of the family. For us the emphasis now is on relational issues rather than individuals or structures.


• The correlation between fertility and family policies
• The link between social cohesion and family solidarity

The paper contains new ideas about the way we can strengthen families through strengthening the mediating structures of societies, that is the intermediary social formations which are attached to the family. We call these associations “third sector organisations”. Thus we have a mixture of state, market and third sector agencies dealing with family issues.
This paper will cover the following issues.

- Review of the models of family policies inherited from the 20th Century
- The success and failure of these models
- Old and new orientations in family policy
- The perspectives of a new relational model
- The four dimensions of family policy
- An assessment of the new approach.

We start with the idea that the models of family policy inherited from the twentieth century are old fashioned and while they have had a lot of success they have also had a lot of failures and shortcomings. Therefore the new approach is called a new Relational model.

Figure 1 shows the old models of family policy as the Liberal, the Corporate or Categorical and the Socialist dimensions. Each of these contained some positive aspects. These models produced seven particular models of dealing with family issues, which meant that no single one could be adopted as a guideline for family policies.

Figure 2 shows the successes and failures of the 20th Century models. As a general statement these models reduce the family simply to a utility within the liberal model, an aggregate of individuals in the socialist model or as simply a support to the State in the corporate model. This, therefore produces subsidiarity in reverse, that is the family is subsidiary to the state instead of the reverse.

Therefore the characteristics of the policies adopted up until now can be summarised in the following form:-

a. Assisterial Policies: benefits are granted to individuals in order that they may be relieved from their familial obligations. This coincides with the publicizing of family functions that results when support to family responsibilities is given by a mere substitution of family roles with external collective services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of Family policies</th>
<th>Fundamental characteristic principle</th>
<th>DEFINITION OF FAMILY</th>
<th>MODE OF OPERATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lib (liberal)</td>
<td>Freedom and protection of privacy</td>
<td>THE FAMILY AS A CONTRACTUAL INSTITUTION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS</td>
<td>MARKET (THE FAMILY IS REGULATED BY THE LAWS OF MARKET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate (categorial according to work categories)</td>
<td>Collective Solidarity</td>
<td>THE FAMILY AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION BASED ON THE COMPLEMENTARITIES BETWEEN GENDERS AND ON SUBSIDIARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS</td>
<td>SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS (DESIGNED TO SUSTAIN THE WORKER’S FAMILY IN RESPECT TO HIS/HER STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab (socialist)</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>THE FAMILY AS A MÉNAGE (HOUSEHOLD)</td>
<td>POLITICAL COMMAND ON RESOURCES IN ORDER TO SUPPORT FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INDIVIDUALS (POLITICS OVER/AGAINST MARKETS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2 – An Outline of success/failure of the three models of family policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of Family and Welfare</th>
<th>Positive aspects (successes)</th>
<th>NEGATIVE ASPECTS (Failures)</th>
<th>Overall valuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lib (liberal)</td>
<td>Freedom of choice for the family</td>
<td>INDIVIDUALISM AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL FABRIC</td>
<td>THE FAMILY BECOMES AN UTILITY/ DIS-UTILITY FOR THE INDIVIDUALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate (categorical)</td>
<td>Public support to family solidarity</td>
<td>LACK OF EQUITY AMONG GENDERS AND AMONG GENERATIONS (DEFICIT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES)</td>
<td>THE FAMILY BECOMES A SUPPORT TO THE STATE (SUBSIDIARITY IN REVERSE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab (socialist)</td>
<td>Equality and redistribution for the more disadvantaged conditions</td>
<td>POVERTY TRAPS AND LOSS OF SOCIAL BONDS</td>
<td>THE FAMILY BECOMES A PURELY AFFECTIVE AGGREGATE OF INDIVIDUALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Matrifocal policy: centred on the woman and on the mother – diad dyad

c. Policy of privatisation of the family: the family is merely considered a private affair and the end result of private preferences.
Developing from these three perspectives the characteristics of policies that are needed today are:-

a. Subsidiary policies: benefits that are granted so that people can carry out their assignments in the family and in the surrounding systems. In particular the subsidiary between the state and the family means that the former has to operate towards the autonomy and the empowerment of the family and family associations.

b. Policy for the family nucleus: centred on the reciprocity between genders and between generations.

c. Policy of valorisation of family relationships as relational goods (social capital): the family is a primary relational good. Therefore, the movement is from substantial policies to subsidiary policies. This new perspective on subsidiarity is more complex than that envisaged within the Maastricht Treaty which was a reductive perspective on subsidiarity. The new approach is a vertical, horizontal and lateral way of thinking.

Up until now we have had implicit policies and indirect policies which need to be refocused into explicit and direct policies.

Thus we have had

- Implicit policies centred on individuals with respect to separate needs throughout the life span of the individual; Interventions for the good of separate age groups (generational categories) in particular children and the elderly.
- Indirect policies centred on the generic needs of people’s daily life such as housing, health, education, food. This approach centres on using the family as an instrument in the fight against poverty or for other social problems.

Thus we are left with the family as a residual entity. On the other hand what is needed today are explicit policies centred on the relationships between
genders and between generations for the valorisations of social intermediations implemented by the family; interventions on the inter-generational ties as a problem of relational solidarity. In addition we need direct policies centred on the family nucleus as such. For example, the tributary subjectivity of the family, the family-income, the family-insurance, to increase the strength and the social functions of the family relationships. In other words concentrating on the family as a social subject.

Therefore what is proposed is that we should move from multi-focal policies to policies focussed on the family nucleus. We need to focus on policies which can value family relationships as relational goods or social capital in themselves by moving form implicit to explicate and from indirect to direct policies.

In summary this means to move from regarding the family as a residual entity to the family as a social subject. It is not to be assumed that this is a backward step to the "breadwinner" model. It is, however, a vision of the family as a system of relationships where there is full reciprocity between genders and between generations.

Relational Model of Family Policy (Subsidiary Model)
This new relational model of family policies can be conceptualised as a subsidiarity model in the following form:-

1. Criteria which distinguishes family policy:-
A policy is defined as family friendly if it is orientated according to the guiding distinction between family well-being and non-family well-being. In order to make this distinction unambiguous the reference to the family must be formulated in terms of its social subjectivity [family policies are those which recognise this subjectivity].

2. Definition of the family:
Family is a social relationship of full reciprocity between genders and/or generations.
3. Complex citizenship of the family:
The family has its own set of rights / duties in as much as a relationship of conjugal and/or inter generational solidarity.

Citizenship of the family means a complex of duties and rights beyond individual rights. It means social mediations performed by the family as such. This implies also a complex subsidiarity and social policies; complex in that it is vertical, horizontal and lateral and relational in terms of exchanges which empower families and those individuals living in a family.

4. Principle of complex subsidiarity in social policies.
The relationships between the family and other societal sub-systems (state, market, third sector institutions) must be regulated by a principle of mutual development of each actor’s specific tasks.

We can, therefore, arrive at a four dimensional model of family policy (see above):-
Conclusions: why and which relational policies?

In considering relational policies ‘relational’ here means that social policies in order to realize intergenerational solidarity should operate via the following principles:

- The principle that the family is a relational good for each human person, and therefore is a special right
- The principle that the family has a complexity of rights in addition to individual rights, thus citizenship of the family needs to be central
- The governance of the family is equal in order to promote solidarity through reciprocity between genders and generations
- The principle of subsidiarity must be enforced in the use of resources and entitlements both within the family and between the family and the other sub-systems of society.

Conclusions
To conclude, to develop a model of policies concerning the family in order to achieve intergenerational solidarity should operate via the following principles:

Conclusions: why and which relational policies?

- “Relational” here means that social policies, in order to realize intergenerational solidarity, should operate via the following principles:
  - The principle that the family is a relational good for each human person (and therefore is a special right)
  - The principle that the family has a complexity of rights in addition to individual rights (Citizenship of the Family)
  - The governance of the family is equal to promote solidarity through reciprocity between genders and generations.

This is the principle for the governance of the family

- The principle of subsidiarity must be enforced in the use of resources and entitlements both within the family and between the family and the other sub-systems of society.
Facilitator:
Antoine Math

Changes in Policies Relating to State Aid for Families in Western Europe Since the Beginning of the 1990’s

Households containing children receive support which varies greatly from one European country to another. The disparities, which are greater in relation to expenditure on families than in relation to other forms of expenditure on social security, relate to national concerns whose origins can be linked to intra-familial arrangements, the respective places and roles occupied by women and men, political practices, demographics, religion, the structure of the market and even to military aims. The differences relate to the explicit or implicit objectives and to the instruments used (social security benefits, tax relief, exemptions on expenses, subsidies, services in kind, etc.). These differences in the way in which policies aimed at supporting families are conceived are reflected in the level and the structure of the assistance, which varies greatly from one country to the next according to the family’s income and shape.

However, these family-related policies are still the poor relation where analyses of the dynamic of social security systems are concerned. According to data on social welfare expenditure provided by Eurostat, while expenditure on services related to the family and children is definitely less than expenditure on the elderly/survival and on health/illnesses, it is greater than expenditure on invalidity and unemployment. During the first half of the 1990s, family-related policies were the subject of comparative studies, but since then less attention has been paid to them, especially compared with other areas such as retirement or social welfare for the unemployed. This relative disinterest can be explained in several ways: by the fact that, with the exception of some countries, including France, family-related policies are not institutionalised as such; the fact that international organisations, in particular European institutions, pay little attention to these issues; the fact that, while all European countries provide assistance for families, this form of support comes through channels other than state benefits paid to the family; and finally, the fact that the changes are more difficult
to delineate and to compare than they are for other areas of social security because they take the form of numerous small social and fiscal measures which are gradual and disparate in nature, and sometimes scarcely visible.

The overall impact of superimposing these measures remains unclear. Analyses of the changes which have occurred in relation to assistance provided to families in countries in Western Europe since the beginning of the 1990s is one element of the discussion on the European dynamic and the possible convergence of social security systems. The also had a methodological interest in this matter: it was a question of verifying the whole heuristic interest in simultaneously using several comparative sources in order to answer the same single question (case-type data, analysis of the changes in legislation, aggregated data on expenditure and data from surveys carried out within households). This approach allows the respective properties and limits for the different methods to be underscored and, on a broader basis, encourages methodological reflections on comparisons between social policies.

In the following document we limit our attention to the changes in financial assistance in the form of cash benefits and taxation. The case-type method makes it easier to estimate the changes in financial assistance given to families between 1992 and 2001 while taking the effects of monetary benefits for the family and tax benefits on income into consideration. Child benefit, which is equal to a net increase in income for a family solely due to the fact that it contains children and due to these two whole mechanisms, was calculated for different typical households varying in relation to the level of income and the shape of the family. In order to summarize the results, average child benefit has been calculated based on 18 typical families and is compared with the per capita net national income (graph). This indicator has increased in the majority of European countries, as if this dimension of social policies had previously not been included in rigorous budgetary measures. It has almost doubled in Ireland. It has significantly increased in the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Portugal, Italy, Denmark and, to a lesser extent, Germany. On the other hand, it has been divided in two in Sweden and in
Norway. Where the other countries are concerned, the increase (in France and Greece) or decrease (Spain, Holland, Belgium) appears moderate.

When these results are compared with the results on expenditure on social security benefits for families and children obtained by Eurostat and with the information on legislative changes which have occurred in the area of benefits and taxation, the conclusions converge to confirm an increase in assistance for families in Austria, Luxembourg, Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, Italy and Portugal. On the other hand, assistance has decreased in Holland, Norway, Finland and Sweden. In a less clear manner according to the sources used, it also appears to have decreased in Belgium and Spain. The results indicate the lack of a significant change in France.

An econometric method based on case-type data from 2001 facilitates an illustration of the fact that the differences between the countries studied with respect to assistance provided to families cannot be explained by differences in economic development or socio-demographic structures (evidence of this result has already been provided by Jean-Claude Ray using similar data relating to 1992). These differences more likely have their origins in traditions and national policy-related choices, which themselves are reflected in the social and fiscal mechanisms. This result corroborates the various, more descriptive approaches concluding in greatly contrasting and non-convergent changes within the European Union (EU), thereby supporting the thesis according to which the bringing closer of European economies cannot solely be expected to result in the convergence of policies relating to assistance provided to families. Above and beyond the community processes and budgetary constraints which influence the rules and regulations adopted within the EU, family-related policies have followed broadly national roads since the beginning of the 1990s. The Member States have preserved margins for manoeuvre in order to be able to decide on the extent and the form the assistance they provide for families will take. These changes, which reflect individual choices, may appear surprising if they are compared with the directions taken by other areas related to social security such as
retirement or unemployment assistance. In these sectors, reforms also follow national roads but, in accordance with the dominant liberal precepts, instead of appearing closer, the direction taken is a relatively common one. Up until now it might seem that family-related policies have escaped from the common lot of other areas related to social security. The influence of the ideas applied in this area remains common to each individual country, for better or for worse, partly because the dominant economic ideas and the international authorities provide few or no recommendations, with the exception of paying some attention to employment-related concerns, for a sector which they have never made a priority.

The example of family-related policies shows that portraying the recommendations related to social security systems as impossible to implement due to the imperatives of European construction, the tightening of budgetary constraints or the necessary bringing closer of these systems, is questionable. Despite the fact that they hardly want it, the national decision-makers have probably more margin for manoeuvre than they let on or than they admit to themselves. This conclusion goes against the grain of the dominant discourses whose aim, by using Europe or any other economic argument, is to justify austerity as being the inevitable future solution where family-related policies are concerned.

Average child benefit for 18 typical families varying according to the level of income and type of family [couple or single parent, one to three children]. Child benefits are calculated as the net income supplement from the benefits paid and income tax, due to the presence of children.

For more information
Figure 1

Average child benefit (monthly) as % of net national income (annual) per inhabitant in 1992 and 2001. State benefits paid to the family and income tax only. PG106

Antoine Math, “Expenditure on social security for families in Europe. Changes which are neither convergent nor unavoidable”, Information on social issues (CNAF), no. 102, 2002.
Antoine Math, “Policies related to state aid for families in western Europe and related changes since the beginning of the 1990s. A comparison made using several method”, Research report carried out with the support of the CNAF, June 2003 (available on request).
Rapporteur: Mr. Denis Crowley

We had a lively discussion and I’ll try and do justice to it as quickly as I can.

We were fortunate in having two presentations, one from Antoine Math and an additional one from Professor Donati who presented recent experience from the research prepared for the Italian white paper on welfare which discussed how Italy has outlined a new approach to family policies. This was very useful for our work. I think that some of the concepts that he introduced there are relevant and should be recalled to the group as a whole.

