

C H A P T E R 8

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Sustainable responses to policy challenges require that the causes and consequences of demographic developments are understood and explained. The Conference on “How Generations and Gender Shape Demographic Change” served as a forum for discussions of both policy issues and research contributions. Panel discussions took place in seven sessions, which are summarized below.

In the opening session, Estonia informed the audience about its family policy framework established in 2000. Its key features include equal opportunities for families with and without children; equal distribution of financial, psychological and

time burden between partners; and equal rights to participate in work and family. The objectives of this Estonian policy include raising the level of knowledge and awareness of society in the area of children- and family-related problems, supporting research (including the GGP) and analysis of the most recent developments. In the other intervention, Ukraine reflected on recent challenges such as rapid population ageing, a decreasing life expectancy and migration. A recent initiative, “Rebirth for Ukraine”, aims to improve conditions for families who decide to have children, and especially those with several children who are more likely to live in poverty.

PANEL DISCUSSION A: VERY LOW BIRTH RATES

In the interplay of changes in intergenerational and gender relationships, several demographic trends of recent decades have implications on public policy. These include the concern about very low birth rates that many countries in the UNECE region are witnessing. The decline of fertility to very low levels in countries of Southern Europe in the 1980s and in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s has raised concerns, as the continuation of such patterns could lead to marked population decline and could greatly magnify the challenges posed by population ageing in the future.

The policy statements and case studies from Estonia and Slovenia illustrated the pivotal question of low birth rates, highlighting the challenges that low birth rates are posing in many areas. In both countries, the reproduction of the national population became one of the most important topics in public debates in the early 1990s. Slovenia brought up the issue of how birth rates could be increased and which alternative structural reforms could support this aim. It became apparent that a single type of population policy cannot fit all countries. The differences between the member States would rather require policies that take into account the individual regions' characteristics. Therefore, Estonia argued for more research on the topic of low fertility rates despite positive developments following its recent family-friendly measures.

The research results presented in this session cast light on several questions posed by policymakers, such as the reasons why healthy couples cannot realize their fertility intentions. What is preventing healthy couples who want to have children from

having the number of children they wish? The expressed intentions to have children can help researchers identify the reasons. The answers to these questions can help us identify the relevant groups of people who are unable to realize their wishes and enable us to address and support them by policy measures strengthening their reproductive potential. Given their combination of prospective and retrospective approaches, the GGS data can lead to important insights on these issues.

Results from two consecutive panel waves allow analysing the relationship between expressed intentions to have children (wave 1) and their subsequent realization (wave 2). Different socio-economic factors were identified that distinguish individuals who are successful in their realization of childbirth and those that are not. On the one hand, women above 30 years of age, cohabiting couples as compared to married ones, and women with less education are less likely to fulfil their child wish (BUL). On the other hand, men with lower education and both women and men enrolled in studies are more likely to fulfil them. Thus, fertility intentions can be informative for the construction of policies related to the needs of children and families. To promote the realization of childbearing intentions in Bulgaria, policymakers may consider supporting an earlier completion of desired education level and provisions that enable becoming a parent during studies.

Presented research also showed the usefulness of cross-national comparison in addressing access to contraception and infertility treatments and their variation across countries with different health

policies. When couples have good access to and are well informed about contraceptive methods, they can more efficiently plan the number of children and the timing of their birth they wish to have. Difficulties in conceiving children due to medical problems can disturb these intentions. Sometimes people fail to realize their intentions without medical assistance and the time to pregnancy increases. Infertility treatments are more frequently used by women

who are close to the end of the reproductive age-span (BUL, DEU) and have higher incomes (DEU). Furthermore, women are more likely to obtain fertility treatments than men (GEO, RUS). The use of contraceptive methods and infertility treatments varies across countries. However, all the countries included in this analysis (BUL, DEU, GEO, RUS) show relatively high risk for unexpected pregnancies and mistimed pregnancies.

