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**General motivation for launching a new round of European family surveys;  
the Gender and Generations Programme.**

**FIRST DRAFT**

1. Queries about general demographic developments in Europe

Over the last decade, fertility has declined to unprecedented low levels all over Europe. We need a better understanding of why. Have people's value systems changed? To what extent are gender-equality considerations part of the explanation of recent demographic trends? Is greater autonomy for women an explanation? What role does economic trends play? How about political trends – to what extent have families in Central and Eastern Europe been lead to suppress or postpone childbearing by the insecurity and disorganization that has accompanied the transitory phase in their history? Are people responding to new opportunities and adapting child-bearing patterns toward those that prevail in Western Europe? How do relationships between generations fare? Is mutual support, monetary and otherwise, an important element in countries with faltering public- and private-sector institutions, and what role does such support play in countries with well-established and reliable systems in the public and the private sector? How valid are the common explanations of the particularly low fertility level for the “old” democracies in the Mediterranean? Why does fertility vary so greatly between neighboring countries with roughly the same political systems and economic trends, like Sweden, Norway, and Finland – can subtle differences in public policies be at play?

The questions are many; we need to get a better grip on potential answers.

2. Data availability differentials across countries

For most countries the data from the first round of European Family and Fertility Surveys (EFFS) are now about ten years old. They no longer capture current trends. Fertility theory has also developed since that first round, partly due to the information that it provided. Many new explanations cannot be tested on those old data, simply because they build on insights that were not available when the data were collected. Many countries in Central and Eastern Europe did not even participate in the EFFS or used only parts of the standard questionnaire. A new round of data collection is needed to provide basic information (or basic new information) for such countries.

Some other countries have lots of relevant data, in some cases data from specialized sample surveys, or else data based on register systems. Some such data sources provide information in a depth that a general fertility survey cannot ever expect to attain. Value surveys provide data on values and attitudes far beyond what a fertility survey can do. Time-use surveys provide data on home-chore sharing and childrearing to an extent that only a focused survey can do. Public Policy Acceptance surveys provide a wealth of data on the topics that they cover. Aging studies provide medical and health information only some of which can be captured in a broad-spectrum demographic survey. Population registers can provide wall-to-wall data coverage on childbearing and other recordable family dynamics, and in some countries such data can be combined with data from educational registers or income-tax returns and sometimes with data from the social-insurance system to provide a basis for analyses of behavioral patterns in a detail and for population groups so small that only specially directed surveys can hope to compete.

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Specialized surveys have the problem, however, that they are focused on a restricted range of topics and rarely permit investigators to study individual behavior simultaneously, or to combine observation across arenas of dynamic behavior salient to an understanding of family dynamics. They too often focus on cross-sectional description and preclude the study of dynamic interactions that develop over people's lives or over time periods. It is particularly hard to capture the two-way interaction between the development of an individual's value spectrum and his or her demographic behavior.

Information on individual values are never available in register data. It is also normally very difficult to get complete information on individual-level nonmarital-union dynamics from such a source. It is never possible to get any data on LAT relationships (LAT="living apart together"), a family arrangement that may have been around for a good while and that may be on the rise these days, though we do not know much about it.

What a new family survey can do in each country is to incorporate enough information to allow all important family living arrangements to be studied, and to capture important factors that influence individual-level demographic behavior. In particular gender-specific behavior can be studied, as can the influence that gender attitudes have on demographic dynamics, such as childbearing and union disruption risks. Conversely, the analysis of a family survey can provide insights into the impact that family behavior (childbearing, say) has on individual behavior in other arenas, for instance on employment behavior, and on occasion also on gender attitudes and individual-value developments if our cards are played right.

### 3. The Gender and Generations Programme (GGP); its national surveys (GGS), and its contextual data base

At the initiative of the Population Activities Unit of the Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE/PAU), a group of prominent demographic research institutions in Europe have formed a consortium to promote and prepare a new round of European family surveys. All countries in the UNECE region will be invited to participate.

Each national investigation is conceived as a unitary national panel survey of adult women and men at ages perhaps 18-79. The idea is to have equally many women and men in each survey, and to include people far beyond the childbearing ages, for we want to see the reproducing family in the greater framework of intergenerational relationships. We plan to study gender relations in the various countries, see how gender relations influence childbearing and family dynamics, and see how those relations in turn are influenced by demographic behavior. We plan to describe how these features are distributed across countries and to use cross-national comparisons to understand better how family mechanisms function in the diverse settings that Europe provides. It is important to us that the individual and the family should be seen as embedded in societal surroundings, therefore each national gender-and-generations programme includes a contextual data base in addition to the gender-and-generations surveys. The contextual database will contain information on family-related public policies, economic trends, childcare availability, norm composition, and other nation- and region-specific data relevant for family analyses.

The contextual database and completely anonymized data from the national surveys will be made easily available to all *bona fide* researchers.

### 4. Basic sample and questionnaire design

We plan to use a multi-wave panel design with a mix of information about current status at each wave, retrospective histories (collected mostly at Wave 1), and event histories between panel waves. As a minimum, two waves are foreseen for each national survey. The retrospective histories in Wave 1 may include individual partnership histories, childbearing- and parenthood histories, educational histories, and a modicum of respondent employment histories. Much more detailed information will be obtained about these dimensions at the time of the interview. We aim at including migration histories in Wave 2. Each wave after the first will contain updates on indi-

vidual retrospective histories covering the period since the last previous wave. In each wave we hope to obtain data on household composition, housing situation, incomes and assets, gender relations, subjective dimensions (values, norms, and attitudes), behavioral intentions, health, family and other social networks, as well as monetary transfers and other items of support in those networks and public transfers.

We aim at individual interviews averaging one hour per respondent. We currently expect about one-third of the interviewing time to be devoted to retrospective histories, one-third to subjective dimensions, and the last third to other items. This partition may change somewhat after Wave 1. We expect most of the fieldwork to occur in 2003.

#### 5. What is new?

There are several features in the GGP that were not included in the previous round of family surveys (EFFS). There is now a stronger emphasis on subjective dimensions and intentions. The panel follow-up will enable investigators to study the impact of such dimensions on demographic behavior. There is a new stress on the effects of gender equality and intergenerational relationships. Data on the demographic behavior of men will be collected much more systematically than before in order to permit more extensive analyses of gendered patterns of behavior. The extension of the age range and the data on monetary and other transfers will permit us to see the reproductive family as embedded in a larger family and social network. It will also allow us to describe how people in the upper age brackets do or do not rely on younger family members for their level of living. The investment in a contextual data bank will enable us to see the individual and the family in a societal setting and to study the impact of cultural surroundings, the economic situation, and public policies. The new emphasis on including countries in Central and Eastern Europe should give us a new angle on the influence of political and institutional developments on demographic trends. We will stress much more strongly than before the need for comparability of data across countries, and this should allow researchers to test and develop theoretical explanations in a manner that has been difficult so far.

#### 6. What is in it for countries that already have lots of data?

Demographers everywhere will benefit from the new availability of fresh comparative data in a large number of European countries. This may not be a strong enough reason for participation in the Gender and Generations Programme (GGP) for some countries that feel that they already have a sufficiency of demographic data. While considering participation demographers in such countries should study the added value that the new combination of GGP data for their own country can provide. Existing sources rarely provide data on a sufficiently broad spectrum of issues. It is hard to organize national data sets that give sufficient emphasis to the context of childbearing and other family behavior. Similarly, one can rarely study the impact of personal values, including gender values, on subsequent demographic behavior, there is usually either no simultaneous information on family and other social networks, parenting and childcare arrangements, and many other factor combinations that will be available in the GGP data.