The basis for this new articulation of policy was that family policy needs to recognise that the family involves a complex set of relationships, rights and duties which exist in addition to individual rights and duties within society. Professor Donati spoke of building solidarity through reciprocity between genders and generations within families and that led on to an outlining of some aims for social policies in so far as benefits and social policies must aim to help people in the performance of these family functions. They must aim to build this reciprocity between genders and generations and a point I think of convergence was when Professor Donati pointed out that policies must seek to build within families this relational dimension which he linked to the concept of social capital. So something that we had heard about in some of the interventions this morning.

So that was an initial presentation from Professor Donati and it linked in to some of the points which then came up as we entered into our second presentation. Antoine Math presented us with three questions and the discussion I think can be reported around the three questions that he posed.

His first question was a why not question. He asked that given that the EU has developed certain processes which focus on, for example, pensions, poverty and social exclusion, and on health care as explicit objectives of a policy exchange using the open method of co-ordination, not harmonisation of policies, the creation of common policies, but this
open method of co-ordination, why do we have those areas reflected through the OMC and not family policies as such. His point was to say that choice of no policy is in itself a policy choice. So the question was, does the absence of this explicit focus on family policy at the European level amount to a non-recognition of family policy at the European level?

This question gave rise to quite a lively discussion which included some other ‘why not’ questions aimed at the European Union which were added into it. We had a similar why not question building on this. Why does the European Union not co-ordinate tax policies as an explicit counter, for social policy reasons, to the tendency of a competitive market between countries in a single market? Why does the EU not more explicitly deal with the rights of citizens and for example the rights of men within gender relationships, within families?

Those were the questions as they were posed. To summarise the answer of the group would be their view was that the European Union is still essentially a market based enterprise where competencies have emerged in so far as they relate to the creation of the single market, what some people in Brussels would refer to the core objective of what we do. The point was made that perhaps the new draft Constitution would bring about some possibility for change in this area in that it will change the relationship between individuals and Europe by focusing more on citizenship. In concrete terms there will be the incorporation of the charter of fundamental rights within the treaty. Might that then open up possible ways for the European Union whereby there would be an answer to the question about individual rights and the ability of individuals to claim and test rights at the European level?

Those were the views of the group as to why we don’t have these approaches at the moment. There were other views which are more organisational and bureaucratic in a sense. There was also the view that we are doing lots of things which touch on family policies in an indirect way but some discussion centred around the fact that maybe that is sufficient.
The question was also asked by Antoine Math as to whether or not it would be a good thing that the European Union should engage more explicitly with family policies. In terms of addressing this question I would argue that one possible risk that you run by not having an explicit focus on family policies at the European level is that given that other core competencies at the European level are going to be touching on the ability of member states to undertake family policies. There may be a risk in not having a forum which can give an explicit voice to the interests of family policy at the European level.

The second question which was raised by Antoine Math was an observation that he notes that throughout the 1990s and more recently an interesting divergence in the way member states implement family policies. A divergence which he says is unique to the area of family policy as opposed to what he observed to be convergence in other areas of welfare policy. We are seeing convergence in relation to pensions, in relation to treatment of unemployment. By contrast we are seeing divergence in the treatment of family policies. We had some illustration of that point I think in the discussion which brought a Finnish participant to comment on the presentation from Professor Donati from Italy by focusing on the fact that the type of conception of family policy which Professor Donati had outlined did not seem to fit with the approach to family policy which he would be more familiar with in a Nordic context.

So we have got real divergence and what does that reflect? Well it does reflect the fundamental importance of family policy for individual states. We have divergence but why? Because it is such an essential part of what member states are about. Therefore, maybe we should look below the national level at the regional level as well.

So we had that discussion. We didn’t have much beyond that in the way of convergence but we have recognition that this is an important point. Our third issue for discussion was more of a tactical question raised by Antoine Math and that was a question which was focused on what constituted good approaches to family policy. In this regard he posed the question, should we have policies which are based on targeting? He
discussed the concept of targeting and then also in a narrower sense the idea of means testing. Should we have policies that target at risk groups in a family context? One might target policies on poor families or one might target policies on lone parent families. Is that an approach to go? According to Antoine Math it has a certain seductive appeal. Or is it the case that we should look at policies which are based more on universality. There was a range of discussion in the group but we did not reach a conclusion on the point. However, it was a good question to raise.

So those were the three main questions which we addressed. However, it is worth noting a fourth point in conclusion. In the discussion around this set of questions at a number of points, we have had an important focus on questions to do with respective gender roles of men and women and in particular an important concern being expressed by a number of people here that the European Union’s policy focusing on gender equality, on rights of women, may have inadvertently excluded issues to do with rights and roles of men. This is a question that is becoming of importance and coming more and more on to the agenda.
THE FAMILY AS A FOCUS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Facilitator: Professor Chiara Saraceno
Rapporteur: Professor Karin Wall

THE RESILIENCE OF FAMILIES IN A CHANGING WORLD
Chiara Saraceno

1. De-institutionalisation of the family may be only part of the story
Households, families and kin networks occupy a crucial position in the
social integration of individuals and families and in the social cohesion of
communities. They also are an area of great diversity across and within
countries, which can be reduced or on the contrary widened by changes in
the economy and in the welfare state. Patterns of family formation (whether
and at what age the young leave the parental household to form a new
family, whether they spend a period living alone and/or cohabiting without
marriage, at what age they have their first child and how many children they
have), of dealing with marital conflict (patterns of marriage instability), of
understanding intergenerational obligations and so forth vary across Europe
and across social groups. Also gender contracts, and their degree of
coherence across life spheres, may differ, thus shaping not only specific
patterns of family organisation, but also specific sets of tensions and
perceived available options. This diversity, which is rooted in the distinct
cultural, religious, social traditions which make up the fabric of European
societies, is further widened and possibly reshaped by the migratory
processes: within the enlarged Europe and from without Europe. Although
mobility in the EU has been traditionally framed as mobility of workers, and
at the best people, it has always been also a mobility of cultures, and of
families. This becomes more evident as migration is increasingly involving
people from countries and cultures which seem more distant, more
different than the known ones. But this same experience was apparent in
the first half of the twentieth century, when Italians, or Spanish, or
Portuguese migrated to Germany or the UK or Denmark or Sweden, and
when the Danes or the British went to Italy or France.
Within this background of heterogeneity, within which no clear common trend towards an increasing convergence may be detected, the clear common feature is the resilience of families (however they are perceived and defined) in dealing with the needs of support and of personal, individual acknowledgement and in providing an arena in which interpersonal obligations and feeling of belonging are developed and played out. Certainly if we take the traditional (for Europe) indicators of family formation and stability what appears at first sight is the process of de-institutionalisation, which is often interpreted as a weakening of the family: increasing marital instability, cohabitation instead of (or before) marriage, more natural births and lower fertility overall. Yet there is another side of the coin: there is an increasing demand for acknowledgement of so called “new family forms” points to the willingness, even the need, to assume and perform within these relationships those obligations which were traditionally reserved to the standard family only. When cohabitant heterosexual and homosexual partners ask for social acknowledgement they ask for a degree of institutionalisation of their relationship and of the other relationships created through it. It is worthwhile noticing, in this perspective, that most natural births in Europe differently from the recent past, now occur within a stable couple relationship [EUROSTAT/EU Commission 2003], that is within what by all the persons involved, and particularly by children, is perceived as a family by all means. Although legislation in some countries still does not fully acknowledge this (e.g. in Italy “natural children” are not really legally entitled to a kin network: their legal obligations and rights stop at the parent(s) who has acknowledged them).

What is perceived as a weakening of the family may just be a phase of negotiations and re-shuffling between what is perceived as family and what is not, towards a new kind of institutionalisation. This is, after all, the story of the family as an institution across time and space, although this story has been played out differently in different countries and even at present, within Europe alone, this process is far from being homogeneous across countries.

The resilience of the family is indicated also by the persistence of perceived feelings of intergenerational obligations. Research has
indicated that intergenerational transfers play an important role in all advanced societies (e.g. Bengtson and Achenbaum 1993, Arber and Attias Donfut 2000, Arber 2000). And studies have shown how feelings of obligations towards kin and relatives are deeply ingrained even when there is no law nor love (e.g. Finch 1989, Finch and Mason 1993). A recent study promoted by the European Foundation on Living and Working conditions has for instance indicated that the majority of the Europeans in EU25 are willing to take care of their frail elderly. And the percentage is higher among the young than among the older (Alber and Kohler 2004). Contrary to common opinion, inter-generational obligations continue to be at the core of what are perceived as family obligations – much more than, and beyond, marriage or partners’ cohabitation. Family and kin are also an important resource in case of need: the large majority of Europeans feel they can rely on their families beyond the household boundaries when they are sick, or need money, or need psychological support. The importance of family support is reduced not by a weakening of family ties, but by the existence of alternative options, which lighten the exclusive dependence on kin (as well as the vulnerability) of those who do not have kin to rely on. As a matter of fact, people having fewer social and economic resources are often the same who have scarce family network resources. Moreover, according to Eurobarometer data (Bohnke 2004) the feeling of being left out from one’s own family is more present among the low income groups and increases where the unemployed and the multiply deprived are concerned, particularly in old EU 15; while in the New member countries polarisation between high income group and low income groups in the feeling of being left out from one’s own family are clearer, although there are relevant inter-country differences which do not offer any clear pattern.

2. Resilience, but not without tensions
Resilience however does not mean that the family’s integrative and supporting role occurs without tensions. Five such tensions are crucial from the perspective of the risks of social exclusion and the needs of social inclusion:
• The aging of kinship networks, which is changing the balance between care givers and care receivers.

• The changing gender contract. Much of the balance on which the resilience of family solidarity is based, particularly when care provision in concerned, rely on a gender division of labour and responsibilities within households and kinship networks which short-changes women financially and is to a large degree responsible for the higher risk of poverty incurred by lone mothers and their children as well as by women in old age compared to other individuals and household types. To some degree it is also responsible for the higher incidence of poverty in large families, in so far these posit the most difficult conciliating problems for women.

• The trade off which seems to occur between fertility and family solidarity, particularly in the countries in which the latter is little supported, or lightened, through welfare state provisions.

• The longer dependence of the young generations, due to longer education, but also to the flexibilisation of the labour market and to housing costs. Although it occurs at a different degree and for different durations (with the Southern European countries and the New member countries having the longest dependence), this phenomenon not only puts pressure on household budgets. It also restrains the young’s ability to form their own household and start a new family if they so wish.

• Migrations on the one hand expose both the host population and the immigrant population to often largely different, and sometime conflicting, understandings and practices concerning marriage, gender arrangements, intergenerational solidarities, boundaries of kin and so on. On the other hand they break up family and kin networks – or extend them across countries, and sometime even across continents. Migrant people are often in the position of being family- or kin-less in their everyday life, thus lacking practical as well as emotional resources, and of having family obligations which stretch well beyond geographical boundaries, reshaping their traditional content (see for instance the case of the Equador mother working in Italy who every morning before going to work spends an hour at an internet café in order to supervise her daughter’s homework). Further, particularly in
the case of migrant care worker women, often their work in the European homes helps European families, and particularly women, to strike that work-family balance which for those workers appears viceversa totally skewed towards work.

To these tensions a sixth one should added: a too exclusive reliance on family solidarity risks not only to curb individual autonomy. It also risks strengthening that process of intergenerational reproduction of poverty and social exclusion and more generally inequality which is one of the concerns not only of recent research on inequality, but also of the second Joint report on social inclusion (EU Commission 2003).

Data on poverty provided by member countries and by Eurostat support the argument that these tensions, if not properly addressed, render some group more vulnerable than others. The data concern EU15. But not yet public data from a survey on the quality of life in Europe indicate that in the new member countries and particularly in the post communist ones these risks are even higher and the vulnerability greater.

I will briefly comment on some of these tensions from the point of view of the risks of social inclusion/exclusion which they present.

3. the aging of the population
According to a recent scenario exercise (EUROSTAT/EU Commission 2003), the main increase among the elderly in the next fifteen years in the EU will concern the over eighty years old, who will increase by about 50% (while the working age population will increase only by about 5%). The situation looks more balanced in the new member countries, since their population is on average younger, but the trend is quite similar (Fahey and Speder 2004). An increasing number of households in any given point in time will comprise only elderly people, often living alone (see fig. 1); and kinship networks will have an age and intergenerational balance skewed towards the elderly – with the frail elderly constituting a crucial, if relatively minoritarian, quota of them: with their needs and demands for care. These needs and demands often cross the boundaries
of households, involving and mobilising kin across households.

These demands will increasingly be faced by a shrinking care givers pool in the kin network, due to the impact of the long standing fertility decline on successive cohorts of adults and young elderly (the age group which in Europe, and particularly in EU 15 provides most care to the frail elderly) as well as to the increasing, and longer, labour force participation by women. The present generation of young elderly, in fact, is fairly numerous, in good health, with on average good economic resources (they are the generation which has benefited most by the welfare state developed since the post war years) and most women have remained out of the labour force most of their adult years, or have retired early. They have therefore financial and caring resources to redistribute. But as the following cohorts will be smaller, will work longer (also because of the pension reforms), and particularly women will stay longer in the labour market, their parents will not be able to count on them in the same way. At the same time, when they themselves will become frail elderly, will have less resources in the kin network for their caring needs. Thus intergenerational obligations are implemented, but they are also under stress. And increasingly young children compete with the frail elderly for family care in the intergenerational network. In this perspective, it should be kept in mind that according to various studies
the provision of non family care for young children and for the elderly does not overlap completely with standard welfare regime typologies, but in the case of the Scandinavian countries. In the other countries, generosity in the provision of the former does not imply necessarily generosity in the provision of the latter (see Anttonen and Sipilä 1996). Apparently this corresponds to different shared ideas concerning needs and obligations in the relationship between generations as well as between families and societies. It is possible, or it might be a risk, that the increasing concern for low fertility in most EU countries helps to focus on social obligations concerning little children but not on those concerning the frail elderly, who might risk being left to their own or their families’ resources.

Moreover, notwithstanding the positive impact of the pension systems developed in the seventies on the risk of poverty incurred by the elderly, people aged 65 years and over (and particularly women within them) still suffer from a relatively higher risk of poverty than the adults, especially in Greece, Ireland and Portugal. The flexibilisation of the labour market and the pension reforms introduced in many countries in the past few years might have the unforeseen effect of creating poverty in old age.

