

CHAPTER 7

MOVING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

*Gerda Neyer and Dorothea Rieck**



Rui Vale de Sousa @Fotolia

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1 - THE POLITICAL INTEREST IN DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

The fundamental demographic change in Europe has begun to attract considerable public attention in recent years. There has been a particular focus on the drop in fertility, as total fertility rates (TFR) in most of Europe have declined to levels that demographers call low (a TFR below 1.5) and lowest-low (a TFR below 1.3). As a consequence, permanent childlessness has risen and the childfree segments in women's and men's lives have expanded. At the same time, births to single mothers and to cohabiting and re-partnered couples have increased in many countries. Artificial reproductive technology is becoming a viable means of conception for many couples, which gives them an option to extend childbearing to ever higher ages and to determine the timing of childbearing more effectively at one's own choice. Childbearing patterns are thus becoming more diverse and family forms more dynamic in all European countries. International migration has increased and with it cross-border family formation and living arrangements. Same-sex partnerships and parenthood by same-sex couples have acquired legal and public recognition in many countries, which again has added to the diversity of present-day families. Together with low fertility and with smaller and more heterogeneous families, these changes are altering generational and kin relationships throughout Europe.

The persistently low period fertility has induced increasing political concern about its consequences and prompted a revival of interest in population policies at the national level. In 1986, only 10 of the now almost 50 countries in the Council of Europe¹⁸ regarded their fertility levels as too low. Six countries then stated that they had implemented measures to raise fertility and another six countries pursued policies to maintain fertility levels. By 2007, 30 countries considered their fertility levels too low, 27 Member States admitted that they had policy measures in place to increase fertility and an additional 10 had taken steps to maintain fertility at current levels (United Nations 2008). Nearly two thirds of the Member States of the Council of Europe are thus concerned about their low levels of fertility and three quarters of the countries use population policies in an attempt to increase or stabilize their fertility levels.

¹⁸ Currently, the Council of Europe has 47 members and 1 candidate for membership (Belarus).

Since the end of the twentieth century, demographic issues have come to the fore at the level of the European Union as well. Documents issued by the European Commission address the issue of low and declining birth rates in Member States¹⁹ and view it as a major challenge to Europe's future development. In line with most EU Member States, the Commission stresses the need for policies to raise fertility and regards policy interventions to increase birth rates as realistic (European Commission 2007). It proposes a wide range of policies to improve the possibilities for women and men to found a family, including financial support, improved access to housing and services, and more flexible working hours and work organization (ibid.). Since the authority to pass policies that affect childbearing behaviour directly lies mainly with the Member States, the EU links its suggestions to its employment and its gender mainstreaming agendas as specified in the Lisbon strategy, the Barcelona targets and the gender equality roadmap (European Commission 2007). EU strategies focus on the reconciliation of work and family life, primarily in order to increase female labour-force participation rates in the EU to at least 60 per cent by 2010 (European Council 2002, 12). To reach this goal they suggest an expansion of childcare provisions to offer childcare to at least 33 per cent of children under age 3 and to 90 per cent of children between age 3 and the mandatory school age by 2010 (European Council 2002: 12), an expansion of flexible working arrangements and an increase in incentives to encourage men to take parental leave (Commission of the European Communities 2006b).

Placing fertility issues within the gender and employment objectives of the EU has major implications for fertility-related policy approaches and for fertility research. It calls for a broadening of the perspectives of the policy/fertility nexus to encompass gender equality and to examine the links between gender equality, employment, care and fertility.

¹⁹ For cases in point, see the Green Paper on demographic change and the new solidarity between the generations (Commission of the European Communities 2005), the Commission's communication on the demographic future of Europe (Commission of the European Communities 2006a) and the Commission's first report on Europe's demographic future (European Commission 2007).

We take this as a starting point to explore whether gender equality in employment, care and financial resources plays a role in childbearing intentions in selected Western and Eastern European countries. We make use of the first wave of the national Generations and Gender Survey in Bulgaria, France, Germany and the Russian Federation carried out in 2004-2005. Among many other features, these data permit us to study women's and men's intentions to have a first child in the near future. Previous studies have mostly focused on Western Europe, but we have the opportunity to also include some countries in Eastern Europe. This greatly expands our possibilities to assess the general impact of gender equality on fertility. While in a Western context, one can usually assume that societies progress from less to more gender equality, women in Eastern Europe experienced considerable setbacks in gender equality

after the collapse of the State Socialist regimes (Gal and Kligman 2000a and 2000b, Funk and Mueller 1993, Moghadam 1994). In our study, we can thus attempt to elicit gender-equality impacts when we take into account different systemic developments during recent decades.