PANEL DISCUSSION B: REALITIES OF PARENTHOOD AND CHILDBEARING

With regard to the issues of parenthood and childbearing, Slovenia highlighted the need to exchange good practices to improve support to family and parenthood. The Slovenian representative focused on the family as the primary unit of society and as the most essential context for intergenerational relations, not replaceable by any other institution. Several countries presented a wide range of recently adopted social measures which aim to better support families with children (CZE, DEU, FRA, ROU). Germany introduced a parental allowance in order to reduce family poverty. Recently, it introduced the deduction of expenses for household-related services from taxable income. The Czech Republic introduced a new system of parental allowance that enables parents to choose from three options according to their needs. Furthermore, flexible employment arrangements were implemented, e.g. the creation of part-time jobs and tax relief for employers who provide early childcare for their employees. In Romania, families with many children, families with disabled children as well as single-parent families benefit from additional allowances complementing the basic children's allowance. In addition, Romania offers a wide range of other social services for families and children, including different types of financial aid for education and care services for children.

The policy statements suggested that the decrease in birth rate has similar causes in Central and Eastern European countries: women's emancipation and their participation in the labour market, modern contraception methods, long stays in education, an increase in social mobility and the new socio-economic realities in countries in transition.

Research has identified a trend towards individualization and pluralization of living arrangements in Europe. Although the family remains the central institution for realizing solidarity

between generations, this change of family patterns challenges recent family policies. The presented analyses of GGS data focused on the transition to the second child in partnerships of different types in the Russian Federation, and second-nest parents in a cross-national comparison. Both contributions reaffirmed the above-mentioned trends.

The analysis of data from the Russian Federation deduced two crucial tendencies. It revealed attitudes that did not support traditional social institutions, which was reflected, among others, in the decline in marriage rates. Furthermore, it showed that fertility intentions of married couples have long been higher and more stable than those of unmarried couples. However, evidence for the most recent cohorts puts the latter under question. Hence, family policy in the Russian Federation is facing the dilemma of whether to enhance the advantage of marriage and promote traditional social norms or to grant unmarried couples the same legal basis as married ones. Support to unmarried couples should improve opportunities to raising children in such unions and should support the individual freedom of lifestyle choice.

A cross-national comparison of family-related norms, values and behaviours focused on second-nest parents. To elicit the specific characteristics of these second-nest fathers or mothers and their partners, the relationship with their first-nest children and the probability and frequency of this family constellation, GGS data from Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Germany and the Russian Federation were analysed. The phenomenon of second-nest fathers is still relatively rare but most likely on the increase. Second-nest fathers tend to have a young, childless female partner with a migration background. Second-nest mothers are more often less educated. Second-nest parents show the characteristic of a less traditional view on union behaviour.

Second-nest parenthood is considered to be mainly a problem of men. Data revealed that second-nest fathers have lower contacts with first-nest children than one nest parents. Furthermore, the respective satisfaction of second-nest fathers and children is below average. Therefore, children of divorced parents tend to have difficulties in union formation

and family-building as they are confronted with disturbed parental role models and may suffer from conflicts with half-brothers and half-sisters. Maintaining and promoting solidarity between generations in the context of recent developments was seen as a crucial policy challenge for the future.

PANEL DISCUSSION C: WALKING THE TIGHTROPE OF CAREER AND FAMILY

Finding a desired balance between work and family life entails difficult choices, which frequently require making sacrifices such as having fewer children than intended or giving up a career. Public policy can reduce barriers to parenting and employment, and many countries have embarked on such measures with the general objective of enhancing their citizens' well-being.

In order to facilitate the reconciliation of family and work, parents in Romania have the right to a maternity and parental leave and they may also ask their employers for financial childcare support. Germany's new family policy aims at higher birth rates and better reconciliation of work and family life. For this purpose, the German Government has set up a competence centre, which measures and compares the effects of family-related services and benefits on an international basis and suggests changes. Several countries are increasing the number of care places (DEU, FRA, LTU) and promoting corporate childcare schemes to encourage companies to offer family-friendly services (DEU, FRA). The Czech Republic is currently planning incentives to support flexible forms of employment that are presently not widespread. To make the reconciliation of family and work easier, two countries reported that they are seeking strong cooperation with all partners (e.g. companies, associations, churches, foundations, municipalities) at different levels (DEU, FRA). Much emphasis was also placed on the encouragement of men to take up family responsibilities and the importance of changing stereotypical attitudes concerning the role of men in society (DEU, LTU).