4. Women are more vulnerable to poverty due to their inclusive role in the family

Women are generally at greater risk of living in a poor household: in 2001, 16% of adult women (aged 16 years or more) had an income below the threshold, against 13% of men in the same age group. This pattern is consistent across all Member States, with the widest differences being recorded in Austria, Finland and the United Kingdom. Austria and Finland, together with Ireland, also display the largest gender gaps in terms of persistent poverty risk (Table 3), whereas the gender gap for the EU as a whole for this indicator is small. Evidence concerning the median gap by gender is mixed (Table 4), as in many countries the gap is higher for men than for women. The risk of poverty is comparatively greater for women in specific age groups, in particular for older women (aged 65 years and over: 21% as compared to 16% for men in the same age group for the EU as a whole). Thus, women pay with poverty the fact that they
devote themselves to "making the family": caring for their children and husbands, for their elderly relatives, keeping up the kinship network and so forth. They pay with a higher risk of poverty the very work of inclusion they perform for others – an unpaid “work of love” which constrains their ability (and sometime even willingness) to be in paid work, or to invest enough in paid work to protect themselves from financial vulnerability. This is also the reason why the risk of poverty is highest among single parent households (35% for the EU average), most of which are headed by women. In the United Kingdom, the exposure to the poverty risk for single parent households, which represent a relatively high proportion of all households, is particularly high (50%).

The fact that women – and lone mothers – do not incur higher risks of poverty than men in the countries such as the Scandinavian ones - in which women’s employment is highest and conciliating policies more widespread suggests that in order to avoid that the inclusive role of women becomes a too high cost for them a re-balancing of responsibilities between family and society – as well as within households – is needed. At the same time a too exclusive focus on the work part of the work-family balance may hide the value, and need, of all the relational and caring work which goes on in families and kinship.
networks and keeps them together.

5. Children have a higher risk to be poor and to be poor longer than adults

Also those living in large households with three or more dependent children are particularly exposed to income poverty risk, with Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal displaying the highest risk (between 34% and 49%, against a EU average of 27%). As a consequence, in most countries children experience levels of income poverty that are higher than those for adults. Material deprivation among children must be a matter of serious concern, as it is generally recognised to affect their development and future opportunities. In 2001, rates of poverty risk for children were of 24% or more in Spain, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Differences in the persistence of child poverty relative to adults are also significant (12% as against 9% for the EU as a whole). Thus children not only experience poverty more often than adults, but for longer periods, with long term effects on the development of their capacities and therefore on their life chances.

In 2003, the share of children living in jobless households was slightly
higher than for prime age adults (9.9%); but variations across countries are more marked, with less than 3% of children living in jobless households in Luxembourg and 17% in the United Kingdom.
Children are differently covered by social transfers than the elderly. The elderly have generally a higher entitlement to social transfers than children, who are more often perceived as a sole parents’ responsibility. For this reason variation across countries is greater with regard to the protection of children than with regard to the protection of the elderly. For the EU as a whole, according to data presented in the Second Joint Report on Social Inclusion, social cash transfers excluding pensions have the highest poverty risk-reducing effect on children (in 2001, the drop was of 39%, as against 33% for people of working age and 24% for older people). In the Nordic countries, the drop in the poverty risk rate for children was as high as 65% or more; on the other hand, in Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal, children are the group who benefit least from poverty relief allowed by social benefits (the percentage drop was of less than 15%). These inter-country differences indicate that family policies, and particularly policies addressing the cost of children in a systematic way, might have a role in anti-poverty policies.

6. Being in Employment is Necessary but not Enough To Keep a Family from Poverty

Being in employment is by far the most effective way to secure oneself against the risk of poverty and social exclusion. This is the reason why men are more protected than women, and adults than the elderly. As shown in Figure 6, only 7% of the employed population (and 6% of wage and salary employees) in the EU lived below the risk of poverty line in 2002, as against 38% of the unemployed and 25% of the other inactive. In Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom, around one in two unemployed persons are at risk of poverty. The retired are particularly exposed to the risk of poverty in Greece and Ireland, whereas in Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom other economically inactive people display a high poverty risk.

Living in a household in which none of the working age adults are in work constitutes the highest risk of poverty. In the EU as a whole, in 2002, around one in ten individuals aged 18 to 59 years were living in jobless households (Figure 5 above). This share was highest in Belgium (14%), followed by the United Kingdom (11%). Invariably, women are more
likely to live in a jobless household than men. There is some evidence of progress in this area. The proportion of working age adults living in jobless households has declined between 1995 and 2003 in most countries, with particularly large falls in Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain.

Even if people in employment are less exposed to the risk of poverty than other status groups, they represent a large share of those at risk of poverty. In the EU, around a quarter of the people aged 16 years and over at risk of poverty are in employment; in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal this share is of 40% or higher.

Low pay is obviously an important risk factor of in-work poverty, but being low-skilled and remaining in unstable and often part-time employment, can also lead to poverty as well as to inadequate pensions in the future.

Other, equally important factors, however, relate to the household situation of workers: clearly, lone parents or sole earners in a household with children are particularly vulnerable to poverty risk. Since poverty is experienced mainly at the household, not simply individual level, not all the unemployed and not all the low paid are poor, while a quota of
households with at least one person in work are poor. And the majority of poor children live in households where at least one parent is at work. OECD and LIS data (e.g. Immervall H. ,Sutherland H. e de Vos K. 2001) indicate that, even more than social transfers, mothers’ participation in paid work has a positive impact in protecting children from poverty. Thus employment policies supporting women’s labour force participation and conciliating policies supporting a better work-family balance for women and men may have a crucial preventive impact.

7. The Intergenerational Transmission of Vulnerability
Within the Second Joint Report on Social Inclusion recognition is given of the extent to which poverty and social exclusion can be passed on from one generation to the next: of the extent to which those who grow up in poverty are at high risk of becoming the next generation of poor and unemployed. Attention is given in particular to the ways in which the intergenerational transfer of poverty takes place and on the particular dimension of child poverty that need to be addressed to break this cycle. Although better and better paid jobs for the adults seem at the core of any anti-poverty policy (and are also perceived so by European citizens), studies have indicated that in order to break the intergenerational transfer of poverty specific investments on children and from an early age are needed. Thus early education must be understood not only as a reconciliating instrument, but also as a specific investment in children’s human capital. Waiting when children are of school age may be too late to break that transfer process (see also Esping Andersen and De Maistres, 2003).

2003 LFS data, for instance, show that around 18% of all 18-24 years old had only lower education (i.e., less than upper secondary qualification) and had not attended education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Values ranged from 10% or less in Denmark, Austria, Finland and Sweden to 41% in Portugal. In all countries, young men are more likely to leave the education system with low educational qualifications than young women. In a society and economy which is increasingly becoming a knowledge society these under-schooled men and women
are liable to become precociously excluded not only from the labour market, but also from active civil and social participation.

The phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of poverty and social exclusion is an example of how an overly exclusive reliance on the family as provider and as values-transmitter may result in strong constrains in the individuals’ capabilities. As in the case of gender specific risks, supporting families to perform their integrative role may also imply rebalancing private and public responsibilities, widening the options not only for families, but also for their individual members.

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The main purpose of workshop 2 was to understand how the family acts as a force and as an agent of social inclusion and social cohesion.

Social inclusion may be defined in different ways. For most authors it is related to situations where people can achieve average standards in life in economic terms and emphasis is mainly on the economic dimension. However, social inclusion may also be seen in terms of social participation and in terms of meaningful and supportive family relationships.

In the social policy field – and also in sociology of the family, the trend is to assume that families are important social actors in terms of inclusion and cohesion:

- They protect individuals by giving them emotional support, care, social networks as well as the necessary tools – such as habits, routines, attitudes – that are important for individuals to be balanced, healthy, competent persons as well as participative and responsible citizens.

However, family change over the last decades has also suggested that this role of the family – as a protective, caring, supportive, formative institution - has been weakening. Attention has been drawn to the negative impacts of family breakdown, of low fertility and of new family forms, such as lone parents – that are more vulnerable to poverty and to managing care and work for young children.

Against this background, Chiara Saraceno’s paper brought us some interesting messages and presented some useful conclusions. The title of the paper is probably significant: The Resilience of Families in a Changing World.
From this title we can see Chiara Saraceno’s main message was that although some indicators seem to point to a weakening of family ties or solidarity, many indicators indicate a resilience of family solidarity. Contrary to common opinion, most studies show that intergenerational obligations and exchanges are very strong. Family and kin are an important resource in case of need and the large majority of Europeans feel that they can rely on their families beyond the household boundaries when they are sick, lack money or need psychological support.

Nevertheless, Saraceno also pointed out that some families have no kin to rely on and underlined the fact that those who have fewer economic resources are often those who have low family network resources.

The second part of Chiara Saraceno’s presentation focused on two main issues. First, she identified the main poverty risk factors. Secondly, she underlined some important policy issues. Six main risk factors were identified and were later discussed in the debate.

1 – First the gender factor: women are generally at greater risk of living in poverty. Moreover, the risk of poverty is comparatively greater for women in specific age groups (in particular for older women aged 65 and more).

2 – Second, the family structure factor. Lone parent families and large families with many children are more exposed to the risk of poverty;

3 – Third, the age factor. Children have a higher risk not only to be poor but also to be poor for longer periods than adults. On the other hand, at the other extreme of the age scale, people aged 65 years or over suffer from a relatively high risk of poverty as well.

4 – Fourth important risk factor: unemployment and low wages. Overall, people in employment are less exposed to poverty. However, equally important factors are related to the household situation of workers. Clearly, not only lone parents but also sole earners in a household with children are particularly vulnerable to poverty risk.
Another important conclusion is that the majority of poor children live in households where only one parent is employed.

5 - The fifth risk factor is immigration. Immigrant families are not only more vulnerable to social exclusion but also to deprivation in terms of kinship networks. Many of them are cut off from kin support networks, especially if they are first generation migrant families.

6 – The last risk factor which was mentioned is the extent to which individuals belong to families where poverty is being reproduced and transferred from one generation to the next.

In terms of policy issues, Chiara Saraceno’s paper and the debate which took place in the workshop underlined the following issues.

1 – First, the need for anti-poverty policies to take into account not only the more common risk factors, such as unemployment and material deprivation, but also several other important factors:

- First, attention must be given to the ways in which the intergenerational transfer of poverty takes place in order to try and break the cycle of child poverty.
- Secondly, more attention must be paid to the changing gender contract. Much of the balance on which the resilience of family solidarity is based, particularly where care provision is concerned, relies on a gender division of labour which is unfavourable to women.
- Third, more attention should be paid to the actors themselves. Poor families and poor children must be able to voice their solutions and to voice their perspectives on policy measures.
- Finally, policies must take care not to overburden families in terms of caring and support responsibilities. Families are resilient but an overly exclusive reliance on the family as provider may result in strong constraints for individuals. In summary, supporting families to perform their role also implies rebalancing private and public responsibilities and widening options not only for families, but also for their individual members.
The Family as a carer for the Young and the Elderly

Robert Anderson

Introduction
This paper will concentrate on the family as a carer for children and of older people. However, at the same time it will emphasise the role of other care providers outside the family. The argument for doing this is that the only sustainable approach to family care of children and the elderly in the medium term is one in which the family and other providers work together to enhance the quality of life of children and their parent or parents and older generation to prevent the breakdown of family support.

Care Work
The concept of care must be addressed from a number of perspectives. We need to address the concepts of caring about, caring for and care giving. Care crosses a broad range of policy domains: social, healthy, education, labour market, income-demands and co-ordination. There are complexities around diversity of locations and funding [wages, social benefits, symbolic payments]. When thinking about care for the young and the elderly it is important to acknowledge that care is not simply about dependency but also involves development of both children and older people. In addition, providing care demands a lot of work, a lot of time, a lot of energy and a lot of costs irrespective of who is the care giver.
Care is of huge significance as a sector of employment in Europe. While it is difficult to delimit the care sector one can make some broad generalisations concerning that significance. For example, employment in the health and social care sector accounts for almost 10% of total employment in the EU and of that probably about half is what might be called social care. That ranges from very huge numbers employed in Denmark in this sector compared, for example to much less in Greece and Portugal and probably Ireland.

The care sector is one where huge expansion in jobs is taking place. More than 2 million jobs or 18% of total job creation was in the health and social services, but even so demand for services still exceeds supply. There is of course a significant difference between the member states in relation to the extent of formal providers of care compared to family providers and this is related to differences concerning the role of women, the role of the family and the perceived role of the State. However, it has to be emphasised that whatever the growth in the formal care sector, in all member states most care of both children and older people is provided by the family, although in Denmark and Sweden the majority of child care is provided in formal services.

**Characteristics of care work**

- Done by families, together with volunteers and paid workers
- It has a poor image as a sector
- It is not regarded as being a high skill employment or activity
- It attracts low pay or no pay
- There is a lack of career prospects
- Much paid work is undeclared within the formal economy
- It is predominantly done by women
- The tasks often involve intimate attention to personal needs

While these points may characterise the work in relation to both care of the young and the elderly there are some differences which need to be considered. If one compares the two groups a number of points can be highlighted.
• Care of children on the whole has a defined period, that is from infancy to some period of young adulthood. The perspective of care of older people is indefinite in that the period of caring may start from when the carer is a young adult and continue for forty or fifty or sixty years depending on the circumstances.

• Most of the orientation in child care is towards the future and involves issues of growth and development whereas in the case of the elder care the future is uncertain or in many cases characterised by decline ending in death.

• The care of children to a large extent is about education and social development whereas the focus of most elder care is on the management of health and health care problems.

• Child care is to some extent the prerogative of younger women, both within the home and within the formal child care sector. Care of older people tends to be done by people who themselves are older whether it is formal or informal care. In addition, while care mainly involves women the care of older people has more explicitly involved men as carers particular in relation to spousal care. Outside of spousal care it reverts to a more female orientated care provision.

Child Care:
There has been an increasing demand for formal care services due to changes in parental employment and possibly because of the lesser involvement of alternatives within the family system such as grandparents. There are new demands for more flexible child care services associated with the change patterns and more flexibility in working time, the rise in the numbers of lone parents and their need for child care. It is however, very clear that in many member states the demand exceeds supply.

The Barcelona summit concluded that:
‘Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age’
Thus, child care policy is strongly linked to employment policy but it is also taken up at EU level in relation to social protection and equal opportunities.

The issue arises here, therefore, given that the demand exceeds supply of how can policy contribute to changing this situation. It can be argued that policies are need to:

- Encourage unemployed or inactive persons to enter the care sector
- Establish new entrepreneurs and employers in the sector sometimes through special support to women entrepreneurs
- Stimulate the purchase of childcare services by employers
- Subsidise the cost of services
- Promote quality standards and training
- Stimulate partnership between public authorities and private or not-for-profit employers

**Elder Care**

When we look at elder care a similar pattern emerges in terms of supply and demand. There is an increasing demand for formal care associated with the ageing of the population. However, what we see across the EU-15 is the low level of demand for institutional care and families prefer their older members to be cared for at home. However, one of the things which is becoming apparent is a lower capacity of the family to provide care due in part to changing values and preferences, higher geographical mobility and higher levels of employment among women. Some arguments have been put forward that the family is becoming less able to care for their family members in part because of the decrease in family size. I am not sure that there is clear evidence for that view. This belief is based on the fact that perhaps forty, fifty or sixty years ago when family size was much larger care was rarely evenly shared and it was predominantly an unmarried daughter who still lived in the family home who provided the care. Therefore, I am not convinced that there is a decline in the willingness or capacity of families to provide elder care. This would seem to be substantiated by the recent survey undertaken by the European Foundation for Living and Working which showed that
between 20% and 25% of respondents said they provided health care or supportive care to someone who has a long-term illness or who is a handicapped or elderly dependent. There is, however, a contrast between the EU-15 and the New-10. In the former the care is mainly provided outside the home and in the latter it is mix between formal and informal care. In the EU-15 the carers are mainly of working age but within the New-10 the carers are more likely to be over 60.