Our paper proceeds as follows. We first give a brief overview over recent studies of the relationship between gender equality, employment, financial resources, care, and fertility. This is followed by an outline of the meaning of these features in a gender context and their representation in the fertility-relevant policy orientation of Bulgaria, France, Germany and the Russian Federation. We then present the results of our analysis of the relevant relationships with a focus on childbearing intentions, and we conclude with some reflections on the policy implications of our findings.

2 - GENDER EQUALITY AND FERTILITY: SOME RESEARCH RESULTS

A number of studies related to Western European countries point to the importance of gender equality for fertility development. Policies that promote women's labour-force participation, that alleviate women's care obligations, that further fathers' uptake of parental leave and that reduce the motherhood penalty in employment are regarded as conducive to increased childbearing and improved fertility development. McDonald (2000a and 2000b) argues that cleavages in gender equity between individual-oriented social institutions (such as education or employment) and family-oriented social institutions (such as family childcare) lead to lower fertility. If women's educational attainment and labour-force participation increase to levels higher than or close to those of men, while family care primarily remains a woman's tasks, he predicts that fertility will drop to very low levels (ibid.). These theoretical assumptions are partly confirmed by empirical macro-level studies that show that the negative association between female labour-force participation and fertility has weakened over time or even changed to a positive one (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000, Ahn and Mira 2002, Engelhardt, Kögel and Prskawetz 2004, Castles 2003). These changes can be largely attributed to institutional changes, in particular to the increase in institutional childcare facilities for children under the age of three (Castles 2003) and to a concurrent defamilialization (Esping-Andersen 1999) – that is, to a shift from the family to the State as the main

provider of care and private welfare. However, there are great differences in institutional care services for children across Europe (Neyer 2003 and 2005). As a consequence, the observed change in the macro-level relationship between employment and fertility is mainly driven by change in the Nordic countries and in France. These countries have geared their social policies towards extending childcare, promoting women's employment and – particularly in the Nordic countries – towards furthering gender equality (ibid.). Studies of the relationship between employment and childbearing in these countries regularly find a positive impact of women's employment on childbearing (in that employed women have higher fertility), while the effects of employment on childbearing are mostly negative in countries that adhere to motherism, that is, whose policies endorse women as sole carers (Hoem 1993, Bernhardt 1993, Andersson 2000, Kravdal 1994, González, Jurado and Naldini 2000, Vikat 2004).

On the level of the family, greater equality in the gender division of care seems to be conducive to childbearing as well. Several studies of the Nordic countries show that fathers' engagement in childrearing increases further childbearing; couples in which the father takes some parental leave are more inclined to have another child than couples in which the father has not taken out any parental leave (Oláh 2003, Duvander and Andersson 2006, Duvander, Lappegård and Andersson 2008, Esping-

Andersen, Güell and Brodmann 2007, Brodmann, Esping-Andersen and Güell 2007). However, as Lappegård (2008) points out, the share of father's uptake of parental leave depends on the "gender balance in breadwinning". The more equal the mother's and father's incomes are and the larger the mother's contribution to the household income, the more parental leave the father takes (Lappegård 2008: 155). Just as with the changing relationship between employment and fertility, the positive impact of a father's parental leave and of his engagement in childcare on fertility is found mostly in the Nordic countries, which have actively promoted a gender-equal distribution of work and care between the partners and which have encouraged men's contribution to (unpaid) family work since the 1970s and 1980s. In countries that do not challenge the prevalence of the male-breadwinner/female-carer family organization, the findings are more ambivalent, ranging from no effects or even negative effects of gender equality to some positive effect among specific socio-economic groups (Esping-Andersen, Güell and Brodmann 2007; Mills et al 2008). In the latter countries, having a child increases the gender inequality in the distribution of time and of financial resources. After the birth of a child, fathers tend to work more than before, while mothers tend to work less or to withdraw from the labour market (Misra, Budig, and Moller 2007).

In countries that in effect support a gendered division of care and employment, women also face a greater motherhood penalty, which means that there is a greater decrease in income or in personal financial resources due to motherhood than in countries that put more store on gender equality. In fact, mothers incur the largest wage penalties in the conservative welfare states of Europe, which put the emphasis on women as primary caregivers (e.g. Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands). In the Nordic countries, France and the Eastern European countries, the motherhood penalty is considerably lower. In these countries, mothers actually do not earn much less than women without children do (Misra, Budig and Moller 2007; Misra, Budig, and Böckmann 2008).

Single-country studies indicate that policies that help women sustain their income level during employment interruption after childbirth may facilitate the decision for motherhood, while (severe) reductions of their financial resources due

to childbirth may constrain childbearing. An analysis of developments in Hungary (Aassve, Billari and Spéder 2006) showed that there was a considerable decline in first-birth intensities among highly educated women when an income-related childcare benefit of 75 per cent of a mother's previous income during her care leave²⁰ was changed to a means-tested flat rate allowance amounting to only about half of the previous childcare benefit. Similarly, Vikat, in his study of women's labour-force attachment and childbearing in Finland (2004), demonstrated that despite a severe economic crisis and high unemployment in Finland during the 1990s fertility levels did not drop. He attributed this to a home-care benefit²¹ that allowed mothers to maintain their income levels during the first years after childbirth.