The policy statements indicated that walking the tightrope of career and family is a complex task that needs support from a variety of institutions and partners at different levels. UNECE member States have made great efforts to introduce different initiatives aiming at the reconciliation of employment and family, which is considered a key issue for realization of birth intentions. However,

research suggests that the same policies might have different effects in different countries. Therefore, the efficiency of measures should be monitored (DEU). The following deliberations on research results emphasized the importance of using and expanding the knowledge base to improve implementation of policies and their subsequent monitoring.

One of the more pressing questions is how institutional frameworks and gender attitudes influence employment positions and the wages of men and women. For example, both France and the Russian Federation have high rates of female paid employment and both support gender equality in law, but gender equality in the two respective labour markets differs markedly. How can this be explained? The research presented is based on the assumption that the State and employers can reduce the costs incurred to the parents by providing childcare and flexible time arrangements at work. On the other hand, gender inequalities can be reinforced by more traditional attitudes towards gender roles in the family and less women-friendly family policy. Thus, apart from institutional help, the State should foster gender equality at the institutional level as well as at the level of norms, values and behaviours.

A key question is how and to what extent female employment and motherhood can be seen as competing activities. Research has identified a trend that children decrease the labour supply of mothers in France and the Russian Federation, but in different ways. The negative effect of small children on female labour participation is stronger in the Russian Federation than in France. Furthermore, gender attitudes influence labour supply decisions especially of women in both countries. Hence, the support of traditional and conservative gender attitudes may hinder female employment. The research shows a tendency for the Russian Federation and other former socialist economies to support traditional gender attitudes, which in turn may inhibit female employment due to the internal

conflict between the mother's role and the need to work.

Further research examined why intentions to have children might not have been fully realized. Analysis of Bulgarian data focused in particular on gender-related labour market effects and on child-related benefits in the effort to identify the reasons behind this non-realization of intentions. Research has pointed out that a person's age, partnership status and partnership duration all influence the probability of having children. Younger couples at early stages of partnership are more likely to realize their birth intentions. The research evidence also shows that for individuals already in the labour market, becoming parents is comparatively more

difficult then for those who are out of the labour market. Furthermore, working women with medium to high earnings tend to have the lowest rate of realization of birth intentions. The situation is even more complicated if a mother intends to have another child. The highest chance of fulfilling the wish to have children is among those who are on maternity leave at the time of interview.

Policies promoting labour market flexibility, formal day care beyond kindergarten, parental leave and gender equality in the labour market could improve the reconciliation of family and work and give couples the opportunity to fulfil their wish to have children. Thus, the dual goals of increasing employment and fertility rates could be achieved.

PANEL DISCUSSION D: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS BY INTEGRATING YOUNG PEOPLE

Concerning the integration of young people, the United Nations Population Fund presented findings of its Youth Policy Review "Counting on Youth", which was undertaken in 2006 and 2007 to enhance and enrich the knowledge base about young people. The study showed that only a few young individuals appear to be concerned with core demographic issues such as fertility intentions and stable union formation. There was general assent that children and marriage were eventually desired, but were far from the minds of the young people. In contrast, young people are very concerned about work opportunities, education and mobility. Moreover, a serious lack of youth participation has been observed. The isolation of many relevant institutions such as ministries and international organizations from youth policy development is considered to be a barrier for the integration and participation of young people in society, which can have implications for intergenerational solidarity.

In today's Europe, young people are facing manifold challenges. Their specific situation was illustrated by focusing on transition to adulthood in the Czech Republic. Further research analysed the trends in family formation among young people in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and the Russian Federation. The findings show that the economic situation has worsened in many of these countries, which contributes to delaying of family formation.

Special attention was given to recent developments in the formation of marital and non-marital unions

in those countries. Decline in and postponement of marriages, increase in cohabitation and non-marital births, decline in fertility and postponement of childbearing could be discerned in all these countries. These trends can mostly be ascribed to the change of family-related norms and values, while having unique features in each country.