**Impact of Caring**

How does caring impact on the family? In the European Foundation Research 25% of female carers and 15% of male carers felt that care limited their opportunities through reduction in career development and promotion, financial disadvantages particularly in the provision of pensions, reduction of opportunities for training and skills development and increased levels of stress, sickness and absenteeism.

- In studies in the UK and Germany findings have shown that on taking up caring responsibilities, high proportions of people have given up work or reduced their working hours. Those who stay in employment have referred to lower career opportunities. Since caring and employment are so closely linked there is a need for policy development to reduce the disincentive to care and aid in the raising the level of work life balance. A lot can be done within the workplace to support carers; increased part-time working, more flexible work organisation, teleworking and home working, increased support in the workplace through for example self-help groups. The European Foundation Research asked respondents what in their view governments should do to improve life for children and families. In the EU-15 the three most supported measures were centred around labour market package:
  - To increase the fight against unemployment
  - Support the introduction of flexible working hours
  - Increase availability of child care
In the New-15 the three most supported measures emphasised reduced cost of child rearing through:

- Increasing the level of parental leave
- Increasing the level of child allowance
- Reducing the cost of education

In conclusion, therefore, what measures should be put into place to support carers? These can be divided into those measures undertaken in the workplace and those outside the workplace.

Within the workplace:

- Policies needed on work organisation, work time and homeworking
- Services needed to provide information
- Service development within the community
- Welfare benefits in terms of insurance and leave entitlements
- Support from colleagues and managers

Outside the workplace:

- Information and awareness raising – political commitment
- Social protection: leave arrangements, pensions, financial benefits and allowance but linked with incentives for take up by both men and women without sacrificing future career prospects, pay, pensions
- Services to support carers as well as the elderly
- Respite care/day care centres
- Research and development: technology, information society, policy/service evaluation
- Training and education: access to resources
Rapporteur: Dr. Valerie Richardson

The Workshop commenced with a comprehensive and stimulating paper from Robert Anderson who raised a number of important issues relating to the family as carer for the young and the elderly. Some of the main points of his presentation will be highlighted here followed by a report of the subsequent discussion among those who attended the workshop.

- Families have always cared for their members and there is no indication from available research that there is a lessening of this desire. Families are vital resources in the provision of care. However, there are now competing issues for families, namely the right to work outside the home and the right to self-development for individuals through education, employment, social activities and political life.
- Caring crosses a broad range of policy domains such as social, health, education, labour market and income-demands coordination.
- Characteristics of care work: done by families, volunteers and paid workers; it is not regarded as a highly skilled activity, carries low pay or no pay, lacks career prospects, is predominantly done by women and involves tasks involving intimate personal care.
- Important to acknowledge that caring for children and caring for older persons should not necessarily be regarded as synonymous and identical in its demands and format. In particular, caring for children is time limited, the focus in child care is on growth and development compared with decline, failing health and increasing dependence. The care of older persons involves communication and management of previously independent people.
- European Foundation Research found that 25% of female carers and 15% of male carers felt that care limited their employment opportunities in terms of career development and promotion, disadvantaged them in terms of finances and pensions, limited access to training and skills development and increased the risk of stress, sickness and absenteeism.
- Older people, their families and governments prefer care at home rather than in institutional settings. There is strong support for extending family care with little enthusiasm for nursing homes.
• There is a growing demand for formal child care services through changes in parental labour force participation, demand for more flexible child care services to meet the changing patterns of working time and a reduction in the availability of grandparents and other relatives to provide informal child care. It is clear that demand for child care greatly exceeds supply.
• The EU Childcare Target (Barcelona Summit) linked to employment policy, social protection and equal opportunities

The Facilitator put forward proposals for consideration on how to expand the child care sector labour force. These included:

• Encouraging unemployed or inactive persons to enter the care sector
• Establishing new entrepreneurs and employers in the sector with consideration of special support for women entrepreneurs
• Stimulate the purchase of childcare services by employers
• Subsidise the cost of services
• Promote quality standards and training
• Stimulate partnership between public authorities and private or not-for-profit employers

Suggestions on how policies could be developed to support carers included:

• Measures within the workplace: changes in work patterns, development of community services, insurance and leave entitlements and changes in attitudes of colleagues and managers
• Measures outside the workplace: improvements in political commitment, development of social protection measures, services to support both carers and the elderly, research and development and training and education to access resources that do exist.

The discussion that followed the presentation covered a number of areas:

1. Any definition of work needs to encompass both paid and unpaid work and that each should be valued equally. Caring should not be seen as
an either/or to work outside the home. With the provision of adequate supports and work/life balance policies it is feasible for carers to also be workers outside the home. The group concluded that the only sustainable approach is one in which families and others provide care in co-operation with service provision from outside the family. There is a danger of overburdening families, particularly women, by not providing adequate support services. Women or men who choose to work within the home should be given equal support with those who choose to work outside the home or combine the two roles.

2. However, the costs of caring has to be recognized. These costs include both human costs in terms of career development, a reduction in income and pensions, loss of job security and without appropriate support there is a danger that caring can lead to social exclusion. In addition the family as carer provides a cost saving for governments.

3. The positive aspects of care also need to be emphasized. These include the fact that the majority of older people wish to remain in their own home for as long as possible and where care is needed their preference is for a family member to act in the caring role.

4. Child care should not be equated simply with care for children while parents are working. It should also be regarded as having both developmental and educational components and services should be developed that meet this multifunctional criteria.

5. The group agreed that caring is also an equality issue. To allow genuine choices to be made for both men and women there should be no disincentives to either choosing to work or care in the home or choosing to work outside the home.

6. It was agreed that policies relating to care within the family should be aimed at fostering intergenerational solidarity.

7. The Chairman raised the question of what can be done at European level to promote families as carers and support them in this task. The Group regretted the disappearance or dismantling of some of the EU initiatives which addressed various aspects of family life, of which caring was central, such as the European Child Care Network and the Network on Family and Work. The Group concluded that it was important to take up the family dimension of the existing initiatives without necessarily asking for an enlargement of the political
competence of the Union. It was agreed that there was a need for the Commission to support and facilitate exchanges between countries at the level of networks on caring and families, particularly in the light of the ten new countries with whom the existing fifteen can share their experiences.

8. The group concluded that policies relating to care should not be subsumed into employment policy thus allowing employment policy to drive family policy. It was agreed that the demand for an expansion of the labour force by building policies to encourage more workers, particularly women, to combine caring and work outside the home should not be allowed to take precedence over family policies aimed at the well-being of all families.
The focus of our workshop this afternoon is on Reconciling Work and Family life. As outlined in the Conference Brochure, balancing work and family life is one of the greatest challenges facing policy makers and family members. This workshop is intended both to identify and discuss relevant policy developments and to reflect on how well current policy is working (including what might be taken as measures of success).

While we are well aware that work life balance is not just an issue for people with caring responsibilities – increasingly the availability of work-life balance options is becoming an important topic for a broad range of people in employment and those seeking employment – the focus of our discussions today is in the context of reconciling work and family life.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RECONCILING WORK AND FAMILY LIFE?
The OECD Research Bosses and Babies: Reconciling Work and Family Life – which we will hear more about tomorrow – defines “reconciliation policies as all those measures that extend both family resources (income, services and time for parenting) and parental labour market attachment”.

Reconciliation policies is about supporting a parent or parents so that they have a real choice in making their work and care decisions.

EXAMPLES OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT AT EU LEVEL IN THIS AREA
While the EU does not have competence in relation to family policy, there have been a number of policy developments at EU level which impact on the area of reconciling work and family life.
For example Article 141 of the EU Treaty enshrines the principle of equal opportunities for women and men in matters of employment and occupation. This principle implies equal treatment for workers of both sexes and the right to combine family life and work.

Some recent policy developments include the Resolution adopted by the Employment and Social Policy Ministers at the Employment and Social Policy Council in June 2000, on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life. The Resolution includes a declaration to the effect that:

- The objective of balanced participation of men and women in family and working life, coupled with the objective of balanced participation of men and women in the decision making process, constitute two particularly relevant conditions for equality between men and women;
- There is a need for a global and integrated approach for reconciling family and working life …
- It is necessary to make every effort to promote specific measures .. to bring about the changes in structures and attitudes which are essential for the balanced participation of men and women in the family and at work.
- It is necessary to promote measures to improve the quality of life for all..

The Lisbon Agenda agreed at the Lisbon European Council set out ambitious targets to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs for all. As outlined in the conclusions from the Informal Council meeting of Employment and Social Policy Ministers, which took place in Galway in January this year, achievement of the employment objectives for the Union set at the Lisbon European Council remain a priority. The Heads of State at the Spring European Council this year reinforced their commitment to achieving the Lisbon targets.
The targets set is the Lisbon Agenda in relation to employment are:
- An overall employment rate of 67% by 2005 and 70% by 2010 (EU average 64.3%)
- A female employment rate of 57% by 2005 and 60% by 2010 (EU average 55.6%)
- An employment rate for older workers (aged 55-64) of 50% by 2010 (EU avg 40.1%)

The Presidency Conclusions from the Informal Ministers Council in January indicate that to restore and sustain economic growth, it is essential to expand the supply of labour and to encourage more people to take up employment. Making work pay is a core objective in the EU to support the modernisation of social protection systems.

This is all the more important given the demographic situation facing the EU with the ageing of the population and the consequent reduction in the working population and the resulting pressures on the sustainability of social protections systems. Ministers and the Commissioner concluded that policies to reconcile work and family life are vital elements of the overall package of measures to increase participation in the labour market.

The need for specific policies and measures to further progress the reconciliation of work and family life has become a key issue at both EU and national level. Member states that have achieved high overall employment rates, have in common, policies which take into account the need to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

To be effective in the long term, policies developed must take into account both social and economic issues.

What are the social issues, which must be taken into account? (not in any particular order)

Impact of increased participation–on children – do the systems, supports, structures we put in place take account of the best interests of children?
On caring responsibilities in society – traditionally women have undertaken the unpaid role in society of caring for elderly relatives. Increased participation of women in the labour market means that this role has to be provided through another format.

On family sizes, on the age at which we have children – This issue was covered in detail in the morning sessions. Women are postponing or deferring having children in order to pursue their careers. The result is that birth rates are low which has implications for the future both from a social and economic perspective.

On the family as a unit – pressure on the family as a unit from increased participation. Anecdotal evidence would suggest a treadmill situation for a number of families where both parents are in paid employment.

On the male/female partnership – it is suggested that the arrival of children has limited impact in most cases on the male partner; while in the majority of cases the female partner adjusts her working pattern to establish a balance between work and family life. This in turn has an impact on the type of work women undertake following childbirth.

"Value" placed on unpaid work of parenting versus paid employment. Because of the emphasis in society on increasing participation rates, it may be perceived that only paid employment is considered to be of value to society.

Particular needs of lone parents- availability of specific supports to empower lone parents to make a choice to re-enter the labour market. Lone parents are in the difficult position of being the sole bread-winner and carer.

Social Inclusion. One of the best ways to take people out of the poverty trap is to provide opportunities for them to enter paid employment.
ECONOMIC
One of the biggest challenges in most member states, including Ireland, is the issue of supply, quality and cost of suitable childcare. It is a key issue for all persons who wish to reconcile work and family life.

The “choice” between paid work, part-time work and unpaid caring work – in the context of current cost of living, do people actually have a choice? 
Need for increased labour force to progress the EU competitive agenda 
Gender pay gap issues 
Loss of experience, up-to-date skills, promotional opportunities for people who take time out from paid employment 
Under utilization of skills – number of women now attending third level is greatly increasing. 
Perception of commitment to paid employment for those availing of work life balance options 
Corporate responsibility to reconciling work and family life 

How can policies enable a parent or parents to make a real choice in reconciling work and family life? The challenge at national and EU level is to synchronise social and economic objectives in this area.

We have a number work life balance policies in place in most if not all member states – maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, carers leave, general employment equality legislation etc.

In addition, at enterprise level we will find various work life balance options in operation – flexi-time, part-time, annualised hours, teleworking, term time, work sharing, job sharing, various additional leave options either paid or unpaid etc.

WHAT WILL DRIVE THIS AGENDA FURTHER?
We need commitment to the agenda at a number of levels –

EU LEVEL
Progress and build on achievements to date by the European Council, ESPHCA Council and the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs
What role are national/regional governments taking in relation to reconciling work and family life?

Do we require an integrated family policy on which other related policies are based including taxation policy, childcare policy, education, support for specific groups within society, work life balance policies?

Our experience here in Ireland is that the work life balance agenda cannot be progressed at Government level alone. It is essential to include the social partners in order to effect change in this area. The model in Ireland is one based on the social partnership model. Under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2001 – 2003 (a national partnership agreement) a National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies was established. The remit of the Committee was continued and extended to cover the broader issue of Work Life Balance under the current national agreement Sustaining Progress.

The Committee comprises representatives from the main employer representative organisation IBEC, the main trade union representative organisation ICTU, the Equality Authority, a number of Government Departments including the Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance, Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Social Welfare and is chaired by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The Committee, under Sustaining Progress, is charged with supporting and facilitating the development of family friendly policies at the level of the enterprise through the development of a package of practical measures that can be applied. One of the tasks of the Committee is to examine how best to improve access to family friendly working arrangements in order to realise the potential benefits that these arrangements would offer from both an equality and competitiveness perspective.
The National Framework Committee has undertaken a range of activities to date:

- Family Friendly Workplace Day or Work Life Balance Day, as it is now known, has been an annual event since 2001.
- Direct financial assistance has been given to individual organisations to assist these organisations in implementing or enhancing work/life balance working arrangements.
- In conjunction with this, the Committee also provided assistance to organisations, through the establishment of a panel of consultants, which were put in place to provide assistance to employers in implementing new working arrangements or developing existing work/life balance working arrangements.
- An interactive website has been set up on behalf of the Committee by the Equality Authority.
- Both ICTU and IBEC have developed resources to assist their members in furthering work/life balance at the level of the enterprise.
- Information dissemination and exchange activities have been undertaken, including the hosting of seminars at national and regional level, the publication of newsletters, leaflets etc.
- A number of very useful pilot projects and research projects have been commissioned by the Committee or undertaken on behalf of the Committee.