Such studies allow us to draw a fairly consistent picture of the relationship between gender equality and fertility. On the macro-level, a de-gendering of labour-force participation and a de-familialization of childcare work seem to be necessary to create conditions supportive of childbearing and highest-low fertility. On the micro-level, the link between employment and childbearing appears to be largely intermediated by the institutional support offered to women. De-feminization of private care, which means a more equal distribution of care between mothers and fathers, has proven to be conducive to childbearing in countries that strive towards a gender-equal society. The fertility impacts of a more equal division of care between parents are more ambiguous in countries that support female-carer/male-breadwinner family forms or in countries that regard the distribution of care as a matter of parental choice. Finally, a lower birth penalty and the prospect of maintaining one's own financial resources after childbirth seem to further childbearing, while severe income cutbacks tend to reduce it.

²⁰ The care leave could be taken after parental leave, that is, it could start six months after the child's birth and last until its second birthday (Aassve, Billari and Spéder 2006, 135). Care leave (and also parental leave) was mostly taken by mothers (ibid.).

²¹ The Finnish home-care allowance is a benefit granted to parents who do not make use of public childcare. In the 1990s, the home-care allowance was paid on top of other benefits, such as possible unemployment benefits (Vikat 2004). While it sustained fertility levels during the crisis, it led to a considerable decline in female labor-force participation (Rønsen and Sundström 2002).

3 - EMPLOYMENT, CARE, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES FROM A GENDER AND WELFARE-STATE PERSPECTIVE

As our review of previous research indicates, fertility development in Europe seems to be increasingly tied to the gender development in employment, care support and financial resources in society and/or within the family. Employment, financial resources and care also represent different dimensions of gender equality and of welfare-state policies that regulate gender relationships in society and in the family. In all European societies, employment provides the main source of economic independence: it ensures one's own and one's family's living and grants comprehensive welfare protection over the life course. In most countries, this can only be achieved through full-time employment or through employment which secures an income on the level of full-time employment. Having a full-time employment may thus be regarded as a proxy for a person's capacity to "form and maintain an autonomous household" (Orloff 1993: 319), to assure her independent social protection and to maintain her bargaining power in a partnership. By contrast, working part-time usually implies less income, lower social-security benefits, a reduced capacity to sustain a household, and in couples with an unequal amount of paid work, a reduced bargaining power. For childless women and for men in general, working part-time may also be a sign of tenuous labour-market integration and may be accompanied by greater risks of unemployment.

The financial resources available to a person are usually seen as an indicator of her/his material standard of living. From a gender perspective, however, we can also consider them as an indicator of a person's agency – that is, of the scope of alternatives available to her, of her capabilities to choose, and of her potential to achieve well-being (Korpi 2000; 132; Sen 1992, Lister 1997). Financial resources are thus not simply a sign of possessions or of wealth, but are also an indicator of the power to act, of the capacity to participate in the active life of society, and of the potential to decide one's own life course.

Since in most countries it is women who attend to small children, care offers (e.g. institutional childcare provisions and parental leave) can be viewed as a public recognition of women's work and as the State's efforts to alleviate women's care burden. However, while institutional childcare

provisions promote gender equality by enabling mothers' employment, parental leave options may undermine gender equality if the regulations allow long leaves, grant only low (or no) benefits and are not also specifically designed to induce men/fathers to take parental leave. One can therefore regard a country's care options as a sign of the extent to which it attempts to further gender equality or to reinforce gender inequality.

European welfare states have pursued different gender strategies regarding the support that they grant women or men to maintain their own employment, sustain their independent financial resources and alleviate their care obligations or enable their care giving during parenthood (Meyers, Gornick and Ross 1999, Leitner 2003). The four countries under study (Bulgaria, France, Germany, and the Russian Federation) represent different approaches in this respect.