An important marker of transition to adulthood is the shift from economic dependence and participation in the family of origin to economic independence and the establishment of a partnership and a family. In this sense, leaving the parental home and establishing one's own household signifies an important change in both the living conditions and life experiences of young adults. When do young people leave home? Which determinants affect this process and the reasons for leaving home? What role do the questions of appropriate housing and of housing affordability play in the context of housing-related policies throughout the period of economic transition?

In this regard, research has identified several factors. Educated young people with more than one sibling or who live with a step-parent tend to leave the parental home earlier than their counterparts. In addition, the common trend was observed that men tend to stay in the parental home longer than women. The current status of partnership, age and economic activity are key factors in the decision-making process of young people in terms of whether to leave the parental home or not. In

addition to the objective indicators, the opinions of peers and important others also play a major role in the decision.

One of the emerging trends in the young generation is the postponement of family formation and childbearing. In the past, leaving the parental home was closely related to getting married and having children. Under socialism, early family formation was even favoured by the State through subsidized housing for young families, although the shortage of housing remained a crucial obstacle in this process. After the transition, the problem

of housing affordability arose and superseded the formerly existing problem of housing availability. The large-scale owner-occupied housing market might be one reason for the postponement of family formation and childbearing among lower income groups. Thus, housing policies should take the challenges presented to young people into account. Youth policies solely focusing on employment and education are insufficient. Policies fostering rental housing instead of supporting owner-occupied housing is considered to be one way of reducing barriers for young people's independence.

PANEL DISCUSSION E: IN THE AGE OF OLD AGE

Challenges rising from an ageing population and examples how policies can improve older persons' quality of life were addressed in this session. In Greece, policy responses to current demographic challenges include prolongation of active life by means of health improvement and lifelong learning. In Finland, a national framework for high-quality services for older people with an emphasis on health promotion and preventive services has been introduced to mainstream ageing into all society functions. This should help older people remain independent and productive for as long as possible. In addition, Finland stressed the necessity to increase informal home and community care over institutional care in order to enable older persons to live independent and meaningful lives in their own homes and in a familiar environment. Furthermore, age-based public transport is another element encouraging them to remain active and play a role in everyday life. There was consensus that ageing should not be seen as a problem, but as an opportunity and a challenge.

The need of reinforcing gerontological expertise was also emphasized. Research focused on various facets of current challenges arising from an ageing population. Attention was paid to intergenerational relations as well as the pivotal role of health and education in the context of active ageing.

The strength of intergenerational relations is strictly connected to the frequency of family contacts between generations. Factors such as geographic proximity and relationship quality are important characteristics of such contact. To a certain extent, health and disability also affect the frequency of the relations. In both France and Germany, where these issues were studied, intergenerational relations

appeared to be strong. This strength can be expressed either through co-residence or through regular contact between parents and adult children living separately. Both types of family relationships are partly able to guarantee social integration and alleviate loneliness.

Generally speaking, there is not much room for policy intervention when looking at contacts between generations, as these are more personal than public. Poor health of the grandparents' generation might be related to a certain distance between them and their children. Hence, public policies such as financial assistance or health policies that pay special attention to older persons may eventually increase the frequency of contact between generations. Furthermore, childless older adults are at a particular risk, which points out the need to develop policies paying special attention to this population group in order to promote social integration.

Policy can play an important role when addressing health-care needs of older persons. At the same time, focus should be placed on education in this context, both in terms of its general level and in terms of a lifelong learning approach, because health and education are key determinants of active ageing.

The concept of active ageing constitutes an important change in our understanding of the life course. For a long time, older persons' limitations were emphasized. From this point of view, learning, working and resting were portrayed as three distinct stages of life course. The concept of active ageing promotes the ongoing participation of elderly in the society and the integration of life domains, e.g. work, care, active leisure activities and contact with family and friends.

Research has revealed the ways in which individual characteristics, e.g. age and sex, explain differences in activity level. Furthermore, the societal level was included by examining possible differences in active ageing between Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary and the Russian Federation. The impact of factors such as age, gender, education and health is similar in all countries. Younger, better educated and healthier persons are more likely to achieve a high activity status. Thus despite national differences such as the employment rate of older persons, the underlying mechanisms of active ageing are similar.