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Our experience has been that the role of the social partners at both EU and national level is crucial. The provision of measures to reconcile work and family responsibilities is of benefit to both employers and employees alike. Employers benefit through increased employee satisfaction, retention/attraction of staff, productivity, reputation of the organisation, reduced labour turnover, decreased absenteeism/sick leave. Employees are provided with opportunity of remaining in the workforce or continuing their attachment to the workforce during periods when they have family responsibilities.

Progressing the work life balance agenda presents a complex set of challenges for policy makers and families. These challenges, both social
and economic, do not necessarily dovetail with each other. How we decide to progress this agenda into the future will have a significant on the Europe we hand on to our children and grand children.

**Possible Questions for Discussion**

- How do we measure success in terms of work life balance policies?
- How can the work life balance agenda be further progressed at EU level?
- How can it be further progressed at national level?
- What is the best way to ensure the effective inclusion of the social partners at all levels of the process?
- What are the benefits of an integrated policy on reconciling work and family responsibility at national level/EU level?
- What are the difficulties with having an integrated policy?
- What specific actions can we undertake to make work life balance a strategic policy issue at the level of enterprise?
- What specific actions can we undertake to make work life balance a gender-neutral issue?
The task of our workshop was to discuss how we can develop a more family friendly approach to reconciling work and family life to find a better balance. We had some quite ambitious questions we tried to answer. We wanted to identify and discuss relevant policy developments and to reflect on how well current policy is working including what might be taken as measures of success. And taking into consideration also variation between different countries and policy options. And diversity within and across countries. So you see it was impossible to answer all these questions but we did our best starting with a discussion on the meaning and definition of reconciliation.

There is an optimistic version which was presented to us. The OECD version which is published in 'Babies and Bosses' which is reconciliation policies are all those measures that extend both family resources, income services and time for parenting, and parental labour force attachment. It covers all of the resources a family could need and also proposes that families should also have choice. We did not discuss in any detail the difficult notion of choice in the workshop but there were also more pessimistic views which were brought up in the discussion. One view was that there might be more pressure to take up work even if it’s not very good, well paid employment but maybe temporary work. This might be also an aspect of work policies targeted at particular groups which may mean increasing pressure to take up employment, whatever kind of employment, particularly maybe on lone parents who are not employed. Within our discussions, therefore, we had both a more optimistic, and a more pessimistic view. It depends if you take, for example part-time work, as one means for reconciliation. It may be good work, it may be well paid or have a lot of social security backing up, let’s say. Or it may be more flexible in segregated labour markets. In the discussion also the labour market for carers and household workers in private households was mentioned as an area where there are increasing problems in segregation and maybe even inequalities between the women who pursue a career and can afford to pay household help or carers at a low level.
We moved onto a debate about inequalities in this area. Inequalities in employment have already been mentioned. The quality of work is an important issue in this field as well as inequalities in the quality of childcare which were mentioned by some discussants. You may have had split markets in childcare services between cheap nannies which may be employed and high quality childcare which is not affordable to everybody. So a lot depends on services and childcare markets. Some countries have more of a mixed market of provision. An example mentioned came from the United Kingdom. In some countries there are more institutionalised childcare.

The next inequality which we touched upon, was the question of how much success has been achieved in the attempt to integrate men into housework and care work. We asked the question, how much success in these measures, is participation increasing? There were pessimistic views on this issue. We know about the attempts of Sweden and Scandinavian countries to increase participation in parental leave but nonetheless the general trend is not too encouraging and there remains a lot to do to think about increasing participation in this area as one aspect of reconciling work and employment and family.

The problem is that here we have different policy areas which are involved. Economic policy, and you remember that the European Council set quite ambitious targets about activation rates in employment and also female employment rates which should be raised, which is one driving force of these policies. We also have social policy measures and I just wanted to mention that the European Union has also set some targets for increasing childcare services within the open method of co-ordination which should arrive at available places for 33% of all children under three and 90% available places for children between three years and school age. So these are the targets in that area.

The other policy areas we touched upon were leave policies, the question of services which was very much stressed by different discussions, because there is a need for high quality services to be available to increase employment rates particularly for mothers but it is also a
question of costs. How much does it cost to put a child into childcare/daycare centres? One area of discussion which was mentioned was to limit costs by putting a maximum fee for the use of places in childcare which has been done in Sweden and Denmark.

Fiscal policy, taxes and finally income and social security were discussed as affecting integration of work and family life. So the definition of reconciling employment and family is a very difficult task because at the very end you need co-ordination. You need co-ordination of different areas to develop a coherent policy and this co-ordination you need at different levels, at the EU level we heard about that, at the national level. However, there must also be co-ordination between the social partners if you are bargaining between trade unions, enterprises and employee associations, within the social partnership or social dialogue to create better facilities. Ireland was mentioned in its attempt to promote social partnership to get better facilities in that area.

The problem is the starting points are different in the various countries. If you only look at employment participation rates and working hours we have different cultures. There are also different models underlying social policy. The discussants mentioned the male breadwinner model, the employed mother model, which was the model in the ex-socialist countries also in Nordic countries, but the dual earner family may also be the one and a half earner family, or the one earner family or the mother at home. We also have different service cultures and last but not least we have the gender questions where countries diverge. So we had a number of questions, we had a number of challenges and I think that it is obvious that we were not able to answer all the different questions but we had a valuable discussion and sharing of views and experiences.
Speech by the Parliamentary State Secretary Minister Marieluise Beck
Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Germany

Colleagues, Minister Mary Coughlan, Madame Quintin, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Irish Presidency for organising this important conference. At last, we get to speak about families at an EU conference. Not just peripherally, but as a central theme! Not just as a chance subject, but as a protagonist and as a main target group. This is truly a happy occasion for me!

Families are the heart of our society— in all of Europe. Protecting them is our most important task. The conference has shown the difficult changes families are faced with nowadays. The conference has shown that this development is similar right across Europe. And the conference shows us, how much we can learn from our European neighbours.

In article 33 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights: “legal, economic and social protection of the family unit is guaranteed”. Naturally, this is also understood to refer to institutional protection of the family. The EU has no authority that deals with family policy making. Promotion of the family is not established as an aim or task in the EU Treaty. However, within the context of this Charter of Fundamental Rights and the special tasks of the EU in matters of social protection, gender equality and the combat against social exclusion I see a task that concerns us all.
The Lisbon agenda have given us the specific task of promoting the family unit. The family unit lives and has a future. It is still a life choice for most people and constitutes the most important part of the lives of those people. Family gives people a sense of security, cohesion and personal satisfaction. The trust we place in the dependability of the family unit forms an integral part of our social structure.

I refer here to the wider concept of family. For me, family means many generations, parents, grandparents and children looking out for each other and taking responsibility for each other. Indeed, the younger generation seem to be placing ever increasing importance on family values. Most young people today cite their families as the most important support for them.

Families are affected by the quick pace of social change. We have high divorce rates, a growing number of parents that are raising their children alone, newly formed families and socially excluded families. Despite all the changes, the family unit remains surprisingly stable. 78 percent of all children in Germany grow up with both natural parents and with their brothers and sisters. The family unit stabilises society. Families, as service providers and social units, should be placed at the centre of social interests.

Despite all this, Europe has too few children! With a birth rate of 1.3 children, Germany has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe and of 202 countries in the world it ranks 185.

Our host, Ireland, ranks highest in the EU, yet figures are still below the maintenance threshold. Indeed, having children is right up there on the list of top priorities of young people—over 80 percent of young people want to have children. In Germany, however, we have the phenomenon that this desire to have children is not made a reality, especially in the case of women with good qualifications. This is quite the opposite to the situation in other European countries, e.g. France or the Scandinavian countries. The result is that too many women are childless. One third of German women born in the year 1965 for example, do not have any children, 41 percent of graduates up to 39 years of age likewise.
People may make a conscious decision not to have children. However, this is often not the case and only in very few cases is it biologically impossible. The situation often arises, because conditions are not right. Because conditions are not right the decision to have children is postponed again and again until it is too late. The woman either feels too old or it just doesn’t happen anymore – the desire to have children is not satisfied.

An unsatisfied desire to have children also means an unsatisfied lifelong dream and ill-fate. It is not the task of politics to try to persuade people to have children, however the basic conditions required to fulfil this desire to have children should be provided.

Families that have children, however, are not always happy with the way family tasks and work are divided. In Germany, in the case of 52% of couples with children under six years of age only the husband is employed. This is the case, despite the fact that only 6% want this. In 16% of couples, both partners are employed full time, whereas 32% would like this. The huge discrepancies indicate that the balance between family and work is lacking. The grounds for this discrepancy in Germany are complex. A significant factor is our history: with the division of Germany, the two different systems brought about different structures.

In the new Federal States, the former GDR, many more women are employed than in the former West Germany. It was far more acceptable for women to work. The infrastructure was aimed at this: sufficient childcare places were available. In the new Federal States a lot has changed in the past 14 years. However, a relatively good childcare structure is still in place.

The situation in West Germany, however, is quite different: working mothers had to and still have to justify why they want to leave their child with a stranger. Many look upon these women as bad mothers. In many parts of West German society, the harmful effects of someone else looking after your child is still a popular topic of discussion. Following this logic, there are not enough childcare services. In large cities there are a few more, in the countryside they are as good as nil.
This will sound absurd to most of you. But this is the norm in West Germany. And the reason I am highlighting this situation is so that you can understand why we have decided to take this path. When promoting the family unit we must look at long term options. These may be accompanied by regulations. On the whole, however, we do not need more rules, instead we need better co-operation between the individual actors: politics, economy, society. Therefore, we have agreed on priority areas to be looked at. The first of which is the compatibility between career and family life and the second is early childhood development.

Medium term initiatives for a better compatibility between family life and work are dealt with by the „Alliance for the Family“. The alliance aims to pave the road for a sustainable family, social and economy policy based on the consensus that

- Our society needs a higher birth rate,
- Our economy is dependent on a qualified workforce and more women in employment,
- And that our children need education, training and support from an early age.

Leading figures in economy, unions and politics have agreed to strive, within the scope of their abilities, to put in place a family friendly work environment. The focal points here are company culture, work organisation, working hours, personal development, family services.

The second priority is placed on good childcare services and early childhood development.

The development of childcare facilities is one of the most important socio-political aims of the Federal Government in this legislative period. Germany is at least 10 years behind other West European countries in the provision of childcare service structures. We want to have come into line with West European standards by the year 2010. Despite the difficult budget situation, as of 2005 the Federal Government will set aside 1.5 billion Euro each year for the provision of these services.
In developing childcare infrastructure the Federal Government will introduce various services for different age groups that are of good quality, flexible, affordable and varied. Variety means kindergartens as well as infant care—whether that be through communal facilities, free welfare care, through childminders, through citizens own initiatives or through commercial service providers.

The development of childcare facilities will definitely help improve the living conditions of families: Attending a child day care centre increases the child’s chance of comprehensive education and development. It supports individual lifestyles, improves the chance of creating a balance between family and work and, in the long term, thus counteracts the negative aspects that partners have seen arise in everyday family life.

Finally, but of no less importance, is the fact that the possibility of both parents being able to work obviates the need for family and child poverty. Employment facilitates social security and an independent lifestyle for women—good childcare facilities for children is also key issue here.

Alongside the development of childcare structures, the quality of childcare is also a matter of great importance: Here too we want to reach the standards of other European countries. In essence, this about a comprehensive improvement of early childhood development:

Everything that I have spoken about here is worthwhile investment in the future and is as important for the modernisation of our country as the reforms of the labour market or the social systems.

We have also reintroduced the family reporting instrument to ensure that we can live up to the ever-changing challenges of the future. The Federal Government, through the decision of the German Bundestag, is obliged to submit a report on family affairs at each alternate legislative period. As well as taking stock and analysing the reports these should contain suggestions for the improvement of the situation of families. The Federal Government adds its commentary to the reports from the independent commission together with the conclusions it deems appropriate.
The seventh family report should be presented in Summer 2005 and is to include the theme of the future for families in Germany in the context of social change and social cohesion. I see a great need for dialogue on these questions—within Germany and within Europe. And I am very pleased that the Irish Council Presidency recognises this need and has organised this conference. We need to continue this exchange. Europe cannot afford not to talk about such important themes on a regular basis.

Please, do not misunderstand me: I am not thinking about shifting responsibility. Europe does not need any authorities for making policies on family affairs. But we do need a forum, in which we can discuss our European problems in the area of family affairs. At one stage, a working group comprised of government officials from the department of family affairs met regularly with the European Commission in Brussels to discuss current problems. We should set up this working group again!

We are planning a conference in Berlin for December 2004, at which we would like to discuss this matter with the European Commission. The Ministers for Family Affairs from the EU are invited as are non-governmental organisations from each country. Our aim has to be to put family policy back on the agenda.

My final comment is that should the current status quo remain, in the foreseeable future we will be saying: “We look so old without children”. This will not be in Germany alone but in all of Europe.
Speech by Ursula Haubner
Minister of State for Family and Generations
Austria

I am especially delighted by the invitation of the Irish EU presidency to the Conference on Families and Social Policy in Europe. This initiative of the presidency to hold a conference on the family comes at the right time, and the fact that we have the opportunity to exchange experiences here must be greatly welcomed.

Tomorrow we will be celebrating the International Day of the Family. This year is the tenth anniversary of the “International Year of the Family 1994”, which was created by the United Nations. The aim of this initiative is to increase awareness at both a national and international level of issues relating to the family as an essential unit in society.

Above all, the family must be strengthened and supported. This aim is particularly important in view of the population change resulting in a demographically older society.

We must make the services provided by the family visible. This involves a change in the way we think. Family-related policies concern us all and affect all policy areas: the economy, social issues and children. The parties agree on this. The family must play a central role in our societies in Europe. The idea that the family is not a contemporaneous way of life, as some people claim, is not true. The family holds the undisputed top position on the personal, individual scale of values of the Austrian people, and is also number one among teenagers.

For most Austrians – 89% of them, in fact – the small world of the family is the most important part of their life, ahead of work (66%), friends (44%) and leisure time (39%).

The tasks by which families are confronted are increasing, while the demands made on family-related services are growing and becoming more important. In addition to rearing and providing for children and
teenagers, these tasks also include providing care for and looking after older family members. If the family is in good condition, then the society is in good condition. The economy is also in good condition because families have great purchasing power.

However, are we following the right path? The developments in Austrian family-related policies since 1994 can be described as a unique package of reforms. Austria has used the last decade to change the system for promoting the family from the traditional system where burdens are equalized to one where performance is recognized. This change has been made by means of a set of measures: financial services, tax relief, social legislation to safeguard family time, up to assistance in crisis situations.