France has followed a strategy of choice (Misra, Budig and Böckmann 2008). It focuses on women as workers and offers comprehensive childcare to support women's full-time employment. However, it also has policies in place that allow mothers (of several children) to retreat from the labour market for a longer period of time (see Toulemon, Pailhé, and Rossier 2008: 531f). German policies, by contrast, have targeted women as carers and men as earners²². Childcare facilities for children below age 3 are rare (except in East Germany), and the German tax and parental leave policies pose(d) an incentive for married women to withdraw from the labour market or reduce their employment substantially. Prior to 1989, Bulgaria and the Russian Federation emphasized women's participation in the workforce and at the same time furthered childbearing through comprehensive population policies that included childcare services, long leave options and various in-kind and cash benefits (Koytcheva and Philipov 2008, Zakharov 2008, Rieck 2006; 2008). Since the fall of State socialism, unemployment has risen markedly,

²² As of 2007, Germany has changed its parental leave policies towards promoting women's labour force participation and father's care. Since 2005 Germany has also taken steps to improve childcare options. Since our study is based on data collected in 2005, we outline the policies relevant then.

and the financial situation of women and men has tightened. The gender and social inequality in labour force participation and in wages has increased. In the Russian Federation, childcare services were reduced considerably, and cash benefits and private care have been prioritized. In both countries, there has been a tendency to extend care leave options and emphasize maternalism (ibid.; Rostgaard 2004, Pascall and Manning 2000). Despite differences in employment, care and financial support policies,

up to 2005 in all the countries under study, there had been no concerted efforts made to change gender relationships towards gender equality in employment, care and financial resources. Given the changes in women's social and economic situation (e.g. through changes in women's and men's labour force participation), we expect that this may have a bearing on the fertility intentions voiced by women and men in these countries.

4 - GENDER EQUALITY AND FERTILITY INTENTIONS: FINDINGS FROM THE GENERATIONS AND GENDER SURVEY

For our analysis of the impact of employment, care and financial resources on women's and men's intentions to have a first child in the near future, we make use of the harmonized data sets of wave 1 of the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS1) in Bulgaria, France, Germany and the Russian Federation. The data sets were provided by Population Unit of UNECE for its conference on "How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change" (Geneva, 14–16 May 2008). The fieldwork of GGS1 was carried out in 2004 (Bulgaria and the Russian Federation) and 2005 (France and Germany). All Generations and Gender Surveys are expected to use a standardized questionnaire that guarantees comparability across countries (Vikat et al. 2007, United Nations 2005, 2007)²³.

GGS1 was specifically designed to capture the social, economic, and institutional aspects of gender and generational relationships on the individual and kinship levels. It contains detailed information on individual fertility and family histories and on intentions regarding demographic events for women and men alike. It is therefore particularly well suited for the study of the impact of gender equality on fertility.

We make use of a series of survey questions on the respondents' intentions to have a child within the next three years (as of the interview date). GGS1 also asks what effect childbearing would have on various aspects of the respondent's (and her or his partner's) personal life and whether the decision to have a child would depend on any of these aspects.

By limiting the questions on the respondent's fertility intentions to a foreseeable time period and by embedding it in questions about what would influence her/his fertility decision, GGS1 overcomes some of the problems associated with the surveying of intentions. Answers to questions about an individual's fertility intentions in general (e.g. "How many children do you intend to have (i.e., ever)?") are likely to capture a social norm as well, i.e. the number of children the individual thinks she/he should have rather than will have. Such general questions therefore render findings that confound intentions and social norms, and this may be (partially) avoided by the more concrete question used in the GGS. Moreover, questions about intentions that are not contextualized tend to relate to a rather abstract ideal universe and do not elicit the conditions that either constrain or support the realization of the reported intention. Questions about intentions that cover an overseeable time period and that therefore are "in close temporal proximity to the prospective behaviour" (Ajzen and Fishbein 1973: 49) are generally considered to be the better predictors of actual behaviour. The same applies if determinants and perceived consequences of the intended behaviour are taken into consideration (Ajzen 1991). They offer the possibility of assessing which personal or contextual circumstances are crucial in the decision to carry out the intended action.

As mentioned, we concentrate on women's and men's intentions to have a first child within the next three years (i.e., three years following the GGS1). We focus on the influence that employment, care options and financial resources have in shaping this intention. We have chosen to study the impact of employment, care options and financial resources

²³ A detailed documentation of the Generations and Gender Programme, including guidelines, concepts, survey instruments and of GGP-related conferences, can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/pau/ggp>

because, as outlined, they are indicators of one's capacity to maintain one's own household and family, to acquire independent social protection and to retain one's bargaining power and one's agency. As regards care, they are an indicator of one's reliance on the State or on one's partner. We have furthermore chosen to look at the intention to have a first child because the birth of the first child is one of the most crucial events relevant to gender equality. Women's childbearing (and women's reproductive potential) has always been an anchor point for engendering and maintaining gender inequality (Pateman 1989, Wikander et al. 1995). Often the birth of the first child, more so than the birth of subsequent children, constitutes a turning point in the gender division and gender distribution of employment, care and financial resources. We may therefore expect that women and men assess such features differently when they consider having a child. We have therefore carried out our analyses separately for women and men. For each gender, we have employed logistic regressions with the intention to have a first child within the next three years as the dependent outcome. As explanatory variables, we have included the respondent's age and her/his family status and living arrangement. We have restricted a woman's age to being under 40 and a man's to under 45, as there are very few women and men who intend to have a first child beyond these ages. To get a picture of the main gender-equality factors related to fertility intentions and to avoid very small data sets, we pooled the data for the four countries in most of our analysis, but to be on the safe side we have also carried out separate analyses for each country to account for country specificities. The pooled data sets for women and for men contain 2.447 and 3.001 cases, respectively.