Both research contributions suggested that while the rising number of older persons is a concern, it is the health of older persons that should be the primary concern. Preventive health-care policy,

coupled with the development of educational level of the population, can be considered a crucial leveller to cope with an ageing society.

Both the research and policy statements highlighted the main challenges Governments face in coping with ageing societies. Positive aspects of ageing, for instance the contribution of older persons to economic and social development, were also emphasized. Research suggested that policy should pay special attention to older persons, as this would support social integration, prevent poverty in old age and promote inter-generational solidarity. Ideally, a society of all ages should be created and the concept of active ageing supported, while ensuring ageing in dignity.

PANEL DISCUSSION F: SOLIDARITY BETWEEN AND WITHIN GENERATIONS

In the light of demographic developments, solidarity between and within generations becomes an increasingly desirable policy goal. Countries presented their policies towards reducing older persons' dependency by means of social services (ARM, GBR). Armenia is also working to develop childcare social services and care institutions for people with disabilities. However, reliance on such services may contradict traditional social values. In Armenia, a large family with multiple generations taking care of each other is considered a great virtue and contemporary nuclear families struggle very hard to provide the same level of support to their members as bigger families could in the past. The United Kingdom encourages older persons to stay in the labour market for longer and promotes flexible retirement schemes. Thereby policymakers aim at balancing the tax burden across generations. New State-supported private pension schemes – as well as providing a minimum pension income, and thereby serve to combat pensioner poverty – encourage workers to save for their retirement.

The two research contributions analysed the availability of familial support for older persons and filial obligations, both from a cross-national perspective.

Research underscored that a large majority of older persons have good possibilities to receive support from their adult children. On the one hand, the differences between the studied countries (BUL, DEU, FRA, RUS) regarding family support were

relatively small. On the other, the main factors influencing family support diverge. In Bulgaria and the Russian Federation, co-residence with adult children is an important factor of intergenerational solidarity. In France and Germany, the higher number of non-resident adult children is balanced by their closer distance. Furthermore, socio-demographic variables, such as age, gender, residence and subjective assessment of economic situation, influence the possibilities of support for older persons by adult children. In France, older persons assessing their situation as difficult are more likely to report good possibilities for support by their children. In Germany, older persons living in rural areas get more support than their urban counterparts, while in Bulgaria the situation is the opposite. Finally, research has shown that even if the impact of individual variables varies across countries, there are good possibilities for older persons to get support by their children.

Another closely related issue of concern is current trends in filial obligations, which were analysed in a cross-national perspective. Previous work has largely been inspired by the idea that people are less inclined to provide care to their families if formal provisions are available. Research has repeatedly shown that formal care does not replace informal care, but rather complements it.

The presented studies addressed the two sides of filial obligations: younger adults' willingness to provide care and older adults' willingness to receive

care. How strong are younger and older adults' feelings of filial obligation in different countries? To what extent are people's feelings of obligation shaped by socio-structural circumstances and their cultural background? Significant differences were observed between Eastern and Western European countries in perceived family obligations. Bulgarians, Hungarians and Russians feel have more of sense of filial obligation. Children with higher education, who are employed in a fulltime job and who are living in consensual union feel obligations towards their parents less strongly.

Despite changes in family structures and differences between societies, intergenerational solidarity exists in each analysed country. There is evidence of much interaction between generations in countries with cultural traditions of strong family ties as well as in those without them. Measures that support childcare and dependency care, as well as measures that afford a better balance in distributing family and domestic responsibilities, can strengthen intergenerational solidarity. Furthermore, policies support people to be active in their later life and to improve their health could make a valuable contribution to intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity.

PANEL DISCUSSION G: MOVING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

There is consensus that participation and partnership of both women and men are required for work and family life, including shared responsibilities with respect to childcare and the maintenance of the household. At the same time, the majority of those with caring responsibilities are women. It is also acknowledged that the increase in women's labour market participation has not prompted an increase in men's domestic duties, which is frequently referred to as women's dual burden. While gender equality in itself is an important policy goal, analyses have also revealed that in the context of low fertility, fertility levels remain relatively high when there are high levels of gender equality in the economy, family and society.

In this panel session, Germany provided insights into its policies regarding role patterns. Despite the widespread approval of the idea of gender equality in Germany, studies show that there is a significant gap between visions of gender equality and the role allocations practiced, which particularly leads to problems when mothers decide to return to work. Problems around women's re-entry to the labour market illustrate how modern gender equality policy in Germany can only be successful if men are also taken into account. Thus, policy should therefore focus on both levels: on the institutional level by supporting flexible work schedules and on the level of gender-related role models and attitudes.

The Republic of Moldova reported that stereotypes prevent men from applying for a paid parental leave that has recently been introduced, thus leading to unequal employment patterns for men and women. Furthermore, the long duration of parental leave

(up to six years) creates difficulties when parents wish to re-enter the labour market.

Recently, nearly all UNECE member States have devoted attention to achieving gender equality. Nevertheless, it remains a pressing issue and a crucial policy challenge for the future. Researchers can therefore make valuable contributions by ensuring a better understanding of recent policy developments aiming at gender equality and by providing as well as expanding knowledge-based information about gender roles and attitudes.

A study of gender roles and gender asymmetry in France and Georgia pointed out the profound changes in the gender system over the last 50 years. In France, egalitarian attitudes had a negative effect on fertility and marriage rates. In both France and Georgia, the distribution of household tasks among partners is unequal in that in 8 unions out of 10, women take on many more domestic tasks than do men do. In France, however, equality predominates in the management of income, with couples sharing these responsibilities in an egalitarian way. In Georgia, specialization of tasks by sex is even slightly higher than in France, but some women have more power of decision than men. However, equality in the management of income is not as frequent in Georgia as it is in France.

During the socialist era, the Czech Republic experienced higher fertility rates, which were encouraged by a system of almost free childcare facilities and State financial support to family budget. Since the 1990s, parental leave arrangements and family-based childcare have been given more attention, while public childcare services for

children under the age of 3 have been reduced for the most part. Consequently, the traditionally high female employment rates and gender equality of the past seem to be eroding. Is there evidence of a discontent with this new family policy paradigm among the Czech population? Do men and women share similar opinions regarding childbearing, care-giving, female labour force participation and leadership positions?

Research identified two different groups revealing significant differences in gender attitudes. Women mainly tend to adopt the pro-family attitudes emphasizing the role of the mother in childrearing. Furthermore, women more often agree that in case of divorce it is better for the child to stay with them. Men, on the other hand, demonstrate male breadwinner behaviours by disapproving the higher incomes of women and stating that men make better political leaders than women do. Higher education and younger age contribute the most to gender equality attitudes.

The presented research findings did not provide strong evidence for a discontent with the new policy paradigm reinforcing the male breadwinner model after 1990. Among Czech men and women, expansion of childcare services for very young children was not considered a priority.

Further research focused on the variation in the support for filial obligations. The analysis assumed that population ageing directly challenges the family potential for elderly care due to the increasing number of old people in need of family support. Other demographic trends, e.g. increasing rates of

childlessness, higher divorce rates, higher education levels and higher female labour participation rates, may do so indirectly by impacting on norms and attitudes about family care. Thus, the central question is: Which socio-demographic groups are most in need and where should public care complement familial support for older family members? Research has shown that in most countries, the above-mentioned individual characteristics make little difference. Cultural differences and heritage, however, also shape attitudes and support. Actual support may not suffer, since public services seem to supplement rather than substitute family support. Hence generalization across countries is difficult and country characteristics must not go unrecognized in the process of policymaking.

Both policymakers and researchers highlighted the task of achieving gender equality as priority. UNECE member States have made great efforts to introduce different initiatives aimed at gender equality. Nonetheless, policies should continue fostering the gender mainstreaming approach. While opportunity structures set by the labour market and social protection systems undoubtedly play an important role with respect to gender equality, changing attitudes, norms and values can also explain much of the change in behaviours. Therefore, Governments should adopt measures at the institutional level, for example measures counteracting women's marginalization in terms of professional activities and social protection systems, as well as at the level of gender and family-related norms, values and behaviours.