Let me give you a short summary of the most important measures taken to promote the family in Austria:

As part of current tax reforms, Austria’s families are being provided with tax relief totalling approximately €250,000,000. Austria is thereby once again proving that families are not just a private matter, but are also part of the public arena. The existing single earner’s and single parent’s allowance can be claimed for tax purposes, and are now increasing as the number of children increase.

The most important innovation in the past decade in the area of family-related policies from a financial point of view was created in 2002 in the form of the children’s care allowance. Independently of whether or not they have worked in the past, mothers and fathers receive a monthly children’s care allowance of €436.00 for a maximum of three years if a parents decide to leave work and look after a child. If several children are born, there is a 50% addition to the children’s care allowance. A high, annual additional earnings cap also facilitates gainful employment while the child is being cared for. This means that parents can choose between continuing to work while using the money to pay for childcare, or working part-time for a period of time while looking after the child during the remaining time.
Individual pension insurance, health insurance and service contributions are linked with the children’s care allowance.

- Between 1992 and 2002, an additional 41,000 childcare places were created in Austria for children between 0 and 15 years of age. Most of these are available for children of preschool age (3 to under 6). 73% of children in this age-group attend such a school. A high-level Austrian summit is currently dealing with the issue of punctually closing any existing loopholes.

- In addition to children, care is also provided within families for the older members. In Austria, 80% of those requiring care currently receive it within the family. The elderly want to grow old at home. This is why the federal government is supporting the care network within the family by means of a care allowance.

Since 2002, hospice staff members have been providing care so that dying family members or seriously ill children can be assisted. Security is guaranteed during this period of time by means of protection against dismissal, health insurance and continued payment of service contributions. Personal, individual assistance provided to the dying in the last weeks of their lives is the Austrian answer to the euthanasia discussion.

Compensation for the services in the form of cash and non-cash payments is supplemented by offers which correspond to families’ needs.

In view of the fact women today go out to work as a matter of course, as well as the fact that the professional and familial aspects of life are compatible, and the resultant necessity for childcare places outside the home, it is becoming increasingly important to organise the world of work and opportunities relating to further education and training in a family-friendly manner. This is why additional initiatives were taken with regard to family-related policies, in the areas of compatibility between the family and the professional life, adult education, family planning and mediation in conflict and crisis situations.
• In Austria, 350 family planning and marriage counselling offices provide services for all issues relating to the family.
• During the course of adult education seminars, skills and abilities related to the rearing of children can be acquired depending on the age of the child. The rearing of children in a violence-free environment is an important instrument in the prevention of violence.

As part of a joint dialogue between the government, states, municipal authorities and civil societies within the context of a national conference on the family, experts are focussing on the challenges posed by current and future family-related policies.

The following are the issues being discussed:
1. 1994 +10: “10 years of family-related policies in Austria”
2. Compatibility between the family and the professional life
3. A child-friendly society
4. Families without violence
5. Educating parents and couples
6. A positive masculine identity and fatherhood
7. Solidarity between the generations
8. From family planning to a centre of competence for families
9. Families and the law
10. The household as a company

More than 500 experts from the areas of politics, administration, business and civil societies are participating in this conference. This form of cooperation can be used as an example of the integrated approach taken with regard to our family-related policies. It is an approach that includes the cross-section of all of the actors and stakeholders with an interest in the political issue of the family.

The compatibility between the family and the professional life is at the core of Austrian family-related policies. The decision relating to the family and the professional life should not be an either-or one, but one which includes both the family and the professional life. The family and the professional life should not stand in each other’s way, and a decision
to temporarily leave professional employment should be possible, as should a decision to reduce one’s professional hours for a certain period of time.

Both the family life and the professional life are important for the society the work done within the family and the independence provided by the professional life above all for women. In this respect it is important to know that the children are being well looked after. In this area the setting up of networks and provision of high quality childcare which, on the one hand, ensures the well-being of children in age-groups up to 14 and, on the other, corresponds to the needs of the parents, is a political issue of central importance and one which we are dealing with intensively throughout Austria.

In this respect I would like to provide just a few examples:

- Acquiring the business world as a partner, in one’s interest amongst others
- Deciding on part-time parental models
- As a result of the FAMILY & PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATION audit an internal company process was started during the course of which family-conscious staff policies including suitable measures are being implemented within three years

More and more companies are today recognizing that, due to demographic developments, there will be a shortage of workers in a few years, and that this means that in the future women will be the key workers. This is why companies are today already improving their drawing power for women and men with families.

As part of an EU project jointly implemented with Germany, Italy, France and Hungary, the model for a national coordination office relating to compatibility measures for the family and the professional life was created. This model can be transferred to other countries.

Together with Ireland and Japan, Austria took part in the second examination of countries by the OECD organised around compatibility
between the family and the professional life. When countries were being compared, the OECD report stressed that the audit was exemplary. The OECD study entitled “Children and Career - Compatibility between the Family and the Professional Life” was issued this morning. The study clearly shows in which areas measures will have to be implemented and focal points created in relation to future family-related and social policies.

The following are the central elements of future oriented family related policies in Europe:

· The creation of a broad range of family-friendly framework conditions in accordance with freedom of choice, e.g.

1. Provision and expansion of financial services and tax incentives relating to family-related policies
2. Childcare opportunities which respond to varied needs, are reasonably priced and of high quality
3. Creation and promotion of a family-friendly world of work so that a family- and children-oriented sphere can be created in one’s immediate environment

An investment in the family is also an investment in the future, and is therefore worthwhile. It also ensures the necessary dynamic with regard to the generational question.

Now that I have heard that there is great interest in continuing the discussion on family-related policies at EU level among the people present here today, I can already guarantee you that Austria will be organising an additional related conference when it holds the EU presidency during the first half of 2006. You are all invited to this conference.

Thank you for your attention.
STATEMENT

THE HON. ROBERTO MARONI
MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
ITALY

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to thank the Irish Presidency and The European Commission for hosting this important Conference, held in order to underline the importance of the Decennial of International Year of Family, launched by the United Nations.

Italy has joined with deep enthusiasm the initiative promoted by the International Community to celebrate the Decennial of the International Year of the Family, in the conviction that family can play a strategic role as the flywheel of development and social cohesion, particularly when it comprises vulnerable members such as minors, ageing people and people with disabilities. “Reinforcing the family as a whole means to give to all little girls and boys an extra opportunity to live inside their affective system, to allow ageing people to remain active within their habitual context, to give to all people with disabilities the necessary support to strengthen their capacities to live in full autonomy in society.

Families have demonstrated that they are able to offer a lot for the development of individuals and society. They face up to responsibilities with great strength and can be protagonists in this process. Unfortunately and unjustly not always these potentialities have been acknowledged as well as their leading role in the definition of political choices.

For all these reasons the Italian Government considers it to be important to mark the year 2004 with a strong commitment in favour of families and with this conviction we have been working for the last few years at a strategic program of integrated actions to promote the empowerment of Italian Families. In fact the empowerment of a family is a decisive instrument for the empowerment of all the people that live within it. The recent White Paper on the Welfare State submitted by the Italian
Government in 2003 represents an innovative instrument to read the process involving the Italian society as a whole in order to identify the main tendencies, the bonds and the opportunities and in order to start a concrete reflection about how to respond to the challenge caused by these processes. Furthermore, according to the principle of vertical subsidiarity, it represents the base for the actual confrontation among the different levels of governance that hold the responsibility to set up programs of social interventions - the regions - and to provide services (municipalities). Since the social changes are very complex and the elements of weakness increase (as the demographic one), there is the request to identify strong instruments for the planning, for governance, for experimentation starting from a deep knowledge of the social context of the families. In this regards the White Paper places the family in a definitely central position, viewing it as a strong instrument of social inclusion, particularly in respect of the most vulnerable categories of persons.

Thank to its innovative approach, for the first time in Italy, family is acknowledged as a social rights subject: not only a sum of individuals, an entity that develops duties, functions in its private sphere, but a complex organization of affective relationships, duties, and rights, responsibilities and solidarity. A “social Institution” towards which orienting integrated actions and should be considered by public Institutions, policy makers and administrators as an interlocutor within the social dialogue, and in the definition of programs and plans of interventions. This means to implement concretely the principle of horizontal subsidiarity which is not a mere transfer of responsibility from public to private, but also a way to share objectives, actions and results with the social partners.

The White Paper, and the new National Action Plan on Social Inclusion -based on the its guide-lines - highlights the crucial contribution of family to address efficiently the main causes of the social transformations: the demographic transition and the effects on the relationship between generations. In fact, as known, my country, is facing an extraordinary demographic phenomenon: caused by the speed and the intensity of the ageing of the population due to the combination of the
decline of fertility rate and the increasing of life expectancy.

Furthermore, the NAP/Inclusion emphasizes that my Country according to the Conclusions of the European Council in Lisbon, intends to strengthen the integration between social policies, labour policies and macro-economic policies within a balanced and sustainable economic development. Recognizing this tight connection appears to be fundamental and functional in order to face the most recent European challenges and to create an active, dynamic and solid welfare. The fight against the social exclusion in favour of individuals and families as lead roles is not only an ethic duty but also an essential pre-requisite for the development of our country within the context of increasing globalisation. In this situation the family policies assume a fundamental role. That means that they inspire significantly part of the measures that the Government has been realizing in these years. “Supporting family policy” is not a “sector policy” but the result of different interventions which acknowledge its real role as “actor of the system”.

The recent 2nd Joint Report on social inclusion confirms that family policies are constructive in the process of inclusion regarding the conciliation of family/professional life as well as family solidarity. As you know the family solidarity is indicated as the typical approach to inclusion of the Italian policy. In this regard we want to ensure to families a strong support to live the attitude to solidarity in a way which does not penalize them. In Italy the solidarity networks that operate in and among the families are very consistent and involve relatives, friends, neighbours in individual way or linked differently. It is about three thousand million hours yearly of which only 5% is absorbed by the extra-familiar voluntary assistance. It is about economic assistance and protection of health, work and studies. We want to protect this treasure, avoiding the risk that families suffer from an excessive burden of responsibilities and duties taking care of people in need.

In this context, the White paper singles out a series of measures on the financial, taxation, social, and employment sides, enforcing an approach of mainstreaming through public policies, that needs to be implemented
in keeping with a Social Agenda. This, in order to relaunch nativity, encourage creation of new families, the parenthood, and allow the family to tackle its numberless commitments without experiencing inconveniences and breaks-up. These objectives can be reached through the implementation of measures for the reconciliation between works and family life, for the development of the child care services system as well as the recognition of the value of informal caregiver network, particularly those entailing mutual and self-help.

In order to stimulate the raise of birth rate and the creation of new families the 10% of the National Fund for Social Policies (161 million €), has been dedicated specifically to support the achievement of the first home and the first birth.

Besides, according to what demographic experts say, Italian Government is conscious that the raise of birth rate depends strongly on the births after the first one. For this reason it has introduced an experimental financial measure: the bonus of 1.000 €, granted to all women, with no regards to their income, for second or further newborn. By this time almost 70.000,00 have benefited of it.

Furthermore, The Social Agenda of the White Paper and the Nap/inclusion clearly mark that entering the labour market is one of the strategic challenge for young generations. In this sense a specific commitment is defined to promote the introduction of the young generations into the various phases of the social life, also through mobility programs on international levels and opportunities for working / training programs.

Following the European aims, Italy is strongly committed to enhance measures for the reconciliation of work and family life. In this context a major step is represented by the reform of the labour Market recently approved (Biagi Law). It introduces new forms of flexibility so to allow a major conciliation between family responsibilities and professional commitment, in particular for women. The part-time job is the best known, though in our country it still scarcely applied: we know very well
that in Italy part-time contracts are only 9% compared to the European media of 18%, 25% in Great Britain, 42% in Holland. The Biagi reform aims to keep the necessary balance between the need of the workers to dispose and organize part of their time for purposes other than work and those of the companies to increase or decrease working time in relation to new production necessities. The Ministry of Welfare has launched an informative campaign on this matter.

In 2000 a Fund was created to allocate resources for companies that apply contracts in favour of the flexibility of the working hours, the training and reintroduction in the workplace of workers after the leave period. In the last few days we approved 23 new projects for a total amount of €2 million.

Since 2000 a specific law on parental leaves is in force. In these years the Ministry of Welfare has been working intensively to promote the application of these rules and to spread the culture of reconciliation through these instruments. The Ministry works also for integration and constructive modifications of the law, as well as for widening the opportunities to benefit of extraordinary biannual leaves for people who take care of relatives living in high level of dependency.

Great attention is paid to the development of child care services, aiming to reach the target fixed by European Councils (Lisbon and Barcelona,) of satisfying at least the 33% of the demand. A specific Fund has been created of €300 million in three years in order to raise the supply of public child care services and in the 2003 a new Fund was created to stimulate the participation of productive sector in the development of welfare system: €10 million have been assigned to companies and other employers to realize child services in the working places. We received more than 200 applications and this proves the interest of all actors to promote the wellness of families.

At the same time a very innovative bill for the reform of child care services system is underway in Parliament. It will regulate, inter alia, innovative forms of childcare services especially with the direct
involvement of families and social partners.

Nowadays, we have started a deep reflection about the reform of fiscal system, that in Italy still strongly disadvantages families with children. The White Paper on Welfare State outlined how in Italy, differently from the most part of European Countries, the fiscal system seems to consider that the contribution possibilities of the family are very little conditioned by the presence of children to maintain, grow and educate. Our aim is to build new fiscal mechanism to guarantee a mayor social equity that keeps in consideration the family charges combined with monetary allowances.

Before I conclude my statement, I would like to add two points which are particularly significant in our work to sustain the development of welfare state in favour of families.

First of all, the commitment of the Italian Government to spread a new culture of social responsibility within the productive sector. As you know, during the Italian Presidency we promoted important initiatives and new proposals presented during the European Conference held in Venice last November with a view to defining strategies to implement the CSR.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of another initiative launched last January to mark the Opening of International Year of Family in my country. We constituted a new Italian National Observatory on Family which is a network of 25 small and big cities, working all together with experts, regions, associations, and central Institutions. The main objectives of the new organisation are:
• to monitor the main social and demographical indicators,
• to study the changes in family structure;
• to collect and exchange information on initiatives and good practices developed at local level in order to grant to families appropriate support and service network
• To deepen the knowledge about the role of the associations acting on the territory within local network.
We consider it a laboratory to experiment with a different way of working
together (central, regional and local governments with the social private
sector) with a view to focusing new strategies to enhance the role of
family within the economical, social and cultural life of the Country.

To celebrate the International Year of Family the organisation has set up
an intensive program of research and conferences to spread a new
consciousness of the importance of family as an active partner in the
social development.