4.1 Country differences, age and family status

As expected, women and men in France and Germany have much lower intentions to have a first child within the next three years than women in Bulgaria and The Russian Federation, *ceteris paribus* (table 52). The higher intention rates in Bulgaria and the Russian Federation correspond to the universal childbearing in these two countries; almost all Bulgarian and Russian women and men become parents and they still do so at a comparatively young age (Kesseli 2007, Rieck 2008, Frejka et al. 2008). When the four countries are taken together, women are most likely to consider motherhood between ages 25 and 35, while younger and older women

tend much less to want to become mothers. Men have a somewhat greater span in which they plan first fatherhood, namely between ages 25 and 40. We find remarkable gender differentials in parenthood intentions by family status. Among women who live in a union, marital status does not seem to matter much for their childbearing intentions; cohabiting women do not have significantly lower intentions of becoming mothers than married women do. By contrast, men in consensual unions are noticeably less inclined to become fathers in the near future than married men are. Not surprisingly, childbearing intentions were lowest for women and men who did not have a partner at the time of the interview.

4.2 Employment

As has been pointed out, in order to use employment as an indicator of whether a person can afford to form and maintain a household independently of the support of a partner, we differentiate between full-time, part-time and no employment when we look at the relationship between employment and the intention to have a first child within the next three years. Following Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) suggestions, we furthermore consider the importance that the respondent attributes to her/his own work in the decision to have a child by including the response to two additional questions, namely: "How much would having a child within the next three years affect your employment opportunities?" and "How much would the decision to have a child within the next three years depend on your work?"

Our analysis shows that women who are in full-time employment are much more likely to intend to have a child than women who are in part-time work, who are not employed, or who are in education. For men, the activity status is much less important for their childbearing intentions: men in full-time work are somewhat more inclined to become fathers than those who work part-time or are not employed, but the results are less pronounced and not significant (table 53). What is furthermore surprising is the fact that women who work part-time show the same reservations about becoming mothers as women without employment do. (The same may be said for men; however, the results for men are not significant.) Full-time employment seems to be a precondition for women (and men) to intend to have a child. Part-time work or non-employment appears to entail a greater risk for women than it does for men as far as the intention to have a first child is concerned. If, as suggested, full-time employment

Table 52

Intention to have a first child within the next three years among childless women and men (odds ratio)

	Women		Men	
Country				
Bulgaria	1.20		2.09	***
Russian Federation	1		1	
Germany	0.40	***	0.61	***
France	0.37	***	0.71	***
Marital status and living arrangement				
Living apart together	0.40	***	0.35	***
Cohabiting (not married)	0.80		0.67	**
Married	1		1	
No partner	0.23	***	0.27	***
Respondent's age				
< 20	0.22	***	0.24	***
20 < 25	0.45	***	0.48	***
25 < 30	1		1	
30 < 35	1.40	*	1.10	
35 < 40	0.43	***	0.86	
40 < 45			0.44	***
N=	2,447		3,001	

Notes: (1) *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

(2) Missing values are not shown but were controlled for

Source: authors' estimation based on the Generation and Gender Surveys

can be regarded as an indicator of the possibility to maintain one's own household and to retain one's bargaining power vis-à-vis a partner, then the results show clearly that for women being able to support themselves (and their child) and to retain their independence has become a prerequisite for motherhood in the four countries in our analysis.

This interpretation is further confirmed by the results regarding the effects a child would have on the respondent's employment situation. Women and men who expect negative consequences from childbearing on their work are much less likely to intend to have a child in the near future than those who think that parenthood would have no effect, or even a positive effect, on their employment situation (table 53). These results should be seen in the light of the gender distribution of the expected consequences of parenthood: The vast majority of women, namely two thirds, fear that having a child would impair their employment opportunities, while only a quarter of the sampled men have reported this concern. Only about 30 per cent of the women

expect that motherhood would have no effect on their employment situation as compared to 66 per cent of the men. Men who believe that becoming a father would improve their work situation (about 9 per cent of all interviewed men) are about twice as inclined to intend to have a child within the upcoming years as those who do not expect any impact of fatherhood on their work. The 4 per cent of the female respondents who think that a child would improve their employment opportunities do not differ much in their childbearing intentions from those women who do not expect any consequences of motherhood on their work. From a gender perspective, these results show that considerable differences still exist between women and men in the (perceived) implications of motherhood and fatherhood vis-à-vis their employment situation. However, there are essentially no differences as to the consequences of these implications for their fertility intentions. For both men and women, the possibility of maintaining or even improving their employment opportunities after becoming a parent is essential in order to intend having a

Table 53

Intention to have a first child within the next three years among childless women and men (odds ratio)

	Women		Men	
Activity status of respondent				
Employed (full-time)	1		1	
Employed (part-time)	0.61	**	0.80	
Not employed/in education	0.62	***	0.88	
Effect of having a child on employment				
Better	1.09		2.05	***
Neither/nor	1		1	
Worse	0.51	***	0.58	***
Dependence of decision to have a child on work				
Not at all	0.85		1.12	
A little	1		1	
A lot	0.62	***	0.80	***
Activity status of partner				
Employed	1		1	
Not employed/in education	1.07		0.95	
Effect of having a child on partner's employment				
Better	1.40		3.36	***
Neither/nor	1		1	
Worse	0.43	***	0.83	
Dependence of decision to have a child on partner's work				
Not at all	1.10		1.15	
A little	1		1	
A lot	0.81		0.80	
N=	2,447		3,001	

Notes: (1) *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

(2) Controlled for marital status, age of respondent, and country

(3) Missing values are not shown but were controlled for

Source: authors' estimation based on the Generation and Gender Surveys

child, while negative labour market prospects due to childbearing decrease intentions to have a first child in the near future considerably.

The importance that women and men attribute to their employment with respect to their fertility intentions is further underlined by their answers to the question of whether their intention to have or not have a child would depend on their work. There is not really much difference between those who reported that their intention to have a child within the next three years is not influenced at all by their work situation and those who believe that their decision depends on their situation only to a small extent, although women and men tend to lean in different directions on this issue. Women

who say that their work has no importance for their childbearing intentions (about one quarter of all women) tend to show a somewhat reduced intention to have a child (as compared to women who report that employment issues play a slight role in their decision-making processes). Conversely, men who claim that their employment situation is irrelevant to their fertility intentions (about one third of all men) are somewhat more inclined to intend to have a child (than men who say that their intentions for fatherhood depend only a little on employment aspects). By contrast, both women and men who say that their intentions whether to become a parent strongly depend on their employment situation (nearly half of all women and about 45 per

cent of all men) are much the less likely to intend to have a child. The effect is in fact stronger among women than among men (table 53, panel 3). As with the results on the impact of employment and the expected effects of childbearing on employment, this confirms that employment has become an essential factor in women's considerations about whether to become a mother. The findings also indicate that women realize that their employment situation may become (and most often does become) more volatile with childbearing. To a greater extent than men, women consider their work when they weigh whether to have a child and, viewing parenthood from the employment perspective, this reduces their childbearing intentions to a greater extent than it does for men.

For respondents who have a partner, we also examined whether the partner's employment plays a role in the respondent's own childbearing intentions. As table 53 shows (panel 4), the partner's activity status has no visible impact on the intention to have a child within the next three years. (The intention of respondents whose partner currently is not employed does not differ markedly from those whose partner currently is employed.²⁴) The same can be said of the importance that the partner's work is reported to have on the respondent's own fertility intentions. Respondents (both women and men) who state that their childbearing intentions depend a lot on the partner's employment show somewhat lower intentions to have a first child than those for whom the partner's employment is said to be of minor influence. Those for whom the partner's employment is irrelevant for the decision to have a child are somewhat more inclined to have a child in the near future. In neither case is the finding significant, however. By contrast, the effect that parenthood could have on the partner's employment seems to have a significant influence on childbearing intentions – and with partly deviating effects for women and men (table 53, panel 5): Women who state that having a child would worsen their partner's employment opportunities, are much less inclined to intend to have a child than those who do not expect any consequences of family formation on

their partner's employment. Women who think that their partner's employment situation will improve by becoming a father tend to be somewhat more inclined to become mothers, although the result is not significant. Among men, negative consequences for their partner's employment seem to impact on their intention to have a child in the next three years only marginally (and non-significantly). Yet if they expect an improvement for their partner's employment, the odds of their intending to have a child more than triple. There are, however, only a small number of men (7 per cent) who think that their partner's work opportunities will improve with childbearing; the majority of men (54 per cent) expect that their partner's employment situation will worsen. By contrast, among women, the vast majority (77 per cent) sees their partner's work situation as untouched by childbearing and 12 per cent expect that their partner's employment will improve with fatherhood.