Speech by
At the conclusion of this conference we must assess what we have learned and also what can unite us. Europeans have a great deal in common where family life is concerned. In their eyes, it continues to be essential, at a time when the family and the conditions of family life are undergoing rapid and broad changes within the member states of the European Union (EU).

These changes deserve to receive serious consideration from political leaders. As the presentation given by Dr. Hubert Krieger of the Dublin Foundation has shown, these changes reflect a wide range of views which have become more liberal, in order, in other words, to be able to take the range of constraints imposed by one’s social life, in particular one’s working life, into consideration.

At the same time, these changes involve significant risks for the future of European societies, not only the risk of a long-term demographic decline accurately evidenced at the beginning of the conference by Professor Wolfgang Lutz, but the very current risk of polarisation between families with several children and couples with fewer children enjoying a more comfortable lifestyle. This form of polarisation also sets men and women against each other, with the latter facing a specific amount of extra work, even if special situations have to taken into consideration. In this respect the question of type thus became an acute and relevant one during our discussions, whereby it was stressed that the burden related to accumulation of contractual time (paid working time) and time given (to looking after the family) is not shared equally.

However, a great deal of value continues to be placed by European societies – men, women and children equally - on the time devoted to looking after the family, a time of inter-generational solidarity. This was one of the good pieces of news commented upon by the Dublin Foundation and confirmed during the discussion workshops and by the speeches given during the plenary session. This is a piece of news which
will cause us to study more closely how Europeans allot their time throughout their life cycle. Societies and governments are thus being invited by private individuals and experts to recognize the value of this inter-generational solidarity by means of appropriate incentives or redistribution of resources. If they fail to recognize its value, the freedom to devote one’s time to one’s children and to inter-generational solidarity, or not to do so, will become a choice involving living for oneself.

The conference has thus renewed or reconfirmed the significant extent to which state intervention is justified, with the aim of recognizing the importance of family life and the importance of the investment that a lot of Europeans, both men and women, make in family life, an investment which should have less disappointing consequences.

• Should, or can, the European Union associate itself with this recognition by means of its own policies? This question was put abruptly at the beginning of one of the workshops and the answers to it were varied in nature. This confusion is understandable. Where the issue of what affects families is concerned, the usual metrics of “European added value”, the effects of the community dimension, are hardly any help to us. The reason for this is that is a question of preserving singularities and national cultures which draw different borders in our countries and in how they are made up, between what are private and public matters. This explains why the family-related dimension is not a matter for the competences of the European Union and, as Madame Quintin reminded us at the beginning, why any idea of European family-related policies are dismissed.

• On the other hand, according to Professor Linda Hantrais during her speech, would national state subsidies affecting families, the interfaces between community policies and promoting family life, only be able to develop due to the global “holistic” nature in which they must from now on be provided? Madame Quintin outlined the most important of these, and they have been stressed by the Irish Minister, Mary Coughlan, T.D. I would like to remind us of just how abundant they are.

• First of all, the concept of grouping families together is laid down in
the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. It has directly resulted in application of regulation 1408/71 in relation to migrant workers from third world countries. The idea of civic citizenship which causes this grouping together federates the Commissions proposed laws in accordance with the European Council held in Tampere, Finland.

- The area of harmonisation of labour legislation, in which social dialogue has had one of its first successes with regard to the issues related to reconciling the working life and family life, is doubtlessly an area where the EU can make a significant contribution in keeping with the guiding lines and the European Labour Strategy. This conference has renewed and reinforced the purpose of this reconciliation.

- In the area of the fight against exclusion and pensions, related coordination of national policies with the aim of modernising social assistance is already dealing with the specific role and participation of families, the consequences of changes within the societies and, in particular, the problem caused by the burdens borne by women who are mothers, daughters or daughters-in-law.

By means of and within the context of these policies, the European Union can link and support national policies whose aim is to recognize the importance of the family. By means of and within the context of these policies, the European Union can also in a very concrete manner develop the way in which knowledge, research and practices are exchanged. The need to do so seems to me to have been expressed very strongly by the participants in the conference. Once of these practices relates to how time is used in everyday life and throughout the whole of one’s life. You, Madame Minister, have spoken of what happiness is made of. The Book of Ecclesiastises reminds us in this respect that it is well that the powers that be devote the necessary amount of time to each activity in life. Perhaps this is the type of wisdom that those involved in public life should be encouraging.
Feedback from the Conference

Hugh Frazer

D.G Employment and Social Affairs European Commission, Brussels, Belgium.

Introduction

I want to try and do four things in my summation. The first is to draw out some of, what for me, were the important lessons about the context that was set for us yesterday from the very profound analysis that was given. Secondly to try to draw out some of the principles that people seem to be concerned should inform the development of social policies in the future.

Thirdly to suggest what seemed to be some of the priority social policies that will address the changes we have heard about in the context of the position of families and fourthly perhaps to make a few comments on the way forward after this conference.

The Context: The Importance of Analysis

Let me begin by picking out seven messages that stood out for me about the context. These are centred around change, the changing economic, social, political, cultural, demographic situation which was so ably described and analysed for us during the presentations.

1. Change
Change is dramatic and inevitable. First let me stress that it is hard to overestimate the significance of the changes and challenges we will inevitably face as a result of changing family structures and roles, interacting with changes in the wider society, with falling birth rates, population decline and ageing populations.

Even though there remain uncertainties as to whether life expectancy will continue to increase or level off, whether fertility rates will recover or stay at their present levels, and what the scale and impact of immigration will be it is clear that major change will continue to happen. Though there are very different starting points in different countries and clear clusters of countries and what happens in particular countries will be mediated by particular national, cultural, political and social factors, there are quite clearly comparable trends across Europe which challenge social policy and policy makers.

In thinking about change I was reminded of our great modern poet Seamus Heaney, writing more recently about the conflict in the north of Ireland and about kinship. His work reinforced for me the need to approach the issues we are discussing with openness and imagination and to develop a vision for the future that will give people confidence and will help them address their genuine fears and insecurities with all the change that is around them.

2. Diversity
The second learning point that I had about the context is one concerning diversity which was again reinforced by our speakers this morning. There is in fact great diversity between countries. The diversity between the new 10 new member states and the existing 15 member states, between countries in the north and countries in the south and we can all learn from each other. There is great diversity and growing diversity in family types and new forms. I was also struck by increasing numbers of single person households. In addition, our diversity is being further added to by greater levels of immigration and migration. All of this creates greater complexities for all of us and for policy makers.

3. Resilience of Family/Intergenerational Solidarity
The third learning point was the resilience of the family and the resilience of inter-generational solidarity. It is reassuring to hear that there is not a war between the generations and that people believe that families matter and they want them to continue to play an important role in caring. This is something that policy makers need to take into account as they develop policies for the future.

4. Need for Care-v-less Carers
Fourthly, I was struck by some conundrums. On the one hand we have a greater need for care into the future but we are likely to have less carers. We need more women working but we also need more children. These are difficult, challenging and conflicting objectives.

5. The Vital Role of family for Social Inclusion
I was really struck by the evidence that was given on how vital is the role played by the family in promoting social inclusion and a sense of well being and quality of life and that the presence or absence of strong social and family support is as important as economic factors in determining the social inclusion of people.

6. Family Size and family preference
I was also struck by the evidence that people want larger families but that this desire can create a number of challenges. It is clear from the presentations that there are a number of barriers to be overcome in order to make that aspiration possible both for individuals but also for the society.

7. Socio-economic inequality matters
The final learning point about the context was the re-emphasis on the importance of addressing issues of socio-economic inequality and indeed how some of the changes that were happening could create greater inequalities and the importance that that puts back to issues of redistribution.

Principles for Policy
Moving then to questions on the lessons for how one goes about thinking about policy and the principles that should underlie policy making. The first thing I would say is that there is a need for clarity as to who policy is intended for and what is the objective of policy. At times yesterday I detected a certain ambiguity or tension about whether we are most interested in the reconciliation of work and family life and the quality of life or are we more interested in policies to create more workers to meet the needs of the labour market.

Secondly, I think one lesson for policy makers arising from the presentations was that doing nothing is not an option. We have to be prepared to respond to the changes that are happening and also to work to influence those changes. The state must play a role in this in ensuring a balance, a balance between adequate social provisions, between support for reproduction and support for labour supply.

This issue of balance also reflects the balance that has informed European Union policy since the Lisbon Summit. That is, a balance between social, economic and employment policies. It was pointed out several times that there are contradictions between those different policy areas going in different directions and we have not yet achieved the reinforcing nature of the Lisbon policy triangle. So we must rebalance that.

The next learning point for designing policy was that to be effective we must consult. This has been a very strong message throughout the conference. We must consult and involve families about policies that affect families but also in doing that we must consult children to get their views and we must consult elderly people about their views.

A further point is that in developing policy it needs to have an approach that is holistic and multi-dimensional. In other words that it is integrated and that we support joined up policy making and implementation.

Next is the issue of promoting the rights of individuals. The changes that
we heard about within families, the changes in power structures, put much more focus on the rights of individuals and there seems to be quite a lot of evidence emerging that policies work best if those rights are respected. This means developing policies based on choice not on compulsion.

The final lesson that I believe has emerged about designing policy is that there is a need to look both to the short term and to the long term. There are immediate things we need to do to assist people but we also need, because of the big changes that will happen down the road, long term perspectives in policy making.

**Policies for families in a changing world.**

- **Employment**
  Clearly employment is a very important issue for the well being of families. However, I also took from the evidence and the discussions that an employment focused approach is important but not sufficient and indeed not always a solution for some people. We heard about the numbers who are actually in work and in poverty. We heard about the excessive demands that are made on some people when they are in work. I would argue that at present there is a danger that employment policy is driven too much, too simplistically by the needs of the labour market and not enough by the needs of people. Employment policy must respect the rights of people and the aim should be to create opportunities and to respect diversity without fostering compulsion.

- **Balancing work and family**
  The second area, and there was a lot of discussion on this during the conference, is about the need for policies to balance work and care. There has been a tremendous amount of detail presented during the debates with fascinating and different evidence about approaches in different countries.

- **Income Adequacy**
The third issue that is important is ensuring income adequacy. This means not only looking at employment and access to work and a job to create income, but also looking at adequate social protection systems, looking at adequate child income supports and looking at how we ensure that people in retirement and on pensions have adequate income and that the adequacy of an income remains a fundamental issue for the future.

- **Eliminate child poverty**

The fourth issue is the importance of addressing child poverty and in creating an inclusive society for children. We must do this, of course, by enabling children to grow up in secure families. However, only looking at the support of families is not sufficient. We have to look at the rights of the child and we have to look at what children themselves need and want.

- **Strengthen Care Policies**

The fifth area is the need to strengthen support and care services for the elderly and for carers in families. We need greater flexibility that combines the care that is provided by families and voluntary organisations as well as by the state. The mix of paid support and kin carers support needs to be addressed and this should not just be economic support.

- **Promote Gender Equality**

Sixthly, and there’s been a lot of discussion on this, there is the need to promote real gender equality. There was strong evidence of women being overburdened. There have been limited gains made by formal equality but we heard again today about the need to share the ‘backpack’* or range of caring and home making tasks by addressing gender roles within and outside the home. This is still an enormous challenge in this society.

- **Support family and social networks**

The seventh point is to support family and social networks. There is a

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* see paper by Ms. Catalene Passchier for explanation of ‘backpack’
need to empower people at local level to form networks of mutual support.

- Respond to postponement of births

We have to think about policies to respond to the postponement of births and to what Professor Lutz presented in his paper concerning the tempo effect. We need to consider the serious question of how can we encourage people to have children earlier?

Therefore, overall I would argue that in the key policy areas that emerged during the Conference have a strong correlation with many of the European Union’s social inclusion and social protection concerns and the key messages that have emerged from the processes that have been going on in Europe over the past two to three years.

Of course there are many other issues that I have not covered in that review of policies and within those policy areas there is clearly a need to give particular attention at times to particular groups who are most vulnerable and who are most at risk. We have heard about lone parents and we have heard about immigrants and we have heard the voices of a few fathers.

Possible Ways Forward

A clear message from the conference is that people have been discussing and debating on policy issues. They want the dialogue and the exchange to continue. The German Ministry plan to host a major conference in Berlin in September 2004 to continue this dialogue. It is also clear that people want to further deepen the analysis and understanding. There are many issues that were raised that we need to know even more about. I think it would be interesting to learn more about some of the reasons for the differences between the new member states and the older member states and what can we learn from each other’s differences.

Looking forward, we have to think about these very profound issues. How can we can get them into the political process? There is a need for
urgency in responding to these issues to give them more attention in the political process. There was I detected a desire for more involvement by the European Union and by the Commission in particular. While there is no EU competency in the area of families, it did strike me that in fact we are very active in many of the relevant policy areas whether they be employment or social protection or social inclusion or discrimination or gender equality. I think the question is not whether the EU should be involved, it is involved, but whether it is better to look at some of the issues raised here being developed and integrated within existing processes or whether it is necessary to develop some additional process. From my point of view I felt that most of the issues could well be addressed by developing the processes that we already have.

Finally, in terms of the way forward I was struck that this was an issue much wider than just the European Union. We have heard at this conference from the United Nations, from the OECD and also from the Council of Europe, and we should engage in dialogue with them and learn from their work in these areas.

**Conclusion**

I was encouraged to learn a lot of examples that good policy actually does make a difference. It seemed to me that there was some evidence that desired family size can equal real family size, that fertility can be higher, that participation rates can increase, that child poverty can be lower where there is real choice, where there is real gender equality, where there are truly family-friendly policies, where there are proper care services, where there is an investment in high and universal welfare provision. These things actually work.

I was also struck throughout the Conference by trying to understand for myself what is family policy. What is the difference between family policy and social policy? If you have strongly pro-child policies, if you have good care and support for the elderly, if you have policies that respect the rights of individuals, if you have policies that promote an inclusive labour market and facilitate the active labour market participation of all people, if you have strong equality and anti-discrimination policies, if you have
co-ordinated and reinforcing social protection. If you have all those social policies is that not in fact a strong family policy? Indeed is that not the current preoccupation of European Union policies in the social area?

Finally for my concluding comment. I return to my theme of drawing on the poets. I will go to an English poet from many centuries ago, John Dunne, where he said, "No man is an island entire unto himself". I think that reminds us as we struggle and debate how best to respond to changes we have heard about that we must remember above all the importance of human relations and human solidarity and the family is at the heart of such relations.
CLOSING SPEECH

MARY COUGHLAN TD
Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Ireland

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are coming to the end of what has been a very successful Conference. We have closely examined the social, demographic, economic and even cultural changes that are occurring in all our countries and the profound effects these are having on families. The challenges arise not just from the realities of these profound changes, but also from the rapid pace of the changes.