Similar to the assessment that women and men have of the relationship between their own employment situation and childbearing, they also seem to have a rather realistic picture of the effect of childbearing on their partner's employment (given the gender differences in impact of childbearing on women's and men's employment reported by other studies). But women and men draw different consequences from their assessment. Women seem rather to abstain from intending to have their first child in the next three years if they expect negative impacts of childbearing on their own and their partner's employment. Men's childbearing intentions seem to be less affected by potentially negative outcomes of motherhood for their partner's employment. The fact that a man's intention to have a child in the near future decreases markedly if he expects negative consequences for his own work, but that his intention does neither decline much nor significantly if he expects negative impacts of childbearing on his partner's employment, may reflect a gendered attitude to work: men may perhaps regard negative consequences of childbearing on women's work as the "normal" costs of childbearing for women.

4.3 Financial situation

We consider the financial situation as a proxy for women's and men's agency, that is, for their capability to pursue goals which they value (Sen 1992). For both women and men, the financial situation plays a considerable role in their intentions to have a

²⁴ In our regressions we have included (a) the respondent's and the partner's employment, (b) the respondent's views on the effect of childbearing on her/his own and (c) on the partner's employment and (d) her/his views on the dependence of her/his and the partner's childbearing decision on employment, all in a single model in order to control for these factors mutually.

first child within the next three years (table 54). If childbearing is expected to worsen their financial situation, women and men are much less inclined to intend to become parents than if they expect no impact on their financial situation. A foreseen aggravation of their financial situation reduces women's childbearing intentions even somewhat more than men's. It should be noted that about two thirds of women and men alike expect that childbearing will depress their financial situation. Men who think that their financial situation will improve with fatherhood are much more inclined to have a child in the next three years than those who do not expect any consequences. Women seem to be much more reserved; there is only a slight tendency toward increased childbearing intentions if they expect the financial situation to improve, and the result is not significant.

Women and men who state that their decision to have a child within the next three years would depend a lot on their financial situation (about half of all women

and men, separately) are less inclined to have a child than those who feel that their childbearing decisions depend on their financial situation only to some extent (table 54, panel 2). Although the results are not significant, men for whom their financial situation has no influence on their childbearing decisions tend slightly more towards fatherhood than those for whom the financial situation does not play a great role in their deliberation about having or not having a child. Women who say that their financial situation is irrelevant for their childbearing show slightly lowered intentions compared to those who make their childbearing decisions somewhat dependent on their financial situation. For women and men alike, the prospect of impairing their financial situation through parenthood severely lowers their intentions to have a first child in the next three years. This implies that, both for women and for men, maintaining their living standard and their agency (measured in terms of maintaining their financial standard) seems to be crucial for their childbearing intentions.

Table 54

Financial situation and childbearing intentions:

intention to have a first child within the next three years among childless women and men (odds ratio)

	Women		Men	
Effect of having a child on financial situation				
Better	1.28		1.81	***
Neither/nor	1		1	
Worse	0.45	***	0.52	***
Dependence of the decision to have a child on financial situation				
Not at all	0.78		1.10	
A little	1		1	
A lot	0.75	**	0.79	***
N =	2,447		3,001	

Notes: (1) *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

(2) Controlled for marital status, age of respondent, and country

(3) Missing values are not shown but were controlled for

Source: authors' estimation based on the Generation and Gender Surveys

4.4 Care options and fertility intentions

As regards care options, we have examined two possibilities. First, GGS1 allows us to assess whether the opportunity to go on parental or care leave has an impact on the intention to have a first child (again, within three years after the interview). We must take into account, however, that the question

may have different connotations for women and men. Since parental leave regulations for women have been in place in all four countries for several decades, the question posed to women may pick up aspects of an entitlement to parental leave, such as the fulfilment of employment or of income requirements. This may be different for men. Due

to the EU Directive on parental leave²⁵, fathers in the EU are also entitled to parental leave (of at least three months). Parental leave options for fathers are also part of national family policies in the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, only a minority of fathers have made use of the opportunity to go on parental leave (for more than very short periods of time) in any of the four countries that we have examined²⁶. For men, the question concerning the impact of parental leave opportunities on their intentions to have a child may thus indicate their willingness to devote some time to childcare and may signal a step towards a changing perception of fatherhood and greater gender equality in family issues.

Second, while we are able to investigate whether the availability of childcare affects childbearing intentions, we cannot distinguish between different types of childcare, e.g. institutional care or private care. Nevertheless, the question offers the possibility of assessing the significance that women and men attribute to having some assistance in and relief from childcare obligations.

As table 55 reveals, the opportunity to go on parental leave has no visible effect on women's and men's intentions to become a parent within the next three

years. The intentions of women and men who state that their decision to have a child in the near future depends a lot on the possibility of taking parental leave do deviate much from those who say they pay only little attention to parental leave options in their fertility considerations. The same applies to those who do not pay any attention to parental leave options when considering having a child (table 55, panel 1).

The results are quite different as regards the availability of childcare. Women and men who declare that their childbearing decisions depends a lot on the availability of childcare are much less inclined to plan a first child within the next three years than those for whom childcare availability is of less or no importance. Women who attribute great significance to the availability of childcare are even somewhat more hesitant to have a first child than the respective men are. These results suggest that those women and men who may depend on the availability of childcare (i.e. those who say childcare is of great significance for their decision to have a child) may have some doubts about whether the childcare that they need or seek is actually available.

5 - CONCLUSIONS: MOVING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

This study has taken the recent suggestions by the EU that Governments should implement policies to increase fertility as a starting point to explore the relationship between fertility intentions and gender equality. We have concentrated on aspects of gender equality that correspond to the EU goals of the Lisbon agenda and to the EU roadmap to gender equality, namely gender equality in employment, care and financial resources. For our explorations, we have chosen a life-course event that often marks a turning point from more to less gender equality – the birth of the first child – and looked at the impact of employment, care and financial resources on

women's and men's intentions to have a first child in the near future. The results of our study underline the importance of employment, care and financial security for fertility decisions of women and men as well as the greater weight that women put to most of these issues in their fertility intentions.

Women who have only a part-time job or no employment at all are much less inclined to have a child in the near future than women who have a full-time job. A precarious employment situation (part-time work or no employment) seems to have a less strong effect on men's intentions to become a father. Negative employment prospects associated with childbearing reduce fertility intentions significantly, for women and men alike. However, men hardly lower their fertility intentions if they expect that a child would impair their partner's employment situation, while women seem to abstain from childbearing intentions if they expect negative consequences for their partner's work. In general, women who have a potentially risky employment situation (part-time work or no employment), pay a lot of attention to their work in their fertility decisions and expect

²⁵ Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave, concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC (OJL 145, June 19, 1996, 4-9).

²⁶ Since 2002, France has a statutory paternal leave which grants father the possibility to take an 11-day leave. About 60 per cent of fathers have made use of it (Toulemon, Pailhé and Rossier 2007: 541). In Germany, fathers' use of parental leave has increased substantially after the recent amendment of the parental leave regulations, which reserve two non-transferable months of the parental leave to the either the father or the mother.

Table 55

Care options and childbearing:
intention to have a first child within the next three years among childless women and men (odds ratio)

	Women	Men
Dependence of childbearing on opportunity to go on parental/childcare leave		
Not at all	1.07	0.92
A little	1	1
A lot	1.04	0.87
Dependence of childbearing on availability of childcare		
Not at all	1.07	1.12
A little	1	1
A lot	0.64	0.74
N=	2,447	3,001

Notes: (1) *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$

(2) Controlled for marital status, age of respondent, and country

(3) Missing values are not shown but were controlled for

Source: author's estimation based on the Generation and Gender Surveys

negative impacts of motherhood on their own or their partner's work are much less likely to consider a first child in the near future than those with a full-time job. The same applies to those women who do not expect negative consequences of childbearing for their work and do not make their fertility decisions dependent on their work situation. However, positive prospects of employment do not raise women's fertility intentions. Men, by contrast, tend to be encouraged to consider a child if they expect a positive impact of parenthood on their or their partner's work situation.

Retaining their financial situation after the birth of a child seems to be a crucial element in women's and men's consideration to have a child. Both react with strongly reduced fertility intentions if they expect their financial situation to worsen or if their financial situation plays a great role in their fertility decisions. As with the employment situation, women hardly increase their fertility intentions if they expect a positive effect of childbearing on their financial situation. Men, however, react with highly elevated fertility intentions if they expect that having a child will improve their financial situation.

The opportunity to go on parental leave or care leave does not affect women's childbearing intentions of the near future, nor do we find any discernable effect on men, which would signal that the possibility of active fatherhood (and greater

gender equality in care) affects their childbearing intentions. The availability of childcare, however, seems to influence childbearing plans: Both women and men who state that their intentions to have a child in the next three years depend heavily on the availability of childcare are much less likely to plan a child than those for whom childcare availability is of no or little importance.

Although our study is only a first attempt to explore the relationship between gender and fertility and more in-depth research is needed to back policy conclusions, there are some indications as to which directions fertility-related policies should take. Having a job that allows one to maintain a household and retain one's agency and also sustains one's financial resources seems to be essential for women and men to consider having a child in the near future. So does the availability of childcare. Given that these aspects seem to be even more essential for women than for men, this does not only call for policies that strengthen women's and men's employment and financial situations, but for policies that strengthen women's employment and financial resources vis-à-vis men. This clearly calls into question policy strategies that aim at easing part-time options for women as a route to increase fertility, at least as far as the transition to parenthood is concerned. It rather calls for a shift in employment policies with a focus on gender equality from the perspective of childcare.

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