This pace of change is in danger of leaving us with yesterday’s responses to today’s problems. As a result, I have detected a real urgency at the Conference on the need to find and implement new responses, so that we can manage the change, rather than being led by it into ill considered and inappropriate policies or, perhaps, no policy at all. As one speaker said, no policy is still policy and has outcomes.

It is also clear from the Conference and from the research findings presented that the vast majority of people still greatly value their families and family life and have a strong commitment to both. They remain among the top sources of individual well being and social cohesion, and as such are a major source of social capital. The value of social capital may not fully show up in our measurement of GDP, but it does in every indice of well being, personal fulfilment and social cohesion.

However, the demands and pace of modern life are putting huge pressures on families and family life. This is resulting, for example, in up to 30% of women having less than their desired number of children, a proportion that grows in the case of women in the higher education categories. People like to spend time with their children and with their families, but find that they have much less time to do so. Similar “time poverty” may occur for families wishing to look after their elderly parents, other aged relatives, and family members with disabilities.
Many children are in poverty and socially excluded because their families cannot earn enough to provide them with adequate support. However, for many the obstacle to earning enough is the fact that they have children to care for.

These pressures are also contributing to a growing incidence of marital breakdown and to a reluctance on the part of a growing number of people to commit to long term relationships.

For many the most important source of support for families is employment. A good job, or both parents in good employment, provides a standard of living that can contribute greatly to family cohesion. However, the difficulties in reconciling work and family life can often result in parents having fewer children than desired, and significantly less time than desired with the children they do have, or to care for other dependent relatives.

On the other hand, lack of employment or of good jobs is one of the main causes of poverty for families with children. There are many obstacles to well paid employment, chief among them being a lack of affordable child care and a lack of education and training in the case of the parents. Inadequate income support from the State was also cited as a major factor for people in the 10 new States.

Providing care for the growing numbers of elderly people will be one of our greatest challenges in the decades ahead. Providing that care in the family will become increasingly difficult as families will be smaller and the adults in the active age groups will be in employment.

The path towards meeting these challenges lies mainly through social and employment policy. We need to make employment more family friendly so that people can balance work and family life to the benefit of both. We need also to ensure a proper gender balance so that women can achieve their potential in employment and men their potential as responsible family members.
On the social protection side we need to develop the right mix of income support and other services, especially child care and elder services, that facilitates the appropriate work/life balance, especially for vulnerable families, such as lone parent and larger families.

These are key parts of the agenda, we have been working on in various ways in each of our 25 countries. But what value can we add to our endeavours at EU level and at International level more generally.

I think this Conference has already shown the value of sharing our knowledge, experience, expertise and good practices in this key policy area and the richness that comes from the participation of people from up to 30 countries which, of course, includes our guest countries as well as Member States.

The Irish Presidency will ensure that a full report of the Conference will be drawn up as a priority, published and placed on the web, outlining the analysis put forward on the challenges families face and the ways discussed of meeting these challenges.

But we need to further deepen the analysis of the interactions between family and social policy across the European Union. Our theme relates to the three main areas for which there is a Treaty basis for policy exchanges – employment, modernisation of social protection, including the provision of care, and combating poverty and social exclusion. Assisting Member States in developing integrated strategies based on these policy areas to support families meet the challenges we have identified at this Conference would be a major and worthwhile task for the EU institutions. There clearly could be a role for the Social Protection and Employment Committees working both separately and together on these issues, supported by the EU Commission. I will be reporting on the outcome of the Conference on this basis to my colleagues, at the meeting of the Council of Ministers for Social Affairs June 2004. It is also important that we bring the exchanges out to a wider audience as we have tried to do in this Conference. I am particularly pleased that Germany has already indicated that they plan to hold a Conference on the theme in Berlin in December.
Minister Ursula Haubner, has also indicated that Austria is considering hosting a Conference on the subject during their Presidency in 2006. The Council of Europe is planning a population conference next year at which changes to families will be one of the main themes. The OECD Ministerial meeting scheduled for March 2005 will have social policy, as it affects families, as a key theme.

As Minister with responsibility for family affairs in Ireland, I am in the process of developing an integrated strategy at national level for supporting families which I intend to complete and publish by the end of this 10th Anniversary Year. I have already undertaken a nationwide consultation which will be fully taken into account in developing the strategy as, of course, will the outcome of this Conference.

My hope is that we will find ways of more effectively pooling our policy development on supports for families at national level with that of EU countries, other countries in Europe and beyond, gaining from the exchange of our diverse experiences, knowledge and good practices.

I believe this Conference has made a significant contribution to this process.

It just remains for me now in this closing Conference speech to thank all who contributed to the Conference. I wish to thank the speakers, including the Workshop facilitators, for their excellent, well researched papers, the Chairs, including the Workshop Chairs, for guiding our discussions so well and the rapporteurs for ensuring that there will be a good record of our deliberations. The interpreters have done a superb job in enabling all of us from up to 30 countries, with our different languages and accents, understand each other.

I wish to thank Beacon Travel who did a marvellous job in getting you all here and I hope will be as efficient in getting you all home safely to your families! The catering here in Dublin Castle and last night in the Royal Hospital was excellent, for which we are most grateful. Sincere thanks to the staff here in Dublin Castle who looked after us so well and to the
Gardai, our police, who are looking after our safety. The staff of my own Department have once more done a marvellous job for which I am most grateful.

Once more I wish to thank the European Commission for all their support and commitment to the success of the Conference. I especially wish to thank Odile Quintin, Jerome Vignon, Costas Fotakis and Graham Taylor who were so supportive over the last year.

To my fellow Ministers, many thanks for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here, to show your support and to share your views on families and family life with us from your countries’ perspectives.

And finally I wish to thank you the participants, coming from all over Europe and beyond, for your commitment, dedication and hard work in making the Conference the success it is and for sharing your diverse experiences, knowledge and good practices with us.

You have all had to leave your families to come here, but I am confident that families in our countries will ultimately benefit from you being here and contributing to the further development of European Social Policy to better support families.
This Conference marked, at EU level, the 10th Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family by joining the worldwide focus on changes to families and family life, insofar as they have an impact on European Social Policy.

(1) Survey findings presented at the Conference show that the vast majority of EU citizens greatly value their families and family life and have a strong commitment to both. They remain among the top sources of individual well being and social cohesion, and as such are a major source of social capital.

(2) The survey also showed that employment is seen as one of the most important ways of achieving family well being and security. Employment of both parents is becoming the norm and replacing the “Head of Household” model, in which there was one breadwinner (usually the man) and a full time carer, usually his wife. The new arrangements, however, are leading to difficulties from the competing demands of work and family which include:

(a) up to 30% of women are having less than their desired number of children (40% in case of women with higher education);

(b) accessing affordable quality child and elder care is a significant problem in many countries;

(c) “Time poverty” in relation to family life and care of family members is becoming a growing problem; and
(d) a growing incidence of marital breakdown and of reluctance to commit to long term relationships means there is greater instability in family relationships.

(3) Families at risk of social exclusion include those headed by lone parents, large families, jobless households and older people living alone.

(4) The ways discussed for meeting these challenges include:

(a) more family friendly work practices and the development of similar family friendly approaches by other key institutions;

(b) development of the right mix of income support and other services, especially child care and elder care services, that facilitates a more appropriate work/life balance;

(c) special targeted measures to assist families vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, especially the children.

(5) Meeting the challenges posed by the profound changes affecting families requires at national level a strategic, integrated approach involving employment, social protection and possibly other policy areas, such as education, health, and housing.

(6) Such efforts at national level could be greatly assisted by further deepening the analysis of the interactions between family and social policy across the European Union. The variety of approaches being adopted in the 25 Member States, with their different values and traditions and stages of social and economic development, was seen as a significant advantage in terms of being able to draw on a wide range of knowledge, experience and good practice.

(7) Such an analysis could valuably inform the existing interchanges at EU level in the various social policy spheres particularly those relating to work/life balance, social protection and inclusion.
Thursday 13 May 2004

08:30 Registration of participants
9:00 Opening of conference
Chair: Michael O’Kennedy, Chairperson, Family Support Agency, Ireland

Opening Addresses:
Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Ireland
Odile Quintin, Director General, Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission
Johan Schölvinck, Director, Social Policy and Development Division, United Nations

09:45-12:50 First Plenary Session
Changes in the Family and Society
Chair: Jerome Vignon, Director – Social Protection and Social Integration, DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission

The aim of this first plenary (consisting of two sessions and four presentations) is to present the latest information available on two distinct issues affecting the family, namely:
• The changing nature of the family

With respect to a great number of issues, for example demography and values, the family unit is evolving and it is important to understand the challenges this raises for social policy.

• Changes in society and the role of the family

There are many societal changes, which place large demands on the family, at a time when the family is becoming more fragile. It is, therefore, important to analyse how policy initiatives are impacted by these trends.

10:00-11:15 The Changing Nature of the Family

Topics:
“Emerging Demographic Issues in and for Europe”
Professor Wolfgang Lutz, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Laxenburg, Austria

“Family Life in Europe - Results of a 2003 survey on Quality of Life in Europe”
Hubert Krieger, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, Ireland

Questions/Comments

11:15-11:45 Coffee Break

11:45-12:50 Changes in society and the role of the family

Topics:
Professor Mary Daly, Queen’s University, Belfast, Northern Ireland

“Sustainable Family Policy: Modernising Social Protection in Europe”
Joakim Palme, Director of the Institute for Futures Studies, Stockholm
Questions/Comments

12:50-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:00 Workshop sessions (4 in parallel)

These workshop sessions are goal-orientated in that they each address a topic that is critical to the development of social policy as it affects families and the role of the EU in this regard. It is planned that the discussion in each workshop will be organised around a set of key questions, which will be made known in advance. So as to facilitate discussion, a facilitator/issue raiser is also assigned to each session. The role of this person is to summarise and discuss the main points relating to the topic and task of the workshop. A rapporteur will also attend each workshop to provide a report back directly to the workshop and subsequently brief the overall conference rapporteur.

Workshop 1 Modernising Social Protection in Light of Family Change

Historically, social protection in Europe has tended to rely on a model of the male breadwinner family for its view of how households and families should be supported. While this is changing, there are complex issues involved, not least the question of supporting both the individual members and the family unit as a whole.

Other issues, which will be raised and discussed at this workshop, include the increasing ‘activation’ thrust to social protection policy, the significance of migration, and support for families with particular needs. The extent to which a targeted approach is necessary will be an underlying theme. Against this background this workshop will discuss how and why considerations about families and family life could and should be better integrated into different domains of social protection policy.

Chair: Hanna Nicholas, UK Representative on SPC, UK
Workshop 2  Family as a Focus of Social Inclusion and Social Cohesion

This workshop will seek to develop an understanding of family as a force for and agent of social inclusion and social cohesion. Building on the work done during the Italian presidency on families and social inclusion, it will explore how social policy can be configured to support the cohesive and inclusionary aspects of families and family life. The workshop will analyse the significance of recent developments in EU social policy, such as the NAPs/Incl. The needs of particular types of families, such as lone parent families, migrant families, low-income families and large families, will be raised as well in the context of the extent to which such families are ‘socially included’ and more general questions about how society in general can be made more cohesive.

Chair: Constantinos Fotakis, Social Protection and Social Integration Directorate, European Commission
Facilitator: Professor Chiara Saraceno, Department of Social Sciences, University of Turin, Italy
Rapporteur: Professor Karin Wall, University of Lisbon, Portugal
(member of the European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family)

Workshop 3  The Family as Carer for the Young and Elderly

The purpose of this session is to focus on care as a valuable activity in its own right and as a key activity in families, and to identify the key considerations for the policy makers. In today’s changing society, issues arise around care for both family members and policy makers. For
family members not only have the norms about the place of care in family relations changed but so has the availability of family members to care for their younger and older relatives. For policy makers, the support needs of families and their individual members in relation to care have changed and become more diversified. Policy makers must therefore be conscious of care as a complex good, mindful, among other things, of the differences between making policy on and for the care of elderly and that for the care of children. In the light of this, the workshop will seek to develop a framework for the future development of policy on supporting families with care.

**Chair:** William Lay, Director, COFACE, Belgium

**Facilitator:** Robert Anderson, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Ireland

**Rapporteur:** Valerie Richardson, European Observatory on the Social Situation, Demography and Family, Ireland

### Workshop 4  Reconciling Work and Family Life

Balancing work and family life is one of the greatest challenges set by policy makers and family members in twenty-first century Europe. It is also one of the current priorities for policy makers within and across the Union and is a domain of policy that has seen considerable expansion and policy experimentation. This workshop is intended both to identify and discuss relevant policy developments and to reflect on how well current policy is working (including what might be taken as measures of success). Attention will also be devoted to variation, in terms of different policy options and the different settings that characterise Member States and the challenge of variation and diversity for policy within and across countries.

**Chair:** Stasa Baloh-Plahutnik, State Secretary for Labour Market and Employment, Slovenia and member of Employment Committee.
Facilitator: Clare Tiernan, National Framework Committee for the Development of Family-Friendly Policies, Ireland

Rapporteur: Professor Kirsten Scheiwe, University of Hildesheim, Germany

16:00-16:30 Coffee Break

16:00 Simultaneous PRESS CONFERENCE

16:30-17:00 Presentation

“Critical analysis of responses to family change, adapting the EU social policy agenda”

Professor Linda Hantrais, European Research Centre, Loughborough University, UK

17:00-18:00 Feedback and Reporting from the Workshops

Chair: Lucien Bouis, Representative of the European Economic and Social Committee and National Administrator of the French National Association of Families.

During this session, each workshop rapporteur will give a brief (10 minutes per rapporteur) feedback on the issues discussed within each workshop. Following this there will be a 20 minute discussion.
Friday 14.05.04
The key purpose of the remainder of the conference is, on the basis of the workshops and other information exchanged on the first day, to make concrete the possibilities for action by EU Member States and the EU and other international actors.

9:00-11:00 Plenary Session on the challenges facing contemporary social policy in Europe from the perspective of families and family change

Chair: John Murray, Head of Social Policy Department, Council of Europe

Topics: “Babies and Bosses – Reconciling Work and Family Life”
Willem Adema, OECD, France

Contribution from Social Partners:
Catalene Passchier, Confederral Secretary of the ETUC, Belgium
Maria Cronin, Director - European and Social Affairs, IBEC (member of UNICE), Ireland

“Feedback from the conference”
Hugh Frazer, DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission, Belgium

Question/Comments

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break
11:30-13:00 Round Table on Future Policy Action on Families in Europe

Chair: Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Ireland

Marieluise Beck, Vice-Minister for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth Affairs, Germany

Ursula Haubner, Minister of State for Family and Generations, Austria

Roberto Maroni, Minister for Labour, and Social Policy, Italy

Jerome Vignon, Director – Social Protection and Social Integration, DG Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission