

Futures of families in times of multifaceted societal changes: a foresight approach

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as well as many others

Abstract:

This working paper gives an overview over research activities on the future of the families conducted in the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project. The foresight approach employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to outline what the future may bring for families in Europe. What will be the most important topics for the future of families in Europe? Which factors might drive the future of families with children and their well-being? Which family types will be in danger of living in vulnerable situations? What policies will be relevant to stop intergenerational vulnerability reproduction? What may be the future consequences of the ongoing “gender revolution” and current refugee flows? The research summarized in the present report will address exactly these and other important questions.

Keywords: family futures; vulnerable families; inequality; family policy; fertility

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Contributions

The first concept of the foresight scheme was developed by Dimitar Philipov, Ina Jaschinski, Jana Vobecká, Paola Di Giulio and Thomas Fent. They were also mainly involved in planning and conducting the stakeholder workshop presented in Chapter 2. Monika Mynarska, Bernhard Riederer, Ina Jaschinski, Desiree Krivanek, Gerda Neyer and Livia Sz. Oláh are responsible for the focus group research used in chapters 3, 4, and 6. They also organized the focus groups in Vienna and Stockholm. Other focus groups were conducted with the participation of and support from Eloïse Leboutte (Brussels and Madrid), Marina Robben (Brussels), Pablo García Ruiz and Ignacio Socias (Madrid), Irena Kotowska (Warsaw), Laura Bernardi and Pascal Maeder (Bern). Laura Bernardi also commented on an early draft of the focus group guideline. Analyses of the focus group material was mainly conducted by Monika Mynarska, supported by Bernhard Riederer and Desiree Krivanek.

The microsimulation shown in Chapter 7 was conducted by Maria Winkler-Dworak, Éva Beaujouan, Martin Spielauer and Paola Di Giulio. Thomas Fent and Bernhard Rengs did the simulations based on an agent-based model presented in Chapter 8. Bernhard Riederer and Bernhard Rengs conducted the expert questionnaire study and the family questionnaire study used in chapter 5, 6, 9 and 10. Monika Mynarska and Dimitar Philipov were also involved in the construction process of the questionnaires. Colleagues from IFFD and ELFAC—in particular Diego Barroso and Iwona Sztajner—provided us with feedback and translations of the family questionnaire. In addition, they used their contacts for data collection. Analyses of both questionnaires were conducted by Bernhard Riederer.

Chapter 11 and 12 were written by Bernhard Riederer, Monika Mynarska and Dimitar Philipov. Monika Mynarska mainly contributed to the development of scenarios, Dimitar Philipov to policy implications. In addition, Dimitar Philipov supervised the whole work package as work package co-leader, supported by Thomas Fent (2014 and 2015) and Bernhard Riederer (2016). This working paper was prepared by Bernhard Riederer.

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Contents

Executive summary / Content overview.....	5
Part I – Setting the stage	12
1. Introduction	12
1.1. Main motivations: changes in family forms and changes in family life.....	12
1.2. What is a foresight? / What type of foresight?	14
1.3. Lessons from previous foresight activities	15
1.4. Additional lessons from scientific literature	19
2. The <i>FamiliesAndSocieties</i> foresight approach	22
2.1. Quantitative and qualitative methods.....	22
2.2. The workshop: starting qualitative activities.....	24
2.3. Focus groups, online questionnaires and expert consultations.....	26
Part II – The future of vulnerable families in general	30
3. Expert views’ on vulnerable families	30
3.1. What is vulnerability? A broad definition	30
3.2. Why are which family types more vulnerable than others?	31
3.3. Aspects of vulnerability in single-parent families.....	32
3.4. Large families: many children=many challenges	34
3.5. Orphans, families with dependent members and other risk groups	36
3.6. Are there any vulnerable family types? Conclusions and remarks	38
4. What societal forces drive vulnerability?	41
4.1. Future developments: societal forces and vulnerability of families with children.....	41
4.2. Economic crisis versus economic growth	42
4.3. Changing gender roles	44
4.4. Work and family reconciliation	46
4.5. Society and relations within	48
4.6. Main messages: the plurality of developments and their ambivalent consequences	50
5. Future developments and their consequences for vulnerability of families with children	53
5.1. Introductory remarks.....	53
5.2. Expected short and long term developments of the share of vulnerable families.....	54
5.3. The relative importance of major societal forces for future vulnerability.....	56
5.4. Drivers and different dimensions of vulnerability.....	60
5.5. What drives future vulnerability of families with children? Summary and conclusions.....	63
6. Expert opinions on policies to stop the reproduction of vulnerability.....	65
6.1. The problem of vulnerability reproduction	65
6.2. Policy recommendations by experts in focus groups	66
6.3. The relative importance of policy measures according to experts.....	70
6.4. What families think: conformity and differences with regard to experts’ opinions.....	73
6.5. Conclusions: Education, monetary transfers or flexible reconciliation?	75
Part III – Specific topics.....	78
7. Consequences of separation and re-partnering for fertility	78
7.1. How will higher separation rates affect fertility? Aims of present research.....	78
7.2. Data and method	79
7.3. Descriptive results: family trajectories in Italy, Norway, and Great Britain.....	81
7.4. Findings of the microsimulation I: completed family size—the role of first union status and age at first birth ...	83
7.5. Findings of the microsimulation II: union dissolution effects at different parities	86

7.6.	Findings of the microsimulation III: re-partnering, family types and births.....	88
7.7.	Additional analyses: the relevance of education.....	90
7.8.	Conclusion: Re-partnering only partly compensates effects of separation.....	92
8.	Changes in attitudes: gender equity and fertility	93
8.1.	Does higher gender equ(al)ity lead to lower or higher fertility rates?	93
8.2.	An agent-based model	94
8.3.	Main results of simulations	100
8.4.	Discussion: the proof of an argument	103
9.	Large families: Southern Europe and Germany in comparison.....	105
9.1.	Introduction.....	105
9.2.	How family-friendly are Portugal, Spain and Germany?	108
9.3.	The situation of respondents' own families and policy measures to improve it	110
9.4.	Worries about the future of today's children.....	113
9.5.	Conclusions: Vulnerability of large families and worries about their children	116
10.	Consequences of migration and refugee crises.....	117
10.1.	Introductory remarks	117
10.2.	Migration flows, ethnic minorities and refugees in Europe: an overview	118
10.3.	Specific vulnerability risks of refugees and asylum seekers	120
10.4.	Focus group discussions: immigrants, refugees, children left behind and the relevance of education.....	122
10.5.	Expert questionnaire results: Consequences of refugee flows for vulnerability	125
10.6.	Conclusions: Immigrants in Europe—different topics in different regions	129
Part IV — Outlook	131	
11.	Families' futures in Europe	131
11.1.	Introductory remarks	131
11.2.	Reference points: the dystopian and the utopian scenario	133
11.3.	Introducing gender roles: making the story more complex	136
11.4.	Policies: Which measures work under which circumstances (in which scenarios)?.....	144
11.5.	Conclusions: what we have learned from the foresight exercise	147
12.	Conclusions and policy implications.....	149
12.1.	Different perspectives following from different approaches	149
12.2.	Demographic trends affecting vulnerable families	150
12.3.	Experts' expectations: a likely scenario based on questionnaire results.....	152
12.4.	Work–family reconciliation and time policy	156
12.5.	Hindering the reproduction of vulnerability	158
12.6.	Policy options: monitoring and mainstreaming	159
12.7.	Further issues	161
References	165	
Appendix	172	

Executive summary / Content overview

What will the future bring for families in Europe? Nobody can answer this question precisely. Just like the past, the future will also bring unexpected occurrences and developments that could not have been foreseen. As scientists, policy-makers or societies, we should thus be prepared for different futures. Therefore Work Package 10 of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project was dedicated to foresight activities aiming at sketches of more and less plausible trends and broad outlines of the probably most relevant future developments. We tried to do this by contributing some answers to the following questions: What will be the most important topics for the future of families in Europe? Which factors might drive the future of families in Europe? Which family types will be in danger of living in vulnerable situations? What policies will be relevant to stop intergenerational vulnerability reproduction? In addition, we asked for future consequences of the ongoing “gender revolution” and current as well as future refugee flows.

The first two chapters of the present report give a summary over previous foresight activities to then introduce our interconnected research endeavours. Our foresight approach comprised qualitative and quantitative research methods. The question of the most important topics for the future of families in Europe was answered by analysing the results of a stakeholder workshop with family experts. The *vulnerability of families* and *children’s well-being* were identified as major issues for future policy making. Therefore a large part of the following research activities focused explicitly on future vulnerability of families with children.

Based upon the result of focus groups with policy-makers and civil society actors engaged in family-related issues that were conducted in six European cities (Bern, Brussels, Madrid, Stockholm, Vienna and Warsaw), Chapter 3 discusses various aspects and *dimensions of vulnerability* (economic, psychological and social) and tries to identify *family types* that are *at high risk* of being vulnerable. While some informants argued that no family configuration invariably causes vulnerability, there was a general consensus that some types are more “at risk”. Single parents and families with many children (large families) were perceived as most vulnerable. These families may face a higher risk because the reconciliation of work and family is particularly challenging for them. The ability to combine family life with paid employment was identified to be decisive for family well-being.

In the focus group discussions, the informants furthermore named numerous *forces which might be crucial for the futures of families and their well-being*. They include the general economic development (crisis vs. growth) as well as defined cultural and social shifts, related to changing intergenerational relations, to a possible weakening of social ties and the liberalisation of social norms. In particular, however, forces related to the work–life balance were expected to be central for families with children: changes in institutional childcare arrangements, changing gender roles (women’s higher participation in the labour force but also the increasing involvement of fathers in childcare) as well as the role of the “culture of work” and employers’ attitudes towards families. Importantly, experts expressed diverging opinions about possible consequences of various future developments. These are presented in Chapter 4.

In another research activity, we collected 203 assessments of *future vulnerability development* using an expert survey. The survey distinguished between economic vulnerability (referring to financial aspects and poverty risks), psychological vulnerability (summarising feelings of stress, anxiety or depression) and social vulnerability (comprising stigmatisation, discrimination and a lack of social support). For all three dimensions experts predicted increases in near and far future. Most pessimistic were the predictions regarding psychological vulnerability. Eight in ten experts thought that the share of families whose members suffer from psychological vulnerability would increase in the next five years. Three-quarters of respondents expect the extent of psychological vulnerability to grow further between 2020 and 2050. Details are shown in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 furthermore reports results regarding *factors driving future vulnerability* of families with children. Both the expert questionnaire and a family questionnaire (more than 1,300 respondents) asked for opinions on the relevance of a list of factors whose selection was based on the focus group results. Summing up, parents responding to the family questionnaire thought, on average, that changes in family policies and in the reconciliation of family life and professional work would be most important for the future well-being of families. For participating experts, on the other hand, economic development was most relevant. This assessment of experts, however, does not primarily refer to GDP growth but to (un)employment and inequality in earnings. While the economic development and changes in family policy were both linked to all three dimensions of vulnerability for the experts, other

forces like the development of work–family reconciliation and changes in gender roles were perceived to be relevant to two or one dimensions only.

Chapter 6 is about policy measures to prevent the *reproduction of vulnerability* within families—i.e. from one generation to the next. Participants in focus groups strongly emphasised the importance of education in this respect. Education was broadly defined and included education for children, parents and other important societal actors, in particular employers. For instance, schooling of children should promote equal chances as adults, counselling for parent support, coping with parental roles and raising awareness of employers—and society at large—to enhance understanding of parental issues. But experts also mentioned other measures such as reconciliation policies and services addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable children.

Drawing upon the results of focus group research, ten *policy measures* were selected for the questionnaire studies. In general, all ten measures were considered important by responding experts as well as parents. Four measures stood out to be of particularly high relevance for experts as more than half of them reported them to be “indispensable” or at least “very important” to stop the reproduction of vulnerability: (1) providing flexible, affordable childcare options for preschool children, (2) organising assistance for children with special needs, (3) making employers aware that it makes sense to care for the work–life balance of their employees and (4) providing education for all children already at an early age. In line with the experts, parents also emphasised “making employers aware that it makes sense to care for the work–life balance of their employees” (perceived to be most relevant) as well as “assistance for children with special needs” (third place). Contrary to them, however, parents also attached great importance to support for stay-at-home mothers which was perceived as “irrelevant” or even “counter-productive” by more than one-fifth of the experts.

While Chapters 3 to 6 cover the topic of vulnerable families in a more general way, Chapters 7 to 10 report research on more specific issues. In Chapter 7 implications of increasing *union dissolution and re-partnering* rates on family formation are assessed for Italian, British and Norwegian birth cohorts using microsimulation techniques. Among other things, results show that the timing of union formation and separation is crucial for future fertility levels. If union dissolution becomes more common, particularly for childless women, the negative impact of union dissolution on fertility would still be reinforced even if all women were to re-partner. According to the microsimulation output, the share of mothers having a union disruption is expected to strongly increase across cohorts for all three countries under study. Because

single parenthood often entails vulnerability, this result of the microsimulation implies that vulnerability of families with children might also increase.

What impact has the *gender revolution* on fertility and individual well-being? The agent-based model presented in Chapter 8 provides a micro-founded explanation to the observation that some of the most progressive societies recently experienced an increase in fertility. Simulations aimed at explaining the aspects of the transition from a *traditional* regime characterised by a dominance of the male-breadwinner model to an *intermediate* regime showing a conflict between individual desires on the one hand and societal expectations and general conditions on the other to a regime of *advanced gender equity* at the household level and at the institutional level. In our artificial society higher gender equity first resulted in lower levels of fertility but very advanced societies experienced a slight upturn. In addition, higher levels of gender equity led to more consumption and to higher utility (a proxy for well-being and happiness).

Chapter 9 demonstrates once more that *large families* have higher risks of vulnerability than the average family with children in southern Europe. Parents from large families find it very expensive to raise children. Furthermore, family life often interferes with other activities including work. According to our findings, flexible work schedules for caregivers, financial support by the government and childcare facilities at the workplace are necessary to improve their situation. Regarding the future of their children, parents from large families were especially concerned about a good education and the future labour market chances of their children.

Chapter 10 discusses the vulnerability of immigrants using insights from the literature, focus group discussions and the expert questionnaire. Specific groups of immigrants usually face different kinds of problems while only the risk of social vulnerability due to small networks (or even isolation) is relevant to all of them. In particular the prevalence of non-marketable skills and language deficits add difficulties and avoid overcoming vulnerable situations. Refugees and unaccompanied minors frequently belong to the vulnerable group of immigrants. Experts assume that economic, psychological and social vulnerability will increase due to current and future refugee flows especially in the next five years (2015–2020). With regard to long-term consequences, a rise in social vulnerability seems most likely. As social vulnerability refers to stigmatisation, discrimination and a lack of social support, this result might signal a warning that social cohesion in European societies may be at risk.

The two final chapters offer an outlook on the future of families in Europe. While Chapter 11 develops *different scenarios of the future of families with children* in Europe, Chapter 12 focuses on implications of the foresight research for future policy-making. The scenario building process aimed at incorporating all information gained in previous research activities. At the beginning of Chapter 11, both a dystopian and a utopian scenario are outlined, exemplifying that families have (almost) no choice under extreme harsh conditions while they can realise every aim under extreme good conditions. While a variety of policies is fundable in the utopian scenario, there are hardly any resources available for policy-makers in the dystopian one. Moving from these reference scenarios towards more medium developments, different gender arrangements and various types of family policy are considered. The chapter ends with a discussion of the importance of a “gender policy fit”: to reduce vulnerability of families with children, policy measures have to meet the wants and needs of families which are dependent on the dominant gender role attitudes and the corresponding expectations within societies.

The concluding chapter recalls recent demographic trends and uses information from the expert questionnaire study to discuss important aspects of a likely future scenario. In this scenario, increasing inequality in earnings, rising job demands and greater work-related geographical mobility required of parents will result in higher shares of vulnerable families (economic, psychological and social vulnerability). More female labour force participation would lead to more stress but an increase in male engagement in childcare would at least partly reduce it. Policies could in principle have a strong impact on vulnerability, but assumed policy reactions are small. Based on our findings we finally aim at inspiring future policies. Therefore we discuss the issues of work–family reconciliation and time policy, policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability, advantages of synthetic indices for a policy monitoring and the usefulness of a mainstreaming approach as well as a series of specific aspects comprising the integration of refugees, the aim of gender equity, the relevance of parents’ acceptance of policy measures and the necessity of work-related policies.

Part I — Setting the stage

1. Introduction

1.1. Main motivations: changes in family forms and changes in family life

When we think about a “family”, a certain picture usually comes to our minds. This “family” may vary in details, but most frequently we think about two parents living together with their biological children (at least in the so called Western world). Our “family” is imprinted from the “ideals” of romantic love and the nuclear family. Ideals seldom meet the reality. “[F]amilies with porous boundaries that allow a wide range of extended family and members of the community to contribute to caregiving and other responsibilities of family life were the historical norm“ (Parke, 2013, p. 5). The nuclear family itself is no universal form of human living but rather an exception in human history. In Europe, it has never been the most prominent arrangement before the economic recovery and subsequent growth of the 1950s and 1960s (Mitterauer & Sieder, 1989; Sieder, 1987). For the first time in history, wealth allowed members of *all* societal classes to marry and start a family. A male breadwinner could afford a living for his wife and their children. But times have changed quickly. Liberalisation of norms, different ideals of love and sexual freedom challenged the existing ideal as well as female emancipation. Women as well as children became more independent of the “patriarch” who was the boss within the home and represented the family outside. The rising female labour force participation was important. It was fuelled by both, increasing freedom and female education on the one hand as well as deteriorating real wages on the other. One income was often no longer enough to provide for a family. The period characterised by high marriage and birth rates, few divorces and a low prevalence of non-traditional family forms already ended about fifty years ago (Oláh, Richter & Kotowska, 2014).

Although this “ideal” picture of the family was never as ideal or self-evident (natural) for human existence as people may think, it is still in our minds and affects our thoughts about families until today. Reality, however, has brought very different constellations of families in which children can grow up. During the past decades trends like the postponement of partnering and childbearing as well as lower marriage and higher separation rates have led to an increase of single-parent and patchwork families, to name just a few prominent examples. The variety of families, however, is much bigger. Without claiming to be exhaustive, Table

1.1 gives an overview of real-world deviations from the normative ideal of the 1950s and 1960s.

Table 1.1: The typical definition of a “family” and existing alternatives in real world

traditional/ typical definition of a “family”	alternatives observable in real life
<i>two parents</i>	one parent, no parents, multiple parents
<i>married</i>	cohabitating, planning to marry, staying single, divorced, widowed
<i>heterosexual</i>	homosexual, bisexual, nonsexual, transsexual
<i>biological parents</i>	one or more social parent(s) through artificial insemination, surrogacy, adoption, foster care or kinship (relative headed household)
<i>co-resident</i>	part-time resident, shared custody, visitation access to children
<i>one main (male) breadwinner</i>	dual-earner couple, job cycling in/out reverse role families (female as breadwinner; male as primary caregiver)
<i>childcare (predominantly) by parents</i>	childcare by parents and/or relatives, siblings, staff in childcare centres or family day care homes, neighbours, members of childcare cooperatives, members of a collective community

Source: Parke (2013, p. 2); minor modifications by BR.

What could the future bring for families in Europe? Our research follows a foresight approach to contribute some preliminary answers to this question, thereby taking into account different more and less plausible trends affecting the future lives of families in Europe. Although family types will be discussed at some point of the present report, we usually assume that—given the discussed and other past developments—the variety of family types will at least not decrease in the near future. Changes in family life were and are, furthermore, also a challenge for policy making. Instead of focussing on one specific family form, a variability of options how family life can be structured has to be considered. Thus, future shifts in family life and upcoming challenges for families will have policy implications.

Within our approach, we want to detect both risks and opportunities for future families with children. In our opinion, this is of great importance for future debates within science as well as for public debate. While some scholars give more attention to risks, especially with regard to parental conflict and separation, others argue strongly against it.¹ As a society, however, we should be prepared for both, the worst and the best case as well as the most plausible and the least plausible ones (also including a reduction in variety of family types). The past has shown that the future cannot be foreseen in all details with a sufficiently high level of certainty.

¹ To give an example: “Increase in partnership dissolution and so-called patchwork families (new families made up from members of divorced families) may weaken family ties and may negatively affect the financial situation of households and well-being of children,” so the authors of a report regarding risks for future societies (FLAGSHIP, 2013, p. 6). Other scholars like Parke (2013, p. vii)., however, emphasize “the fact that children can thrive in a variety of family forms, especially if there is sufficient community support for all forms of families.”

As Parke (2013, p. 17) notes, “families are embedded in a variety of other social systems, including extended networks of relatives and informal community ties such as friends and neighbours, work sites, and social, educational, and medical institution.” There are broader social systems (community, economy, policy) that are affected by change and development themselves and have a large impact on family life. Corresponding to societal developments, the family as an institution is not static but steadily evolving and adapting to external circumstances (ibid., p. 11). In large parts of the present report, we will therefore focus on developments in other societal spheres and their influence on families in the future.

One of our main research aims is finding out more about potential factors driving the future well-being of families with children. We focus on families with children and their vulnerability because the relevance of this topic was already revealed at an early stage in the research process. Our perspective on vulnerability is not restricted to economic aspects (risk of poverty etc.) but also concerns processes and interaction within families as well as processes and interaction of families with their environment. For family therapists like Walsh “effective family processes and the quality of relationships matter most for the well-being of children” (Walsh, 2006, p. 32, as quoted in Parke, 2013, p. 4). In the following, we first give an introduction to the foresight approach as such before we summarize existing foresights dealing with families. Finally, we emphasize some central aspects of vulnerability as they are discussed in the literature, before Chapter 2 explains our own foresight approach in more detail.

1.2. What is a foresight? / What type of foresight?

From a methodological point of view, foresights are tools to develop visions about the future (see www.foresight-platform.eu/). Unlike a forecast, a foresight does not tell us how the future will look like. It does not predict future developments. Rather, it outlines all kinds of plausible and implausible scenarios to inform us about a variety of possible futures. As such, a foresight is reminding us that we can shape what happens and thereby influence what the future might look like. A foresight should therefore also contribute to our understanding of longer-term implications resulting from today’s decisions. In addition, foresight is highly relevant to be prepared for even not very likely developments as changes are often “unforeseeable” (Boitier et al., 2013, p. 5). As no one really knows what the future will bring,

it is meaningful to consider different directions of developments. The occurrences of the financial crisis in 2008 as well as the refugee flows in 2015 are examples of more or less unexpected events with huge consequences and thus clearly demonstrate the need for foresight activities. Facing all the uncertainties of “a world with an increasing interdependency” (ibid.) and highly inter-twined future challenges, the knowledge of different alternative scenarios of the future should stimulate the creation of (new) policies dealing with all kinds of (un)likely problems and thinking about their effectiveness and meaning under different circumstances.

According to di Giulio and colleagues (2013, 5) a foresight should be understood as “a broad methodological framework and an opportunity to connect the knowledge provided by science to the needs of society”. Foresight activities themselves are not bound to one scientific discipline or a specific research method. On the contrary, foresights usually focus on topics of inter-disciplinary relevance and sometimes even employ a multi-method mix. Among qualitative methods exploiting knowledge and opinions of experts in a specific field are various types of workshops, group discussions or personal interviews. These methods aim at collecting and systematising as much information as possible. Quantitative methods such as statistical methods of analysis, trend extrapolations, forecasts or simulation models based on assumptions and/or collected data can be used to accompany and concretise results of qualitative research. Also important are often variations of the Delphi method aiming at quantitative assessments but sometimes including qualitative contents as well (see Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Aichholzer, 2009).

1.3. Lessons from previous foresight activities

A recent review conducted in the framework of FLAGSHIP² project summarises 34 forward-looking analyses referring to five different topics: economic development, demographic (and societal) change, environmental issues, global governance and territorial governance (Boitier et al., 2013). Most forward-looking analyses dealing with family issues focused on demographic outcomes only (in particular fertility). The FLAGSHIP project team itself furthermore identified demographic trends with social consequences (e.g. postponement of

² FLAGSHIP stands for “Forward-Looking Analysis of Grand Societal Challenges and Innovative Policies”. For more information see <http://flagship-project.eu/>.

partnering, rising age at childbearing, increase in partnership dissolution) and discussed intergenerational conflicts as a thread and intergenerational solidarity as an opportunity (FLAGSHIP, 2013).³ While demographic outcomes are highly relevant, family life involves a variety of aspects, has manifold dimensions and broad societal consequences. During the last years at least two foresights that focus explicitly on families have been conducted: one run by the OECD and the other by the *FamilyPlatform* project. Both are shortly described in the following.

The foresight conducted within the framework of the OECDs *International Future Programme* (OECD, 2011b; 2012) comprised the development of future-oriented scenarios as well as projections of families, households and populations. Experts participating in a workshop first developed four distinctive scenarios: (1) a scenario of “sustainable growth” combining a high stability of economic growth with slow adoption of human-centric scientific and technological innovation, (2) a scenario characterised as “innovative but featuring a fragmented society” where rapid innovation meets a low stability of economic development, (3) a scenario called “back to basics” with slow adoption to innovation and a low stability of economic growth and (4) the “golden age” scenario with rapid innovation and stable economic growth. The two contrasting views of the “Golden Age?”—the term explicitly followed by a question mark in the OECDs publications—and “Back to Basics” are of special interest as they demonstrated very different paths of future development. Despite differences regarding the volatility of economic development and the adoption of new technologies, the OECDs *International Future Programme* debated differences between them in the occurrence of structural unemployment, the role of women in the labour force, the impact of the welfare state or the relevance of formal and informal care.⁴ The conducted projections showed, among other things, that the share of single-parent families was expected to increase across OECD countries (OECD, 2011b; 2012).

³ Within the final scenarios of the FLAGSHIP project (called “collapse”, “perseverance” and “metamorphosis”), family issues were, however, hardly discussed (for summaries of these scenarios see FLAGSHIP, 2014; 2015). Notable exceptions can be found in the report by Sessa (2013). In this report, a normatively good state is characterized by high quality of life in which combination of professional work and private life will become easier—for example by an adjustment of working hours and tasks over the life course that increases parental flexibility (ibid., p. 24). In a less favorable state, on the other hand, inequality among parents regarding availability and quality of childcare is assumed to be very high (ibid., p. 53).

⁴ Interestingly, the two scenarios named “Golden Age?” and “Back to Basics” still have a lot in common. For instance, slow to modest economic growth accompanied by a rise in inequality and a need for further fiscal consolidation of governments was assumed to hold in both scenarios. In our opinion, this is restricting the foresight—but, more importantly, also indicating the relevance of studies focusing on inequality and vulnerability.

The *FamilyPlatform* project (Kapella et al., 2011; Uhlendorff et al., 2011) followed the procedure of the Delphi method using five meetings of the projects' consortium and board members to conduct group discussions. The discussions were structured along three thematic questions. Several feedback loops were conducted in periods between the meetings. Finally, experts identified four main drivers for the future of families⁵ and developed four different future scenarios. *Scenario 1* is characterised by equal opportunities, open migration, diversity in education and values as well as a co-existence of private and public care. *Scenario 2*, on the contrary, shows increasing inequality, extreme positions in values, no or only very selective migration as well as a privatisation of care and education systems. *Scenario 3* is similar to the second one. Nevertheless, according to the third scenario diverse values are accepted in society. In addition, it allows for open, but limited migration. In *Scenario 4*, diverse values are also accepted. Migration, however, is restricted. Furthermore, equal opportunities exist at a low level. Public care systems for all target basic needs and a rigid form of public education offers basic education. Additional education or care can be bought by the rich on free markets (Kapella et al., 2011).

Summarising (and somehow simplifying) previous work, it seems that the main factors considered in the previous family-related foresight activities can be divided—somewhat crudely—into two dimensions: an economic and a cultural one, with special focus on gender roles. As for *economic developments*, a more pessimistic and a more optimistic line of development were envisioned in the previous foresight projects. In the pessimistic version, slow economic growth or even recession were discussed, although previous scenarios did not really consider the possibility of an enduring economic crisis. Still, a negative line of development included high unemployment, low government investments, increasing poverty and very limited social support. Economic prosperity was seen as an antithesis to some extent. In some future scenarios it was not perceived as necessary for the state to spend more on welfare. For instance, as a hardly realistic scenario it was envisioned that a rich society could have a completely privatised social sector. Technology and IT development were considered as important dimensions for economic prosperity. In the optimistic version of future developments, technical advances were emphasised, as they would bring many important

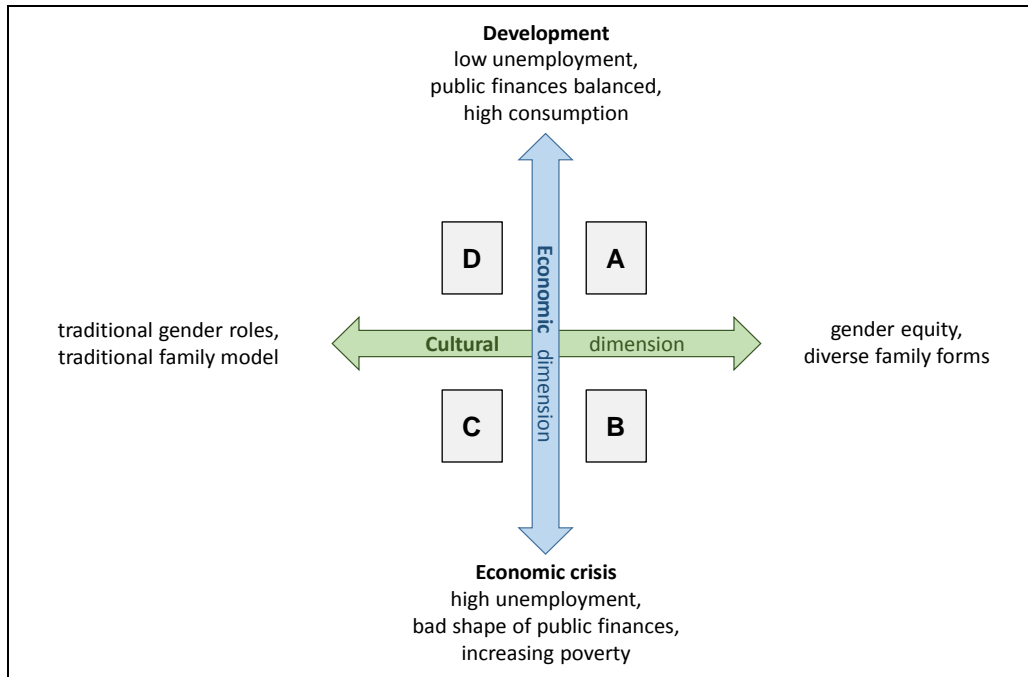
⁵ These main drivers were (a) inequalities, (b) migration, (c) education and values, (d) care systems.

changes such as e-learning, virtual schooling or teleworking (in general: e-living), which could also lead to a growing flexibility of the labour market.

Similarly, based on the previous foresight, two general directions of *cultural development* could be imagined (although in the FamilyPlatform more ambivalent perspectives were drafted). As already mentioned, gender roles were central here. At one end of the continuum the family was envisioned with both partners economically self-reliant, equally dividing domestic chores and childcare (“new fatherhood”). The other end was defined as returning to more traditional roles, with women doing the household work and men focusing on paid work. Greater gender equity was seen as accompanied by a more general value shift: higher individualism and importance of self-realisation, greater freedom of choice and increasing liberalisation of social norms.

Only the two key dimensions—described above—delineate a very complex reality, especially when we realise that any direction of economic or cultural development might bring favourable as well as unfavourable consequences for families. For instance, the negative economic scenario might lead to stronger social ties, as the support of family and local networks will become crucial. At the same time, the positive economic scenario might lead to increasing inequities because some profit more from the economic boost than others and this might lead to the exclusion of economically weak families. Similarly, any direction of cultural development might influence the situation of families both positively and negatively. For instance, more individualistic values might be seen as harmful for family ties; while traditional values—like the traditional division of labour—may be perceived as allowing to put family and community well-being first. Conversely, more gender egalitarian values might be seen as a pre-requisite to founding and maintaining a family, while traditional gender roles might be considered to hamper family formation, increase intra-family inequality and to put families at (economic) risks. Finally, as Figure 1.1 demonstrates, combinations of the two dimensions alone result in four rather different scenarios for the future of families (A, B, C and D).

Figure 1.1: Four scenarios of future developments



1.4. Additional lessons from scientific literature

Although previous foresight research was outlining a variety of scenarios in which well-being of children and families differ, it has not explicitly addressed the vulnerability of families with children. Vulnerability is often understood as being at risk of poverty. Job loss is one of the most important reasons for entering poverty (McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Riederer & Wolfsbauer, 2011; Vandecasteele, 2011). In addition, prolonged periods of unemployment often lead to a loss in self-esteem and impair psychological well-being. Stigmatisation might also come into play. Among the employed, work intensity of the household is decisive for poverty risks (Fouarge & Layte, 2005; Fusco, Guio, & Marlier, 2010), and the type of work influences income as well (Vandecasteele, 2011). Parents' weak labour market attachment might result from low or inadequate qualifications. The higher risk of vulnerability and lower probability of improving their life situation among the less educated have been well documented in the literature (Fouarge & Layte, 2005; Fusco et al., 2010; McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Riederer & Wolfsbauer, 2011; Vandecasteele, 2011). Moreover, a lack of childcare options might force parents (especially mothers) to leave the labour market, impairing their material situation (e.g. Baum, 2002; Eurofound, 2013; Keck & Saraceno, 2013).

Importantly, it has been found that family configuration, that is size and composition of the family, also affects the risk of vulnerability (e.g. Andriopoulou & Tsakloglou, 2011; McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Vandecasteele, 2011), mainly because work and family reconciliation might be particularly difficult in some family types. First of all, family size greatly influences the risk of poverty (Radcliff et al., 2012). The higher the number of children, the higher is usually the financial burden of the household, and thus the need for both parents to engage in paid work. At the same time, however, more children require more time for care and this may lead to the need for one parent—usually the mother—to dedicate more of her time and energy to childcare and to reduce or even give up her paid working time. With reduced income or even only one earner, financial problems can easily arise. Thus, households with three or more children have a higher risk of deprivation (e.g. Finnie & Sweetman, 2003; Fusco et al., 2010; Riederer & Wolfsbauer, 2011). In 2011, almost one-third of two-adult households with three or more dependent children⁶ were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in EU-27 (López Vilaplana, 2013). However, the situation is often even more problematic for single parents (Graaf-Zijl & Nolan 2011, p. 29). The share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion mounts to almost 50 per cent among solo parents with dependent children (López Vilaplana, 2013). This household composition can be a major factor for low work intensity and in-work poverty in the absence of adequate support services, especially for solo mothers who are susceptible to negative income effects of divorce (Vandecasteele, 2011, p. 248). While two-parent families pool their income and have an opportunity to share various responsibilities and burdens, a single parent has to cope with all difficulties alone (Fusco et al., 2010; Vandecasteele, 2011; Holand et al., 2011). In addition—since solo parenthood is most commonly related to the parents having separated—family disruptions often have negative psychological consequences for parents and children (Gilman et al., 2003; Prevoo & ter Weel, 2014).

Besides the size and the composition of the household, specific family characteristics can also influence the risk of vulnerability. Ethnic minorities and immigrant families suffering from a lack of (language) skills or labour market discrimination are frequently mentioned in this respect (e.g. IOM, 2015; Juang & Alvarez, 2010). Moreover, families with disabled family members are considered vulnerable (e.g. Osgood et al., 2010). Research shows that bad health

⁶ In statistics published by Eurostat, dependent children are individuals aged 17 years or less and individuals aged 18 to 24 years if inactive and living with at least one parent.

and disability trigger the risk of entering poverty (e.g. Fusco et al., 2010; McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005). Families with disabled individuals might also suffer from more strained emotional relationships due to the demands of care (Olsson & Hwang, 2003). Finally, same-sex couples with children are also mentioned as a vulnerable family type, albeit because of social exclusion or stigmatisation rather than economic hardship (Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

While all aforementioned families are potentially vulnerable, their situation is moderated by the macro-level context. The level of long-term poverty varies considerably between different welfare state regimes (Fouarge & Layte, 2005). Also, it has been found that risks of vulnerability linked to certain factors vary across countries (Fusco et al., 2010). For instance, the relationship between being unemployed and being at risk of poverty varies between countries according to their level of economic development and institutional setting (McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005; Moller et al., 2003). Finally, cultural factors matter greatly. For instance, gender roles that prevail in a society influence women's position in the labour market determining their economic situation (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Pfau-Effinger, 2000). And social exclusion and stigmatisation are strongly linked to values and norms shared in a given society (Musterd & Ostendorf, 2005). Identifying macro-level factors that will shape family futures will thus be a central aim of our foresight research.

2. The *FamiliesAndSocieties* foresight approach

2.1. Quantitative and qualitative methods

The research scheme of the foresight included in the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project considered quantitative as well as qualitative methods. Furthermore, it comprised several consecutive and closely related research activities (for background information, see di Giulio et al., 2013).

Quantitative methods applied in the *FamiliesAndSocieties* foresight—microsimulations and agent-based models—focused on consequences of changing family structure and gender roles (Winkler-Dworak et al., 2015). Simulations using an agent-based model (ABM) aimed at explaining transitions from a traditional regime characterised by a dominance of the male-breadwinner model to an intermediate regime showing a conflict between individual desires on the one hand and societal expectations and general conditions on the other hand to a regime of advanced gender equity at the household level and at the institutional level. Using microsimulation techniques, implications of increasing union dissolution and re-partnering rates on family formation and future fertility levels were assessed for Italian, British and Norwegian birth cohorts. Using quantitative methods influences of subjectivity are minimised. Another advantage are usually very clear outcomes due to precise (numeric) results. In order to minimise subjective influences and to get numeric results, a rather precise research question and highly standardised analyses have to be conducted. This also limits possible outcomes. While both pieces of quantitative research are linked to specific aspects highlighted in qualitative parts of the foresight, they could not cover the comprehensive and at the same time detailed picture drawn by qualitative research.

Qualitative research is more open than quantitative research, allowing for broader research questions, adaptations of them even during ongoing research activities and capturing subjective views. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research therefore leaves room to describe uncertainties and explore existing ambivalences. Qualitative research, on the other hand, does usually not allow for generalisation of findings which are moreover often ambiguous. The advantages of the one type of research, however, can compensate for the disadvantages of the respective other type. Showing a broader as well as more nuanced picture, qualitative studies can complement quantitative analyses delivering the context and/or details to results gained with quantitative methods. Within the foresight approach of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project, qualitative research primarily aimed at exploring possible

challenges for social policy that might appear in the future, given different prospects of the economic and cultural development in Europe—a task that can be hardly performed solely by employing quantitative methods.

In the course of the qualitative research process, the previous findings always defined the thematic foci of the respective next step. Qualitative foresight activities started with an expert workshop (Philipov et al., 2014). The outcome of this workshop emphasised the topics of family vulnerability and child well-being. Thus, the subsequent focus group research focused on future vulnerability of families with children and vulnerability reproduction within families (Mynarska et al., 2015). In focus groups, participants discussed different aspects of vulnerability, identified major societal forces driving future vulnerability of families and named policy measures to hinder vulnerability reproduction across generations. Exactly these topics, forces driving future vulnerability and policy measures to hinder vulnerability reproduction, defined the content of the expert survey directed at scientists and practitioners. Together with other issues also raised within focus group discussions, they also build the content of the second questionnaire study that was directed at parents (Riederer et al., 2016).

Figure 2.1: Steps of the foresight research approach

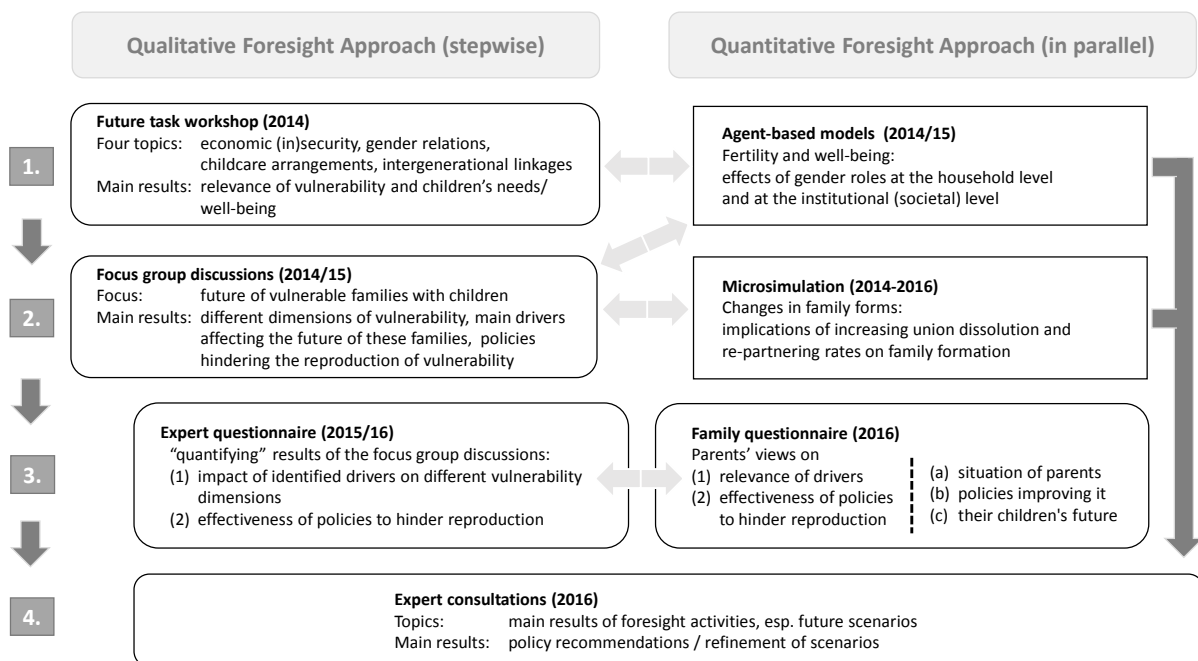


Figure 2.1 summarises the research process and the main connections between the different steps taken. Qualitative research tasks are represented on the left side of the figure and quantitative research tasks on the right one. The questionnaires are positioned slightly more on the right, as they are also a means to quantify the results gained with qualitative research. The darker arrows show direct (stepwise) influence of one task on another while the lighter double-arrows represent cross-references with regard to specific contents. For example, both the workshop and the focus group discussions revealed the relevance of changes in gender roles whose consequences are a major topic in agent-based models. Microsimulations, on the other hand, show that single-parenthood—including lone mothers at birth and those whose union dissolved later—is likely to increase in the three countries studied (Italy, Britain and Norway; see Winkler-Dworak et al., 2015) while, in qualitative research, policy-makers and stakeholders emphasised that single-parent families constitute the probably most vulnerable family form. Both the expert and the family survey included questions about the forces driving future vulnerability and policies hindering reproduction of vulnerability (identified in focus group research).

The expert consultations finally served as a means to evaluate and contextualise the major findings and to address a number of questions that were raised in the course of conducting our foresight research. Advice given from experts served to finally improve the different foresight activities. Starting in the second half of 2015, first consultations regarding the microsimulation and the agent-based models have been conducted. Final consultations discussing possible future scenarios and focusing on policy implications of all our results took place in October 2016.

2.2. The workshop: starting qualitative activities

In a workshop conducted in 2014, 25 stakeholders and 12 project participants from different European governmental and non-governmental institutions discussed four pre-selected topics: (i) gender relationships, (ii) childcare arrangements, (iii) economic (in)security and (iv) intergenerational linkages in the family. These topics oriented themselves on the main topics of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project and were decided upon in several discussions among work package participants and external colleagues who shared their experience of previous research projects on families. The stakeholders were asked to generate ideas in response to four questions specified for each one of the four topics. These questions loosely followed the

composition of a so-called SWOT scheme: one referred to strengths (S), a second to weaknesses (W), a third to opportunities (O) and a fourth to threats (T). Altogether, 16 questions were discussed. To give an example, Table 2.1 gives the questions related to the first topic (gender relationships).

Table 2.1: SWOT questions with regard to gender relations

SWOT	Set of questions
<i>Strengths</i>	Which gender relationship arrangements will improve family wellbeing and how?
<i>Weaknesses</i>	Can these same relationship arrangements be harmful to the wellbeing of the family? If so, which ones are harmful to which family forms, and what are the effects of these arrangements? What other changes in gender relationships can be harmful to the wellbeing of the family?
<i>Opportunities</i>	Which economic factors can improve gender relationships and how? Which policies may effectively improve gender relationships and how?
<i>Threats</i>	Which economic factors can damage gender relationships, and how? What are their effects on family wellbeing? Which policies damage gender relationships, and how? What are the effects of such policies on family wellbeing? On which families?

Source: Parke (2013, p. 2); minor modifications by BR.

Across all 16 questions the stakeholders shared more than 100 relevant issues. Subsequent analyses of these issues lead to the emergence of core themes that have permeated the discussions. The following paradigms were found to be particularly important: (1) vulnerable families, (2) family well-being from a child's perspective, (3) policy inclusion of all family forms, (4) mainstreaming family and gender, (5) reconciliation of generational, family and private lives, and (6) new gender roles. All these aspects entered the following research activities. Regarding "family well-being from a child's perspective", for instance, the most prominent issues like the parent-child relationship or childcare and education of children were all taken up later again.

Among these central themes permeating all the discussions there was one, however, that had the important advantage that it could serve as a guiding concept: vulnerability. Extensive discussions during the workshop focused on disadvantaged families. The disadvantage could refer to experiences of economic problems like material deprivation and/or unemployment but also to a variety of other aspects. For instance, stakeholders also extensively discussed situations of families from a different cultural environment who can experience social exclusion, stigmatization and/or deprivation of human rights. Vulnerable family configurations mentioned during the workshop included, among others (the list is non-exhaustive), families in poverty, socially excluded families, same-sex couples, single-parent families, large families with a large number of children as well as families with disabled members and especially disabled children.

As participants paid a lot of attention to children and their well-being, the reproduction of vulnerability was identified to be an especially important issue. Children that live and get socialized in vulnerable families may get accustomed to the problems experienced by the family and accept them as a normal in their life. Thus poverty may reproduce poverty, and social exclusion may reproduce social exclusion. The ongoing reproduction of vulnerability within families raises the question of how to break this cycle of reproduction—maybe the main concern from the point of view of policy makers.

To conclude, the workshop contributed a rich list of family related issues that require policy attention, and helped to identify a crucial area of further examination within the project: the area of vulnerable families, vulnerability reproduction within the family, and ways towards breaking the cycle of this reproduction. These topics delimited the core area of interest for the next step in qualitative research on the future of families in Europe, the focus group discussions.

2.3. Focus groups, online questionnaires and expert consultations

Six *focus group discussions* with policy-makers and civil society actors engaged in family-related issues were conducted between November 2014 and June 2015.⁷ The focus groups took place in Austria (Vienna), Poland (Warsaw), Spain (Madrid), Sweden (Stockholm) and Switzerland (Bern). The countries were selected to represent distinct welfare regimes and family policy models (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999; Ferrarini, 2006; Korpi, 2000). While Sweden represents the *Social Democratic Welfare Regime* with high dual-earner support, Austria belongs to central European countries with a *Conservative Welfare Regime* characterised by more general family support. Spain is an example of a *southern European Regime* with less state support. Finally, Poland as a former socialist country experienced a change in social policy from a high level of support for working mothers to a more conservative welfare policy. To provide additional insights, the fifth FGI in Brussels (Belgium) was designed to also include experts and stakeholders at EU level. Finally, a sixth FGI took place in a Switzerland. Switzerland is neither a member state of the EU nor fully

⁷ Five of them are described in detail in Mynarska et al. (2015). The focus group in Switzerland was conducted five months later than the others. Thus, results were not ready at the time this first report was prepared.

integrated into the European Economic Area. Furthermore, the Swiss welfare state developed differently than others from a liberal towards a conservative welfare state (cf. Obinger et al., 2010). In addition to covering different (developments of) welfare regimes, the selection of countries also offers some variation with respect to cultural background, distribution of family types and the economic situation of the countries.⁸

The central topic of focus group discussions was the future of vulnerable families with children. We invited practitioners dealing with general family-related issues as well as representatives of organisations dealing with vulnerable families and children's needs. To increase diversity within the groups, we invited policy-makers (governmental organisation or (federal) state representatives, parliament members) and civil society actors (representatives of various non-governmental organisations). Altogether, 45 participants took part in the organised discussions; the number of the focus group participants varied between six and nine informants in each city. Discussions themselves were designed to take approximately 90 minutes. They actually lasted between 90 and 110 minutes. Participants were not paid, but in most countries they received a small “thank you” gift including some publications on family-related topics.

Results comprised three basic components: First, experts identified family types with high risks of vulnerability (especially single-parent families). During the discussion of vulnerable family types, they mentioned different aspects and dimensions of vulnerability (financial, emotional etc.). Second, participants expressed their opinions on several future developments and identified major forces that may shape the future of European families and their well-being (e.g. economic development, cultural change). Finally, a wide array of policy components that could help to mitigate consequences of vulnerability for children and—in their opinion—prevent the reproduction of vulnerability within families were discussed. These results of the focus groups set the scope for two online surveys, one focusing on family experts (scientists and practitioners) and another one directed at parents in general.

Drawing upon the outcomes of the conducted focus group discussions, the *expert survey* asked about estimates of the development of five major forces and their effects on the shares

⁸ For instance, Sweden is a clearly secular country, Spain and Austria can be described as somewhat religious, while religiosity is still very high in Poland (Burkimsher, 2014).

of vulnerable families in 2050. Finally, the relevance of selected policy components to stop the reproduction of vulnerability within families—again based on suggestions by focus group discussants—was expressed by way of rating scales. Between December 2015 and March 2016, we collected 176 opinions and views from experts all over Europe.⁹ Altogether, we got assessments of future vulnerability developments for 29 European countries.¹⁰ The majority of participants in the expert questionnaire study came from an academic background (61 per cent). Almost one-fifth of participants worked for NGOs. Ten experts (six per cent) saw themselves as policy-makers. Around 13 per cent of participants did not assign themselves to one of these three sectors. These experts worked for administrative authorities, regional or (inter)national organisations, in the health sector, in the educational sector or in the private sector (business, industry or banking). Some of them did research or were involved in policy areas but they were mainly practitioners.

The *family questionnaire* was directed at parents. As with the expert questionnaire, its content was largely determined by the results of the focus group interviews. Most importantly, this questionnaire also included questions on the relative importance of each of the five identified main forces driving future vulnerability of families with children and the relevance of selected policy components that should hinder vulnerability reproduction. These questions, though not exactly phrased in the same way as in the expert questionnaire, allowed some rough comparisons between opinions of experts and opinions of parents. The family questionnaire, however, furthermore included other topics mentioned in focus group discussions; namely assessments of the general situation of parents, policy measures that could improve their lives and worries about their children's future. While the expert questionnaire was only available in English, the family questionnaire was translated in several languages (English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish). Data collection started in late March 2016 and ended in early June 2016. In total, 1,370 people submitted answers. Respondents who were not yet parents (pregnancies) or who did not live in Europe were excluded from the analyses, resulting in a sample including 1,343 parents living in 22 different European countries. Nine out of ten respondents, however, came from one of three countries only: from Portugal, Spain

⁹ As some experts chose to make assessments for two or three dimensions of vulnerability and as one expert made assessments for two countries, in total 203 assessments of future vulnerability developments were made. Economic vulnerability was covered by 76 assessments, social vulnerability by 75 and psychological vulnerability by 52.

¹⁰ For ten countries five or more experts provided assessments, with Austria being the most frequently considered country (29 assessments), followed by Italy (20), Spain (17), Germany (14), France (13) and Sweden (11).

or Germany. Therefore most of the analyses with family questionnaire data were done separately for these countries.

Expert consultations took place at several occasions. For the microsimulation and the agent-based model, consultations mainly served as a means to discuss difficulties and evaluate findings. Population and family experts were contacted at major demographic conferences and in-depth meetings with family experts visiting the VID were organised. In addition, members of the scientific advisory board of the project commented on an early draft reporting the research outcome.¹¹ The final expert consultations in October 2016 finally focused on future scenarios and policy implications. First, these expert consultations resulted in suggestions for refining and improving the scenarios. Second, experts emphasized the relevance of specific results that should in their opinion be emphasized in the discussion.¹² These expert consultations re-assured us to highlight the policy implications of specific findings.

The following chapters in this report are based on this research. Chapters 3 and 4 summarise main findings of focus groups. Chapters 5, 6, 9 and 10 present results from the expert and/or the family questionnaire study. In-between, Chapters 7 and 8 report the most important results of quantitative research activities. All these findings build the desideratum on which the final foresight (Chapter 11) and policy recommendations (Chapter 12) draw upon.

¹¹ These consultations were conducted in Vienna, Budapest and Washington, DC between June 2014 and March 2016.

¹² For instance, experts mentioned that different aspects of education should be highlighted in our final discussion of results. These consultations were conducted in Vienna, Warsaw and Brussels (the later at the occasion of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* final conference). A list of most relevant comments is included in the appendix.

Part II — The future of vulnerable families in general

3. Expert views' on vulnerable families

3.1. What is vulnerability? A broad definition

Before we think about questions like which types of families are vulnerable or not, we have to define vulnerability. In general, vulnerability can be broadly described as “the capacity to be wounded” (Patterson, 2013, p. 1). It implies some “lack of resources” or “social weakness” (Hanappi et al., 2015, p. 2). Vulnerability itself has not inevitably manifested consequences but remains often latent until critical events, chronic stress or pressures from outside reveal the limits of available resources (ibid.). In the literature, many dimensions of vulnerability are discussed (cf. Radcliff et al., 2012; Roelen et al., 2012).¹³ There are families with children who are at risk of poverty, and families who experience a lack of social support in daily life. Some families suffer from problems related to stress or from health problems. In other families the children experience a negative relationship with their parents (e.g. because of a lacking sense of security, conflicts between the parents or domestic violence).

For our research on vulnerable families, we finally defined vulnerability as a complex phenomenon comprising (a) financial problems, (b) social exclusion,¹⁴ (c) a lack of social support from personal networks, (d) stigmatisation, (e) difficulties arising from poor physical or mental health and (f) being a victim of crime (esp. family violence). Though vulnerable families are often confronted with many challenges at the same time—for example, families lacking financial resources often perceive strong emotional and social pressures, too (Holand et al., 2011)—it is sufficient that just *one* of these aspects occurs to describe a family as being vulnerable. In the guideline for focus group (see Mynarska et al., 2015), however, vulnerability was defined in general terms in an open way, allowing informants to address different aspects of vulnerability in the course of their discussion.¹⁵ Indeed, experts themselves presented various aspects and dimensions of vulnerability—different reasons for which families might need more attention and support.

¹³ To some degree this is due to the broad use of the concept in different disciplines. For instance, psychologists often use the term in conjecture with stress, depression and anxiety while demographers or sociologists frequently link it to uncertainty in life, labour market risks and income inequality (cf. Hanappi et al., 2015).

¹⁴ We defined social exclusion to mean limited access to facilities such as shops, schools, libraries or medical services.

¹⁵ We mentioned economic hardship and social isolation as reference points but explained that these are only examples for aspects of vulnerable states.

To stimulate the discussion, participants in focus group discussions were first confronted with the trend of a growing diversity of family forms across Europe and asked which of them are, in their opinion, particularly at risk of being vulnerable. As the informants discussed different potentially vulnerable family types, they basically identified the following—at least partly intertwined—aspects:

1. Economic hardship, poverty; economic uncertainty, instability, fear about one's own future; insufficient housing, low living standard;
2. Social exclusion, lack of social networks (friends, family);
3. Stigmatisation, disapproval from the society, discrimination by institutions and legal regulations;
4. Time pressure, overwork, stress, being overburdened; negative consequences: health problems, depression, anxiety, behavioural and educational problems of children;
5. Lack of family stability, risk of divorce, especially difficult situations for children (traumatic experiences, fights between parents etc.);
6. Health problems, in particular disabilities;
7. Violence, often related to the abuse of alcohol and other substances.

3.2. Why are which family types more vulnerable than others?

While some informants argued that no family configuration entails vulnerability inevitably, there was a general consensus that some types are more “at risk”. Almost unanimously, single parents were listed as most vulnerable. Also families with many children (large families) were mentioned early on in the discussion in most settings.

“I think that single parents and families with more, more than two children are at most at risk of poverty. This has several reasons.” (Bern)

“I think that it is hard to define this by the family constellation itself, so of course there are these two types, and I think this is undisputed, among the most frequent types of families, that it's single parents and large families, I mean with three and more, who are most at risk of being affected by poverty, this can be seen in any statistics, and then there are just aggravating factors coming into play, that is, in what conditions does this poverty risk increase or decrease.” (Vienna)

Other family configurations were mentioned too, such as “patchwork” (reconstituted) families or foster/adoptive families. The informants also emphasised other characteristics that might

increase vulnerability of a family, such as migrant status or health-related issues. The types of vulnerable families that were mentioned can be grouped into five categories, although only the first three are related to family configurations:

- 1) Single parents and various family types related to divorce/separation (divorced parents sharing physical custody, patchwork families, but also families facing a risk of divorce).
- 2) Large families (families with three or more children).
- 3) Orphans, adoptive/foster families.
- 4) Migrant families; refugees (mentioned in Austria and Switzerland only), but also children raised by one parent or by other family members because their parent(s) migrated for work (multi-located families, children “left-behind”, mentioned in Poland only: “Euro-orphans”).
- 5) Families with infirm members, especially with disabled children.

Importantly, some families might belong to two or three of the above categories at the same time, for instance, a single parent (1) of migrant background (4) with a disabled child (5). Such combinations were perceived as particularly challenging. Moreover, the informants added one dimension that might further increase or decrease the vulnerability of families: the place of residence. Families living in rural areas may be in a more difficult situation with respect to employment opportunities and the availability of childcare facilities. Also, a rural environment might be less open to a variety of family forms and thus associated with a higher risk of social exclusion. In the following subsections, informants’ perspectives on the five types of vulnerable families listed above will be shortly summarised.

3.3. Aspects of vulnerability in single-parent families

Single parenthood was the family constellation most unanimously seen as vulnerable, combining many aspects of vulnerability: economic hardship, difficulties combining work and childcare, being overburdened by childcare responsibilities, stress and negative consequences for health, stigmatisation, social exclusion due to a lack of social network, a lack of emotional support of a partner and a lack of support in case of various life events (e.g. illness).

The first issue is the economic dimension: there is only one provider, who alone has to combine paid work and family tasks. As he or she is the only one to care for a child (children), it is not possible to work long hours, work intensity needs to be limited or one may end up in “precarious jobs”. In extreme cases, a single parent might have to leave the labour market altogether. Consequently, they would no longer be able to meet the financial needs of their family.

“It’s really difficult for a single parent to find the equilibrium between his/her parental and professional responsibilities. We witness that these persons often don’t manage to create this equilibrium, ending up in precarious jobs. In terms of daily distribution of time, these parents are confronted with questions such as: who is going to pick up my child from school if I am working late? How would I take vocational training, as my children need me at home?” (Madrid)

“If you have the child living with you full-time, it’s also hard to keep up with a full-time job as a single parent and perhaps you will then work part-time instead, and you then will earn less money.” (Stockholm)

Raising a child was seen as much more demanding and stress-related for single parents compared to the two-parents setting. As solo parents need to combine work and childcare on their own, they feel overburdened and pressured, being solely responsible for creating a proper environment for their children. The informants noted that solo parents are likely to cut back on their leisure time, social life or even sleep to fulfil their responsibilities towards their children. Consequently, they may feel socially excluded due to a lack of time for socialising and network building. Moreover, the issue of stigmatisation was mentioned in Spain, where—as the informants noted—single motherhood is still not fully approved in some areas.

The situation of single parents carries, of course, all possible risks related to raising children: a child may get ill, may develop some serious health problem, might experience problems at school, etc. All those problems are much more severe for solo parents because of the limited resources they have. A difficult situation might become dramatic for a single parent. For instance, the informants repeatedly remarked that solo parenthood is especially challenging if a child is ill or disabled. A single parent is facing tremendous difficulties then: he or she is not being able to work, without sufficient income, required to stay at home most of the time to look after a child and lacking partner’s practical and emotional support. Such “combined vulnerability” is particularly challenging and puts a family in an extremely difficult position.

“A handicapped child, of course is a much more serious problem for a single parent than for a two-parent family because well, there is only one person available for the caring tasks, or when another relative must be cared for, the single parent of course also has a much higher workload than when there are two” (Vienna)

“There are children mentally challenged or children with cerebral palsies—using respirators, things like these. Where mother is not even able to leave the house. And if she’s alone, she will not leave the child. This is night and day, morning to evening—sitting and watching and no life at all.” (Warsaw)

A more specific topic is divorce or separation because single parenthood is not always but often a consequence of breaking up with one’s partner. The informants noted, however, other family configurations that result from separation/divorce: the topics of shared (physical) custody (mentioned in Stockholm and Brussels) and “patchwork” families (brought up in Warsaw and Madrid). These families also face difficulties with childcare arrangements as needs of different actors (ex-partners, current partners, children from different relationships) should be coordinated. Finally, one further aspect was related to divorce. In the discussion in Warsaw, the informants noted that also families on the verge of divorce are vulnerable and require additional attention with respect to the children. Children are faced with traumatic experiences, witnessing the parents’ problems and fights, and they are usually left alone with their fears and worries.

3.4. Large families: many children=many challenges

Large families were also mentioned in most focus groups and the respondents usually agreed that having many children might expose a family to vulnerability.¹⁶ The informants discussed several dimensions of vulnerability that large families are exposed to (the need for sufficient housing, accumulation of breaks in employment for mothers, stigmatisation), but economic demands were central.

First, with a larger number of children, also costs of living are higher. It is not only an issue of food and clothing or other daily products. It is also an issue of having sufficient living space

¹⁶ Stockholm constitutes an exception here, as the informants noted that in Sweden having many children is more common among wealthy families who can afford it.

and being able to cover the costs of education for a larger number of children. The financial consequences were also discussed in terms of the mother's labour market situation and retirement funds. The experts emphasised that with more children, a woman stays out of the labour market for a prolonged time. In some cases she might need to become a stay-at-home mother, as with a larger number of children the costs of childcare are too high. The loss of a second earner has a negative impact on the financial situation of the family. It also impairs the mother's situation. Having been outside the labour market for a longer period, she might face difficulties in returning to paid work. She also faces the prospect of low pension at retirement.¹⁷

A possible stigmatisation with respect to large families was mentioned in Vienna and Brussels where participants noted that families with many children might be perceived as "social welfare scroungers":

"Having many children is a stigma and [they] mostly say: Don't you have other hobbies? (...) that I am misusing the state allowances, yeah? This is something I often get to hear." (Brussels)

In Poland, it was noted that some poor families with many children might actually avoid asking for financial support, because they fear that social workers would consider them as irresponsible parents who are not able to fulfil their parental roles. Consequently, children might be taken away from them and put into foster homes or put up with foster parents. This could be seen as an extreme case of stigmatisation.

As with single parents, the topic of "combined vulnerability" was brought up also for large families. Some traumatic life event might be particularly difficult when there are many children in the family. In this case, there is not one child suffering but many children such that *"any problem in the family is lived multiple times"* (Warsaw).

¹⁷ Importantly, the poor pension prospects for stay-at-home mothers were discussed not only in relation to large families. In fact, in any family constellation it was noted that women who leave the labour market to take care of their children might face problems at retirement age, but also in case of separation from the partner.

3.5. Orphans, families with dependent members and other risk groups

Orphans and adoptive or *foster families* were also mentioned as particularly vulnerable in the discussions. The informants acknowledged that even though the number of children concerned is not that large, children with no biological parents (or with parents deprived of their parental rights) are in a very difficult, particularly demanding situation. Their vulnerability was discussed mainly in relation to psychological and social aspects. In Poland it was also discussed that foster parents are not always suitable for taking care of children. In Vienna, the situation of minor refugees coming to Austria without parents was portrayed as extremely vulnerable.

The situation of *immigrants* was generally discussed with different intensity and with different connotations in our research settings, clearly reflecting differences in migration patterns between the countries.¹⁸ The informants, however, noted that, for instance, single parents or large families of migrant origin might be in a particularly difficult situation, mostly because of problems in finding jobs (especially when poorly educated), having lower income and due to lack of social network. The issue of problems related to local language was mentioned as well, also in the context of raising children (e.g. not being able to help children with school homework). In Switzerland, participants also emphasised the difficult situation of children whose parents are illegal immigrants *sans-papiers* (i.e. they do not have a residence permit).¹⁹

Different forms of *dependency in the family* were also mentioned as very important factors increasing vulnerability. These refer to situations when a family member is disabled or chronically ill, when there is an elderly person in need of care, but also to extreme cases of families with an alcoholic or a drug addict. Nonetheless, disability—especially a child's disability—was central in the discussions. As already discussed, it was frequently named as a factor which further increases duties and stress for parents and thus vulnerability for those families already being in a difficult situation (single-parent families, large families etc.). Parents who raise a disabled child on their own might not be able to enter the labour market at all, becoming fully dependent on alimonies or social assistance in worst case.

Finally, there were two family types rarely mentioned spontaneously by experts and often only discussed in reaction to moderator's question: *non-married cohabiting parents* and *homosexual families*. In general, cohabitation was not an issue. Nonetheless, some aspects related to legal regulations as well as social stigmatisation might still pose a challenge in specific cases—for instance, if a mother dies before the fatherhood was legally established. One expert was also worried that cohabiting unions may be less stable environments for children. The situation of homosexual families was perceived as vulnerable in terms of social stigmatisation. This stigmatisation might affect parents, but also children raised by same-sex parents are at risk of being bullied at school. Some experts also admitted that same-sex

¹⁸ In Sweden, for instance, being an immigrant was perceived as less problematic than in Austria. Discussants in Poland and Spain, on the other hand, thermalized mainly out-migration and not in-migration. In Switzerland different types of immigration were discussed (including the specific situation of expatriates, for instance).

¹⁹ The vulnerability of migrant families will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.

couples have to cope with legislative limitations, mostly with respect to parental rights and adoption. The experts did however not recognise any financial problems in homosexual families and thus they often did not consider them being a vulnerable family configuration.

3.6. Are there any vulnerable family types? Conclusions and remarks

The experts discussed various aspects and dimensions of vulnerability (economic hardship, social exclusion, stigmatisation, lack of stability, etc.). Thereby, they presented different reasons for which families might need more attention and support. While some informants argued that no family configuration causes vulnerability inevitably, there was a general consensus that some family types are more “at risk”. Probably the term *families in situations in which they are vulnerable* would be more adequate as there are no “vulnerable families” per se. In addition, vulnerability may often rather be a temporary phenomenon and not a persistent state—as some demands of parenting decrease when children grow older or if a better (paid) job or sources of support are found.

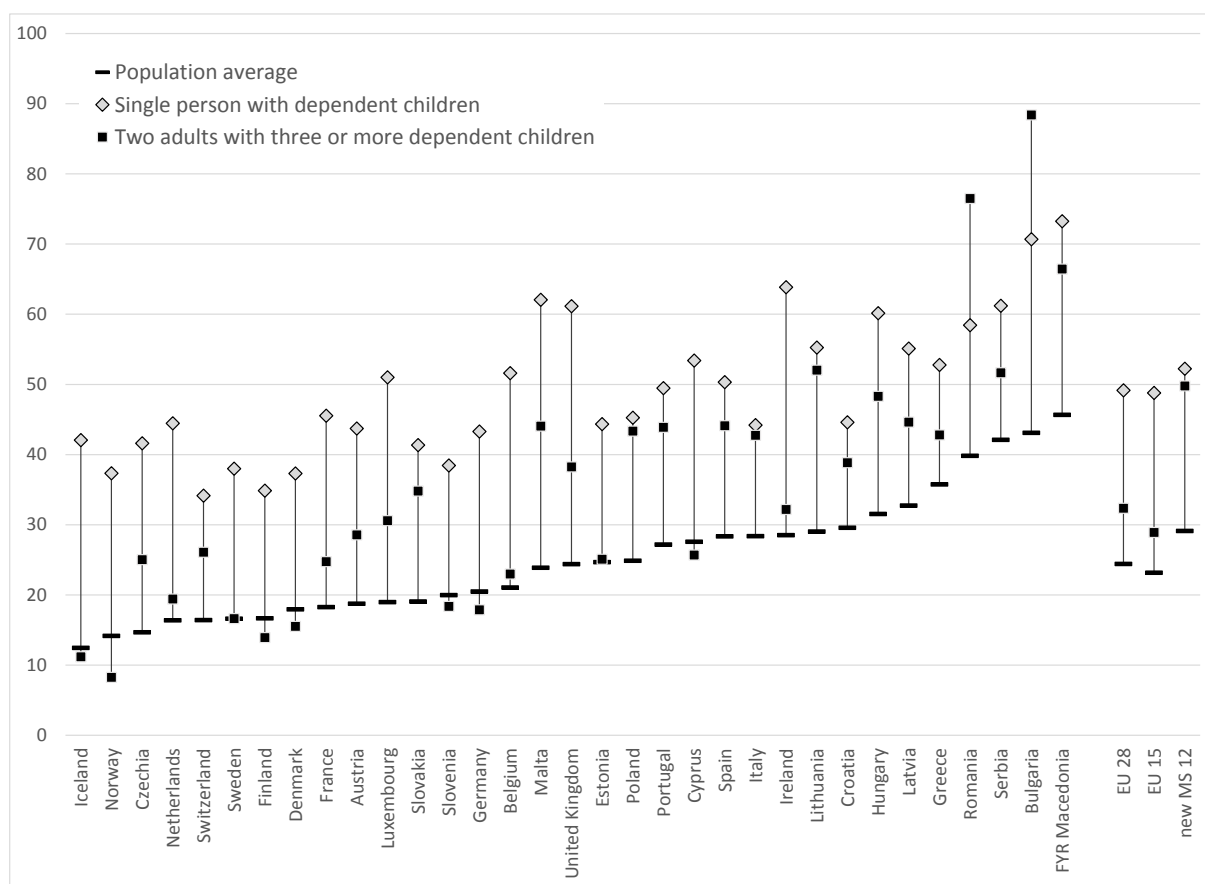
Single parents and families with many children (large families) were perceived as most vulnerable by our informants. The existing literature (e.g. Avramov, 2002) and available statistics support this view. The European Union uses the concept of “being at risk of poverty or social exclusion” to evaluate vulnerability. This refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty, *or* severely materially deprived *or* living in a household with very low work intensity (for more information see Eurostat, 2012; 2016).²⁰ Across Europe, single-parent households clearly are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion than the average population (cf. Figure 3.1). In some countries, however, large families do not show higher risks. As these countries predominantly include the Nordic countries, it is not surprising that large families were not perceived to be especially vulnerable by informants in Stockholm. Participants in other focus groups, on the other hand, usually discussed the situation of large families as being risky.

Overall, the ability to combine family life with paid employment was identified to be decisive for family well-being. Therefore, problems with reconciling work and family and a heavier

²⁰ It has to be noted that “social exclusion” in AROPE is not equal to the concept of “social vulnerability” used in other parts of this report. The AROPE concept does not cover all aspects of social exclusion but refers primarily to enforced lacks in terms of resources not allowing full social participation (problems of affordability).

burden of parents in different life situations were repeatedly mentioned as central for vulnerability in (almost) all family types. Notably, work–family reconciliation covers economic, social as well as emotional dimensions. The inability to reconcile the two spheres of life is likely to lead to serious economic problems. Parents can get trapped in precarious jobs or they may feel forced to limit their working hours which, in turn, substantially reduces their income. In extreme cases, they might need to leave the labour market altogether. Consequently, they would no longer be able to meet the financial needs of their family. Being out of the labour market can also reduce the social contacts parents have, limiting their social embeddedness. Facing substantial difficulties regarding the reconciliation of work and family, parents might also choose to greatly reduce quality time with their offspring for the sake of economic safety but this may have a negative impact on the relations with their children and on the children’s emotional well-being. Finally, problems with the reconciliation of work and family life are also related to time pressure and high stress levels. Indeed, the link between paid work and family life was central throughout the discussions with the experts. Vulnerable families with children seem to be those families in which parent(s) cannot adequately combine both central areas of life.

Figure 3.1: Shares of households at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe (in %)



Note: The rate shown is the average rate across the three years from 2013 to 2015 (2013-2014 only if data for 2015 not available).

Source: Eurostat (2016; data from EU SILC).

4. What societal forces drive vulnerability?

4.1. Future developments: societal forces and vulnerability of families with children

One of the main aims of the focus group research was to identify major factors influencing the future vulnerability of families with children. Starting points for group discussions were retrieved from existing foresight research, in particular from two family-related foresight projects that have been already discussed in Chapter 1 of the present report. To stimulate the discussion, a picture should demonstrate that even discussing future developments of two broadly kept dimensions alone (cultural development and economic development) would allow thinking about at least four different scenarios (see Mynarska et al., 2015).²¹ Participants were then encouraged to talk about various—cultural, social, institutional, economic—changes that might be particularly favourable or unfavourable for the vulnerable families in the future.

Informants animatedly discussed various directions of macro-level developments, i.e. different directions of social, cultural or economic changes. Thereby they named societal forces they considered crucial for the well-being of families with children. Informants focused mainly on the general well-being of (vulnerable) families. They rarely considered how any given force driving future vulnerability might impact on a certain family type. The list below includes the main forces suggested which will be presented in the following subsections in more detail:

- Economic aspects: Economic crisis versus economic growth
- Changing gender roles: Women's higher labour force participation
- Work and family reconciliation
 - Childcare arrangements
 - "Culture of workplace"²²
 - Men's family involvement (changing gender roles)
- Cultural and social changes: society and relations within
 - Social ties, relationships and communication
 - Intergenerational relations
 - Norms and values: increasing diversity

²¹ Several experts criticised this picture for being over-simplified or even biased. In our design, it was meant to anchor the discussion. Especially the controversy around it evolving in the Viennese focus group was not intended. Nonetheless, the dynamics of these discussions revealed interesting viewpoints.

²² The experts used term "culture of workplace" to describe organizational culture, as well as values, attitudes and practices shared by the employees and employers that shape an overall working atmosphere.

Since all participants were informed that our aim is to look at various future challenges and they were prompted to think of future developments, we can assume that they perceive these drivers as important not only now but also in years to come. The forces described below should be considered crucial for situation of families at least in the short-term.

4.2. Economic crisis versus economic growth

Economic changes and turbulences at the macro level are clearly linked to the economic situation of families and influence the risk of poverty. There were, however, different aspects and mechanisms mentioned that might be at play here. First of all, in the discussions the economic crisis was linked to high *unemployment*. At the same time, the informants assumed or explicitly discussed that two incomes are essential for providing good living conditions to a family. If one or even both parents are out of work, this will obviously put a family in danger. Thus, unemployment was seen as the most important factor jeopardising the situation of all families. Moreover, it was noted that different types of jobs are necessary (i.e. those requiring high qualifications, but also jobs that do not require specialised skills), so people of different social strata, with different levels of education and with various levels of qualification can be certain to be able to sustain their family. Indeed, all these jobs must be sufficient to earn a living:

“It’s important to have high-quality jobs and not low-quality jobs, it’s important to be able to support yourself and one full-time job and not to have the lower and lower wages so that you have to have more than one job to support yourself.” (Stockholm)

Finally, youth unemployment was mentioned as a separate factor that is likely to delay entry into adulthood and family formation. In that sense, it is not a factor that increases a risk of poverty for families with children, but it can prevent young people from forming their families and from having the number of children they want.

The informants mentioned another, highly important aspect of the economic crisis, related to taxation and the welfare state. As one expert in Vienna put it, *“without economic growth, without economic activity, there is no tax revenue, and hence no social benefits”*. The economic crisis was perceived as a serious threat to the entire welfare system. It would make it impossible to support families in need and be detrimental to the whole public sector. As one expert in Brussels summarised: *“It means that the financial pressure will continue from all*

sides, from the sides of the job, like employment, but also from the side of the society, all these governmental structures. They don't have enough money."

In Bern, it was moreover discussed that the economic development is also relevant for societal solidarity and tolerance. Participants were afraid of "allocation battles" between societal subgroups when resources are scarce. One discussant diagnosed an "escape back to the traditional political way of thinking" in situations of economic tensions. *"As higher insecurity arises and as less predictable life gets, the more it is getting harder to live a pluralistic and open lifestyle,"* the expert said.

Last but not least, it was noted that economic instability might lead to emotional problems in families. With the economic crisis, families might face financial difficulties that they are not prepared to deal with. As a result of unemployment, they may have problems to pay their mortgages or monthly bills. This can cause much emotional distress and influence the well-being of families in this dimension as well.

"Nowadays, we are delivering a lot of counselling and psychological support to families because of the terrible socioeconomic situation many families have to face. They don't have the necessary tools to cope with it, which creates a series of emotional problems. Our work is about helping them to face these problems and to solve them." (Madrid)

While the economic dimension was perceived as fundamental for the well-being of families, the informants noted that we should not limit our thinking to financial matters. For instance, in Stockholm, also environmental concerns were raised, as one participant noted that *"high economic growth is good for anyone, not for the planet"*. Moreover, in all settings the experts pleaded for a wider definition of family well-being, suggesting that it is not only about a good economic situation, but about a general quality of life. According to some participants of our study, high economic development could bring more pressure to families if it is not accompanied by more general changes in the "culture of workplace", in lifestyle and so forth. We will discuss this topic in more detail when we present the informants' perspective of work– family reconciliation.

"I think that economic growth is a relatively superficial indicator, I think when we speak of the family it is much more about the culture of workplace, culture of the economy, I mean what pressure is being generated by the economy, it could result (...)"

from poor economic growth, but it could also result from high economic growth, depending on how the economy affects the individual.” (Vienna)

4.3. Changing gender roles

Changing gender roles are generally perceived as a critical force shaping modern societies, and the participants of our study discussed them as well. We focus on how gender roles were perceived in relation to family well-being, especially with respect to vulnerable families. In this respect, women’s labour force participation was seen as the key factor, although the informants in our study differ in their opinions on how it impacts on the situation of families. The Swedish FGI was probably most unanimous in this respect, as participants in Stockholm believed that a family model with both parents working full time is the best one. To give an unmistakable example:

“I think of single-parent families. If you went back to traditional family models, so I assume it would be worse for the single-parental households (...) I have problems to see who would benefit from a traditional family model.” (Stockholm)

Aspect discussed with regard to female employment comprised effects on family income, social embeddedness, financial stability for women in general and single mothers in particular, as well as the empowering of women to make their own life choices. Women’s full-time employment was perceived as beneficial to a family’s financial situation as families are better off with two incomes. In addition, employment gives women access to social networks, which might be important for the family well-being as well.

“We have women who are totally outside of the labour market, they have not made any career at all, they don’t have any economic independence left, they lack the networks, the whole social context which would of course also be of advantage to their family, and this is really bad, we have had some very negative cases.” (Vienna)

But it was generally stressed that women’s paid work improves their own situation. They become more stable financially, also with regard to their future pensions. Moreover, economic activity and income empowers women to make their own life choices, as they are not financially dependent on their male partners. Being financially independent from a partner might be particularly important in case of separation or widowhood. If a woman did not work, or limited her working hours substantially, her own and her children’s financial situation might deteriorate if they were left on their own.

Nevertheless, while many participants (also outside Sweden) commented on various positive consequences of women's labour force participation, some negative outcomes were mentioned as well. Possible problems with women's labour force participation comprised the double burden of professional work and family work, the pressure to be good in both roles and possible negative effects upon children's well-being in case of absent mothers.

First, respondents noted that even though gender roles are changing, there is still no full equality within families and women are mostly responsible for providing care at home (mostly childcare, but also for other family members). Consequently, as they are encouraged (or even forced for economic reasons) to work full-time, they suffer a stress-related double burden balancing work and family responsibilities. In fact, in the Polish group a quite vivid discussion took place on how women are put under a huge pressure nowadays: On the one hand they should be wonderful, caring mothers, but they are also expected to work full-time and actively engage in their job.

"This is some sort of paranoia! On the one hand, we say: women, go to work, come back to the employment as soon as possible; on the other hand: Get up at night, breastfeed, prepare ecological food..." (Warsaw)

"If this [gender equality] is only promoted in legal terms but it does not deal with the actual chances and life chances, then this gender equality does not give any value and is indeed counterproductive." (Bern)

Finally, the situation of children was also discussed in the context of mothers' time in employment. While there was no unanimity in this respect, some possible negative consequences for children's well-being were mentioned. One participant in Vienna, for instance, was worried about the necessity of maternal fulltime employment in case of a separation referring to wants and needs of children. A discussant in Poland was especially concerned about working mothers of young children (age 0-3). In his/her opinion, the child might not be attached to its mother if she is absent resulting in a weak emotional bond and a lack of a feeling of safety.

4.4. Work and family reconciliation

Even though our informants noted some negative aspects of women's economic activity, it is unquestionable that mother's participation in the labour market does improve the financial situation of a family and may act as important protection against poverty. Thus, given the well-being of children and families, the possibility of successfully reconciling paid work and family responsibilities is fundamental. In the FGIs, several macro-level drivers were discussed in relation to this topic. First, childcare arrangements were addressed. Second, an interesting dimension related to "culture of workplace" appeared. Finally, the role of fathers was acknowledged, along with several more complex considerations on men's role in modern societies.

The availability of *childcare* facilities was mentioned as highly important for work and family reconciliation and—consequently—for the well-being of families. It was recognised as particularly relevant for solo parents, but discussed in relation to all families. The informants discussed opening hours as pivotal for the ability to combine employment with parenthood: short, inflexible opening hours might make it impossible for parents to work full-time, impairing the financial situation of a family, especially in the case of single parents. Long and flexible opening hours should be accompanied by a high quality of childcare. Parents will not be willing to leave their children for long hours in a facility where a child is not well cared for. Again, this will impact on the ability to combine work and parenthood. Moreover, the informants stressed that childcare options should not be limited to preschool children as they play a pivotal role for older children as well. Especially in the case of vulnerable families, high-quality after-school care can improve children's situation (e.g. their educational outcomes). If formal childcare is not available, the role of grandparents and other family members was mentioned as crucial for the mother's (or—in more general terms—the parents') ability to reconcile work and family duties. It was also noted that grandparents and the extended family might be important particularly for vulnerable families, especially single parents.

A group of factors, related to work and family reconciliation and highly important for the well-being of families, concerns the *culture of workplace*. Using the label "culture of workplace" we take up an expression that was used by our participants. It denotes several aspects. It concerns organisational culture, i.e. the behaviour of individuals within

organisations, such as management styles, as well as values, beliefs, norms and habits shared by the employees. “Culture of workplace” also relates to a more general working atmosphere, shaped by various institutional, legal and cultural factors.

The informants noted that good childcare arrangements will not be sufficient if the culture of workplace is not favourable to families. With long or unpredictable working hours, parents will not be able to reconcile their parental and work roles in a satisfactory way. Children might suffer because their parents will be absent a lot, being overworked and stressed when they are back from work. That will, of course, also impact on the parents’ health and well-being. The informants discussed the role of employers and emphasised that their attitudes towards parents influence the situation of families to a great degree. It largely depends on employers, for example, whether parents are able to occasionally leave work earlier to be there for their children. It also depends on organisations whether they increase job flexibility and allow parents to take advantage of new technologies. The informants noted that the only thing some employers care about is how much time their employees spend at work, instead of looking at productivity. Productivity could be achieved in a more flexible and family-friendly way, for instance by tele-working. The following quotations exemplify some of these aspects:

“That’s also a question of culture, working culture, if it’s okay to be a parent or not at work, is it okay that my child is sick, is it okay that I have to leave at three o’clock some days in the week.” (Stockholm)

“The labour market doesn’t allow it today any more... because we need flexible people who can go to work at times when children need their parents.” (Brussels)

“We keep thinking that productivity is about spending many hours in the office when we have all the technological means to allow flexibility and more efficiency.” (Madrid)

“Work should also be designed in a way that children are not marginalised because of the occupation of their parents.” (Bern)

Changing gender roles are usually considered with respect to women. Also in this report, we discussed women’s participation in the labour market first. But the participants debated the men’s perspective in details, too. They recognised that as women enter employment in increasing numbers, fathers’ involvement in family issues becomes of uttermost importance. Fathers’ contribution to childcare can make it easier for mothers to work, improving the financial situation of families. Thus it seems feasible for both parents to sustain their

professional careers without any harm on their children. In addition, fathers themselves will profit from intensified contact to children:

“From father’s perspective, his active fatherhood, his higher participation and involvement in family life—means a stronger bond with a child. And this is unequivocally positive.” (Warsaw)

Other informants in Warsaw, however, worried about a “masculinity crisis” due to changes in gender roles. According to them, men are somehow “left behind” while women become more educated, more self-confident, active and enterprising. Not all fathers will be willing to get involved and to take responsibility for a family.

Going beyond this, the Swedish participants also discussed fathers’ higher involvement in childcare after the parents’ separation. Egalitarian gender roles and father’s involvement with a child apply also when parents break up. They stop being a couple, but they are still the parents of their children and given changing gender roles they both are expected to take full responsibility for their children. This might take the form of children’s “alternating residence”, i.e. living one week with the mother and one week with the father. Such literally shared custody was discussed as having both advantages and disadvantages for the well-being of children and parents. On the positive side, children have contact with both their parents and their material situation is better, since both parents have the economic responsibility for them. Some informants pointed out that it makes it easier for a separated couple: even though they are solo parents, they share responsibilities and consequently they can more easily combine childcare with employment. As for disadvantages, it was mentioned that “alternating households” might be difficult when a child starts school and the solution limits parents’ mobility. It may also lead to increasing conflicts between parents as they need to make various efforts to get this arrangement work.

4.5. Society and relations within

Social exclusion is an important dimension of vulnerability. It is thus not surprising that various aspects, associated with relations between people, were identified as important for the well-being of families. The informants discussed vertical relations: between community members, neighbours, friends, within couples and families. But also relations between generations were considered as well as more general changes of social norms and values.

Even if a family faces economic difficulties, health problems or any other traumatic experiences, their situation can be improved by support from important others. They can provide invaluable support and assistance in difficult times. The informants in our study noted that the well-being of any family strongly depends on having close ties with other people. At the same time several experts of our FGIs pointed out that social ties are getting weaker nowadays and they expressed concerns about this state of affairs. They perceived it as a negative side effect of individualisation processes: as people focus mainly on their own goals, they are less interested in other people. In this respect, the internet was partly seen as a source of weakening ties and relationships between people; it was seen as supporting communication, but making relationships more superficial. The same can be observed within families and between partners. People function as independent entities rather than as a family unit and relationships are getting increasingly loose.

Of course, based on the qualitative interviews we cannot say to what share of the population weak social ties apply. But the informants identified them as an emerging problem and emphasised its role for family well-being. The experts noted that without close social contacts and kin support, a nuclear family lacks a safety net in case of any problems. And a loose relationship between partners not only poses a direct threat to emotional well-being of a family, but it may lead to conflicts and separation. It was commented by our informants that young people do not really know how to build stable relationships. In our informants' opinion, people lack communication skills which are especially important in close relations. They do not really talk or listen to each other, do not negotiate nor solve problems in conversations.²³

Intergenerational relations were discussed (1) in terms of help and support exchange between generations, (2) with respect to new information and communication technologies and (3) with regard to transmission of values and knowledge from the older to the younger generation. In general, the presence of grandparents might improve the situation of a family with children as they often are important providers of childcare, but it may also become an

²³ Development of technology was seen as unfavourable in this respect: people communicating over social networks instead of creating real bonds; children spending more time with computers than with their peers. As one participant put it, "*they are quite alone in their virtual world.*" Nevertheless, technology was perceived not only negatively. Internet communication methods were mentioned as important for sustaining family relations in case family members do not live nearby (e.g. if a child or a parent migrates). High-tech options for more flexible working were evaluated positively as they enhance work and family reconciliation.

additional stressor in case of need for care in older ages. For some of our informants, communication between generations was a relevant issue. On the one hand, a knowledge gap regarding technology between generations might make effective communication difficult. On the other, communication technology allows for sustaining contact even in case of substantial geographical distance. Finally, some participants remarked that it is important that grandparents pass on their values, traditions and also knowledge to the younger generation. Young parents nowadays would be often unprepared to take on their marital and/or parental roles.

“Maybe in previous generations, the [educational] role was played by—I don’t know—a grandmother, an aunt, a grandfather. They were telling [the younger generation] about life, how it all goes. And now, there is no such thing.” (Warsaw)

Another issue was the consequence and meaning of the increasing diversity of family forms observed in Europe. While some participants diagnosed a possible clash between “old” and “new” values and norms others think that both do co-exist and will so further on. A fraction of discussants feared that the “traditional” family might be valued less as the diversity of family forms increases. Other respondents emphasised the importance of creating good conditions for all types of families. All in all, different views came to the surface:

“I think there is no turning back. It’s the fruit of one’s freedom, the result of democracy itself. People can choose freely how to organise their lives and hence, the state has little to say on how citizens should live.” (Madrid)

“I can be individualistic and open to pluralism and an open society but still want to live the traditional values and live them.” (Bern)

“It probably needs both: on the one hand, you need appreciation of certain values and family stability, and then you also need acceptance of plurality.” (Vienna)

4.6. Main messages: the plurality of developments and their ambivalent consequences

Rather than summarising again the results of the focus group discussions, we want to emphasize specific contents that seem to be especially notable: the broad range of potentially important societal forces, the interlinkages between them and ambivalences of selected developments. The informants considered various directions of macro level developments and named numerous forces that might be crucial for the well-being of (vulnerable) families. These forces were related to work–life balance: changes in institutional childcare provision,

changing gender roles (women's higher participation in the labour force but also the higher engagement of fathers in the care after their children) as well as the role of the "culture of workplace" and employers' attitudes towards family responsibilities of their employees. Also other factors possibly important for the futures of (vulnerable) families were named, such as the general economic development (crisis versus growth), cultural and social shifts in intergenerational relationships and a possible weakening of social ties.

Importantly, the experts expressed ambivalent opinions about the possible consequences of various future developments. For example, on the one hand, economic growth was perceived as necessary to sustain low levels of unemployment and to ensure decent levels of wages as well as substantial public support for families which reduce poverty and thus vulnerability. On the other hand, the experts also pointed out that economic development might bring more pressure to families if not being accompanied by more general changes in the workplace culture (e.g. if employers are not considerate of parental duties) and lifestyle in general (e.g. if individuals neglect interpersonal relationships because of too much focus on work).

A similar ambivalence was visible in how the experts spoke of the increasing female labour force participation. On the one hand, higher engagement of women in paid work has a positive impact on family incomes and improves women's situation in terms of financial independence, also with regard to their future pensions. On the other hand, several experts pointed out that the pressures it imposed on women should not be overlooked. Without family-friendly workplaces and sufficient childcare, and without changes in men's roles women may run the risk of being overburdened, given increased pressure to do their best both in the role of a mother and of an employee. We believe that all ambivalences about possible economic and cultural developments need to be carefully considered, as they may require different policy measures. Even the most positive changes may raise new challenges for policy-makers.

The identified factors referred to the economic development and employment, the reconciliation of work and family life, changes in gender roles and broader cultural changes. In the literature, each of these societal forces is directly related to at least one dimension of vulnerability—and indirectly usually to more than one. For example, economic expansion and contraction affect inequality as well as unemployment and, thus, entries in and exits from poverty (e.g. Danziger et al., 2012; Jonsson et al., 2013; McKernan & Ratcliffe, 2005).

Economic hardship in turn clearly fosters feelings of stress and lowers psychological well-being (e.g. Belle, 1990; Belle & Doucet, 2003) and there is a stigma related to poverty that triggers social isolation and depression (e.g. Mickelson & Williams, 2008; Reutter et al., 2009). To name another example, gender roles prevailing in society do influence the position of women both in the family as well as in the labour market (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Pfau-Effinger, 2000). Employed wives often perceive higher stress levels and lower psychological well-being because they usually still shoulder a larger share of family labour than their spouses (e.g. Allen et al., 2000; Mikula et al., 2008). On the other hand, women who reduce their working hours or even leave the labour market suffer economically from the “care penalty” even in old-age (Evandrou & Glasser, 2003). With regard to economic development, gender roles and work–family reconciliation, the focus group research is largely in line with the existing literature.²⁴ Going beyond this literature, however, it also gave the opportunity to think about links between these areas, existing challenges and possible future developments; thoughts that guided the research activities described in the next chapter and prepared the ground for scenarios reflecting different future states that will be presented in Chapter 11.

²⁴ The literature regarding broader cultural changes is a little bit more mixed. But claims about the disappearance of “the (nuclear) family”, rising problems in building up emotional bonds and a weakening of solidarity in societies in general have been continuously raised from the 1970ies onwards (e.g. Claessens, 1979; Lasch, 1978).

5. Future developments and their consequences for vulnerability of families with children

5.1. Introductory remarks

For the expert questionnaire, we condensed the rich material of the focus groups. This concerns definitions of vulnerability as well as the description of the major forces driving future vulnerability. First, in line with existing definitions of vulnerability in the literature, we summarised the many aspects discussed in Section 3.1 under three dimensions of vulnerability as follows: *Economic vulnerability* refers to financial aspects. It covers poverty and economic hardship, e.g. the inability to pay for necessities, a low standard of living and limited access to public facilities. *Psychological vulnerability* includes strong feelings of stress, anxiety or depression. Such problems for children and families might be attributable to parents who are overburdened because of multiple workloads and conflicts between duties, or to conflicts within families, to child neglect or domestic violence. *Social vulnerability* comprises aspects such as stigmatisation, discrimination and a lack of social support. These three dimensions cover almost every aspect of vulnerability mentioned in focus group discussions and the literature.²⁵

Second, focusing on the future of vulnerable families with children, the discussants considered various directions of macro-level developments and identified a number of drivers that might be important for the futures of vulnerable families. These factors were grouped into four major categories of main forces: the economic development, changes in gender roles, factors influencing the reconciliation of work and family life, and broader cultural changes. Fifth, policy changes can be understood as a further relevant force because participants in focus groups often mentioned that social policy and/or family policy might modify the situation of vulnerable families to a large degree.

²⁵ The necessity of disregarding specific aspects of vulnerability arose from limitations in the maximal length and scope of an online questionnaire. We chose physical health and disabilities to be omitted because forces like economic or cultural development in Europe are not assumed to affect them directly. In addition, biological, medical and epidemiological aspects do not pertain that much to social science and go thus beyond the authors' expertise (for a similar argument see Hanappi et al., 2015, p. 2). It should, however, be noticed that several physical problems are of high relevance exactly because they often trigger economic, social and psychological problems (Olsson & Hwang, 2003).

In the *expert questionnaire*, participants could choose one country and one of the three dimensions of vulnerability their answers would refer to.²⁶ After these decisions were taken, participants were confronted with fifteen drivers belonging to the five different major forces (for details, see below). Participants were now asked to estimate the future development of a specific driver in the chosen country and its impact on the future development of the chosen dimension of vulnerability, respectively. Finally, experts were requested to report estimates of the future development of vulnerability and had to assess the relevance of each of the five forces on this development.

After asking for the impact of each of the fifteen drivers separately, questions aimed at eliciting general assessments of the relative importance of the five forces. Participants could distribute an amount of 100 points to the five forces summarising the 15 drivers to weight the relevance of each force for the future development of vulnerability. Before, however, it was intended to get estimates for the overall development of the dimensions of vulnerability in the country chosen for the near future (until 2020) and the distant future (until 2050) as well.

The following subsections will mainly present an overview of results obtained with the expert questionnaire. Occasionally, however, this chapter will also refer to the *family questionnaire* as it also included questions on the relative importance of each of the five identified main drivers of future vulnerability of families with children.

5.2. Expected short and long term developments of the share of vulnerable families

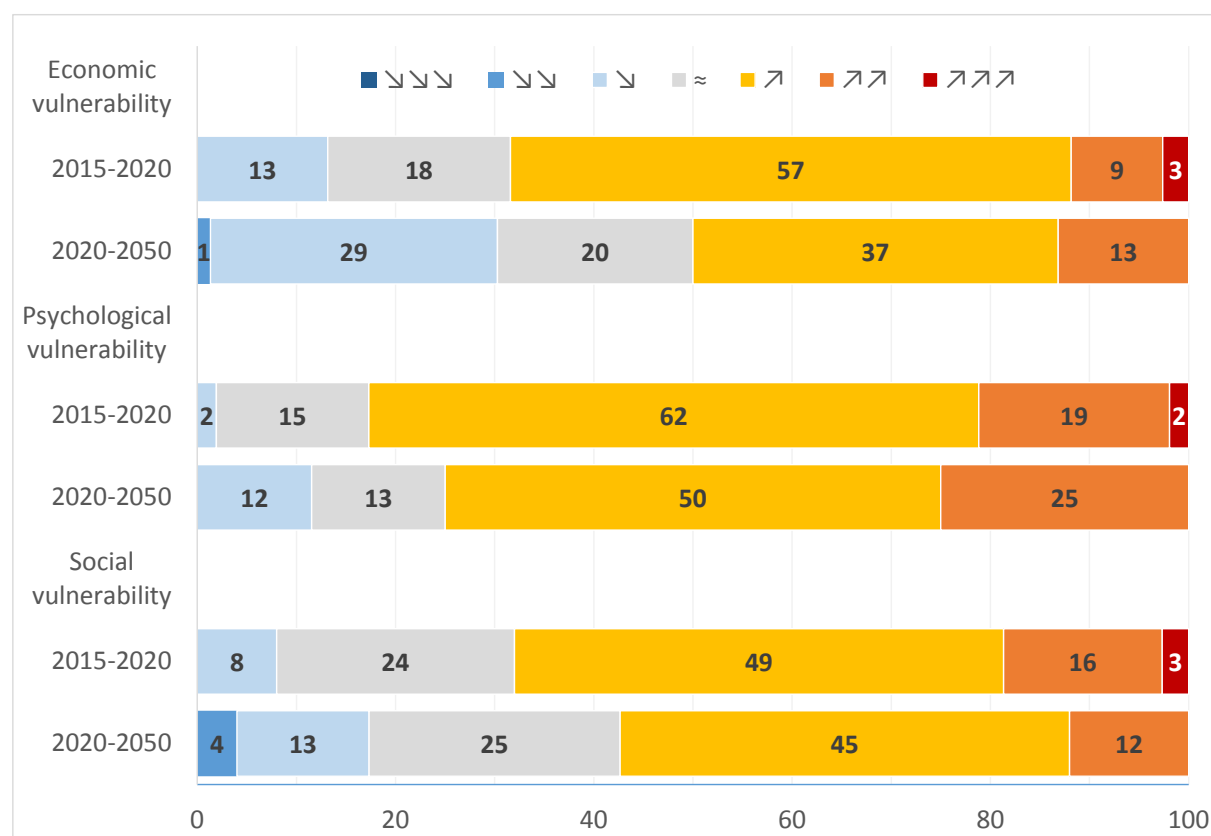
Figure 5.1 displays the estimates of the experts regarding the future development of the shares of vulnerable families with children. The results are shown separately for the three distinguished dimensions of vulnerability. Respondents could state whether they expected the share of vulnerable families to strongly decrease, moderately decrease, slightly decrease, stay roughly the same, slightly increase, moderately increase or strongly increase between 2015 and 2020 and between 2020 and 2050, respectively. In general, the results must be characterised as rather pessimistic: while all three options to express increases were used (two of them frequently), not a single expert assumed that vulnerability might strongly decrease.

²⁶ They were invited to answer with regard to another dimension and/or country of their choice later.

Even expectations of moderate decreases were rarely reported. Altogether, it seems that experts see vulnerability on the rise.

More than two-thirds of the experts predicted *economic vulnerability* to increase in the next few years and about half of them stated that the share of families affected by economic vulnerability would further increase in the period from 2020 to 2050. Participants expecting the share of families hit by economic vulnerability to decline within the next few years were the minority. Only 13 per cent reported that economic vulnerability—in their opinion—would decrease until 2020. At least 30 per cent, however, stated that it might do so afterwards.

Figure 5.1: Estimating the future development of the share of vulnerable families with children



Note: $N_{\text{economic vulnerability}} = 76$, $N_{\text{psychological vulnerability}} = 52$, $N_{\text{social vulnerability}} = 75$. This figure differentiates between estimates that the share of vulnerable families will strongly decrease (↓↓↓), moderately decrease (↓↓), slightly decrease (↓), stay roughly the same (≈), slightly increase (↑), moderately increase (↑↑) or strongly increase (↑↑↑).

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

Even more pessimistic are predictions regarding *psychological vulnerability*. Eight out of ten experts thought that the share of families whose members suffer from psychological

vulnerability was to increase during the next five years. Three-quarters expected the affectedness of families by psychological vulnerability to grow after 2020. Only two per cent of the experts estimated that psychological vulnerability would decline until 2020. At least twelve per cent predict a shrinking share of families affected by psychological vulnerability between 2020 and 2050.

Regarding *social vulnerability*, the results are similar to those with economic and psychological vulnerability but slightly more optimistic. For the period between 2015 and 2020, for instance, 57 per cent of the experts supposed the share of vulnerable families with children to rise, 24 per cent thought it would not change and eight per cent expected it to decrease.

Further analyses differentiated between expertises according to six different regions of Europe.²⁷ Results show that the general tendencies expected do not differ between them. For each region, a majority of participants estimated the shares of vulnerable families to increase. Differences between assessments made by practitioners and scientists are small. Nevertheless, compared to scientists, a larger share of those directly working with families expected increases in social vulnerability in the short run (until 2020) and increases in psychological vulnerability in the long run (until 2050) (for details see Riederer et al., 2016).

5.3. The relative importance of major societal forces for future vulnerability

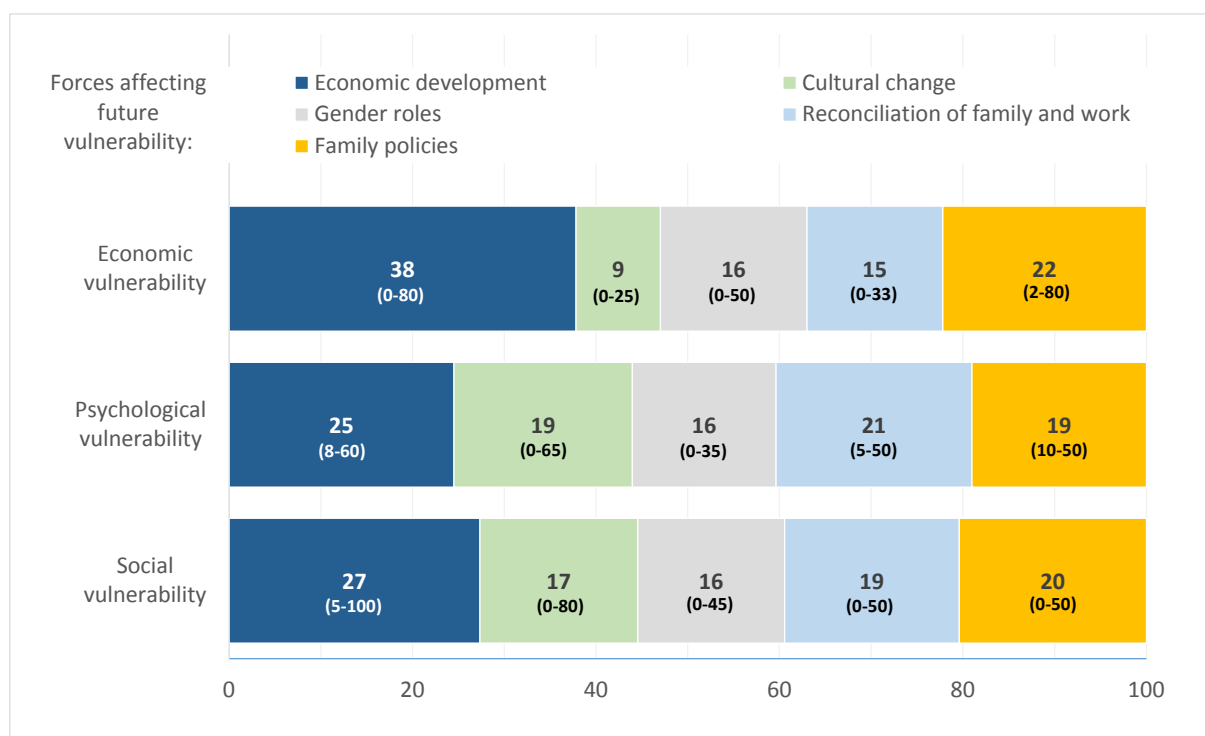
Experts indicated the (relative) importance of each of the five major forces driving future vulnerability by distributing 100 points among them. Figure 5.2 gives the average amount of points (relevance) that experts allocated to them, separated by dimensions of vulnerability. In general, experts thought that each of the five forces had some relevance for the future vulnerability of families with children. Nevertheless, some of the forces were perceived to be more relevant (at least to specific dimensions of vulnerability) than others. For *economic vulnerability*, the economic development can be clearly identified as the most relevant aspect.

²⁷ The six regions are *central western Europe* (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands), *German-speaking part of Europe* (Austria, Germany, Switzerland), *western Europe* (Northern Ireland, Ireland, United Kingdom), *northern Europe* (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), *southern Europe* (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) and *eastern Europe* (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia). Some regions comprise more countries than others to guarantee case numbers that were high enough for the analyses conducted.

Eight out of ten experts awarded more than 20 points to this force (if each force were of the same relevance, each would get 20 points). On average, experts distributed 38 points to it. Nevertheless, there were severe differences between single experts: two experts distributed 80 points to economic development, while one gave it no points at all.²⁸ The other four forces reached average scores between 9 and 22 points. The only force assumed to be of minor relevance for economic vulnerability seems to be cultural change: almost one-quarter of the experts did not award it a single point.

²⁸ For this expert policies were most important (80 points), followed by gender roles (10) and work–family reconciliation (10). In total, eleven per cent of the experts awarded ten points or less to economic development.

Figure 5.2: Relevance of different forces for future vulnerability



Note: $N_{\text{economic vulnerability}} = 76$, $N_{\text{psychological vulnerability}} = 52$, $N_{\text{social vulnerability}} = 75$. Experts expressed the relevance of each of the five major drivers of future vulnerability on scales from 0 to 100. The sum over all five forces had to equal 100. The figure shows average ratings and ranges (minimum–maximum in brackets). Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

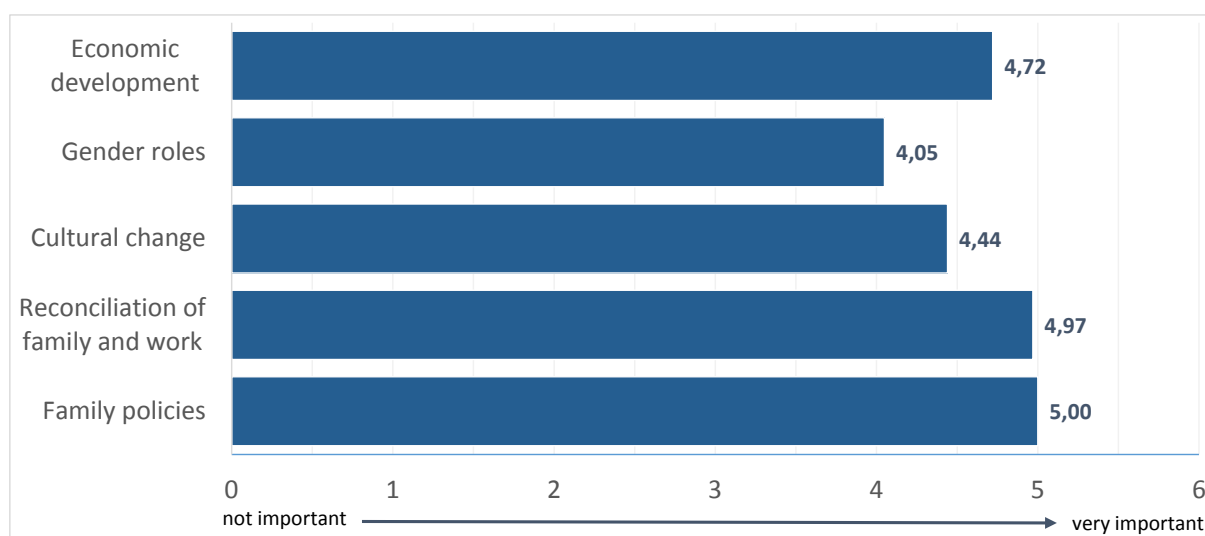
With regard to *psychological vulnerability* as well as *social vulnerability*, the results were somewhat different. Economic development was again perceived to be most important on average but differences between the mean estimated impacts of the five forces were much smaller than for economic vulnerability (with a distance of 16 points between economic development and family policy). While economic development reached scores of 25 and 27 points, family policy and reconciliation of family life and professional work received between 19 and 21 points in each of these two dimensions (6 and 7 points between first and second).

Overall, the highest relevance for the future vulnerability of families with children was attributed to economic development. Family policy was apparently assumed to have the second biggest influence. Experts awarded around 20 points to family policy for all three dimensions of vulnerability. Thus there is a belief that politics can affect future vulnerability in Europe. In addition, while especially average points given to gender roles were remarkably constant across the different dimensions of vulnerability (16 points on each of the three dimensions), it seems that general cultural change and the reconciliation of work and family

life were assumed to be more relevant for psychological and social vulnerability than for economic vulnerability.

In the family questionnaire, participants were asked about their opinion about how important future developments (changes) in the same five areas will be for the future well-being of families. Figure 5.3 gives the results showing average relevance ratings for the five major forces.

Figure 5.3: Major forces affecting vulnerability of families with children



Note: Due to none response N varies between 1,124 and 1,170. The original scale ranges from 0 “will not be important at all” to 6 “will be very important for families”. Shown are means. Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors’ own computations.

The parents asked perceived all of these five factors to be relevant, as all average ratings are clearly above the middle of the available scale reaching from 0 (not important) to 6 (very important). In line with results obtained in the expert questionnaire study, respondents rated changes in gender roles and other cultural changes the lowest. Though not ranked highest, economic development was regarded as highly relevant for the future well-being of families with children. Most important for parents, however, were family policies and the reconciliation of family life and professional work (reaching a mean rating of 5).

5.4. Drivers and different dimensions of vulnerability

Experts assessed the developments of fifteen drivers on 7-point rating scales ranging from “strongly decrease” (-3) to “strongly increase” (+3). Immediately afterwards, they indicated the probable effects of these developments on future shares of vulnerable families with children using the same 7-point rating scales. Table 5.1 gives correlation coefficients (Pearson r) for the association between the estimated development of a driver and its estimated

consequence for the share of families affected by economic vulnerability. A positive (negative) correlation coefficient indicates that an increase of the driver is—on average—assumed to lead to an increase (a decrease) in the shares of vulnerable families in the future.

Table 5.1: Shares of households at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe (in %)

Forces and corresponding drivers of future vulnerability (share of vulnerable families in 2050)	Economic vulnerability	Psychological vulnerability	Social vulnerability
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>Economic development</i>			
Real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	-.06	.06	-.40
Unemployment	.75	.81	.67
Inequality in earnings	.77	.77	.77
<i>Cultural change</i>			
Acceptance of the pluralism of family forms	.11	.02	-.17
Strength of personal relationships	-.16	-.66	-.15
Demands of parenting (i.e. the effort expected of a good parent to make children grow up safe and happy)	.17	.16	.26
<i>Gender roles</i>			
Female labour force participation	.04	.54	.01
Share of men engaged in childcare	-.23	-.40	-.08
Frequency of arrangements of shared physical custody (with alternating residence) of a child after divorce	-.10	.23	-.06
<i>Employment factors affecting the reconciliation of family and work</i>			
Job demands (in terms of longer working hours and more work commitment)	.37	.75	.48
Frequency of flexible working arrangements (such as telecommuting, working from home, flexi-time etc.)	.23	-.06	-.11
Work-related geographical mobility of parents	.28	.45	.33
<i>Family policies</i>			
Financial support to families (provided by national or regional governments)	-.63	-.52	-.60
Access to childcare provided by the government	-.47	-.46	-.65
Government support for fathers and mothers to reorganise their workload when they want to dedicate time to parenting (reduce worktime or temporarily quit their job)	-.31	-.23	-.65
N	76	52	75

Note: Experts assessed whether the driver and thus the share of vulnerable families will strongly decrease (-3), moderately decrease (-2), slightly decrease (-1), stay roughly the same (0), slightly increase (+1), moderately increase (+2) or strongly increase (+3). Shown are Pearson correlation coefficients between these two assessments, respectively. All coefficients with absolute values larger than .40 are printed bold. For instance, the correlation coefficient of -.40 in the upper right indicates “The higher GDP per capita is expected to be, the lower is on average the expected share of families with children affected by social vulnerability in the future (in 2050).” Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors’ own computations.

Economic vulnerability: Two out of the three drivers subsumed under *economic development* show strong associations with economic vulnerability: rises in unemployment and in inequality of earnings were assumed to raise the share of vulnerable families ($r=.75$ and $.77$). Looking at the mean ratings, experts on average assumed only a very small increase in unemployment ($m=.16$) but a clearer one in inequality of earnings ($m=.88$) leading to

corresponding increases in future shares of vulnerable families ($m=.32$ and $.78$, respectively). Surprisingly, the estimated development of real gross domestic product per capita was not linked to expected changes in economic vulnerability. Another driver that showed a strong association with economic vulnerability belongs to *family policy*: higher financial transfers were assumed to decrease the share of vulnerable families with children ($r=-.63$). On average, however, experts expected financial support to families by governments to decrease ($m=-.24$) so that economic vulnerability would slightly increase in the future ($m=.28$). A noteworthy association was also found with regard to access to public childcare (more childcare, lower economic vulnerability).

Psychological vulnerability: Strong associations between estimated developments of drivers and their consequences on future psychological vulnerability of families with children were again found with unemployment (higher unemployment, higher psychological vulnerability) and earnings inequality (higher inequality, higher psychological vulnerability). In addition, future job demands and the development of the strength of personal relationships were also assumed to be strongly linked to future psychological vulnerability. On average, experts expected that increasing job demands and a weakening of personal relationships would amplify future psychological vulnerability. With regard to female labour force participation, the share of men engaged in childcare, work-related geographical mobility and financial support by governments, medium associations between assessments of their future developments and the estimated consequences on future psychological vulnerability of families with children were found. While an increase in female labour force participation was assumed to lead to an increase in the shares of vulnerable families, an increase in male engagement in childcare was assumed to counterbalance this negative effect. Furthermore, experts assumed that greater geographical mobility and lower financial support by governments would contribute to an increasing share of families affected by psychological vulnerability.

Social vulnerability: Strong associations with social vulnerability were found for unemployment, inequality in earnings, financial support for families by the government, access to public childcare and public support to reorganise workload when parents want to dedicate more time to their children. Once more, drivers representing the economic development and family policy seemed to be most important. While increases in unemployment and earnings inequality as well as decreases in financial transfers to families

were assumed to contribute to increasing social vulnerability, improved access to public childcare and more government support to parents who want to reorganise their workload were expected to decrease the future share of vulnerable families with children. Medium associations between assessments of their future developments and the estimated consequences on future social vulnerability were found for job demands (higher demands, higher social vulnerability) and, interestingly, real GDP per capita (the higher the GDP, the lower increases in social vulnerability).

5.5. What drives future vulnerability of families with children?

Summary and conclusions

More than two-thirds of the experts predicted that *economic vulnerability* will increase during the next years (until 2020) and about one-half of them stated that the share of families affected by economic vulnerability will further increase in the period from 2020 to 2050. Even more pessimistic were predictions regarding *psychological vulnerability*. Eight out of ten experts thought that the share of families whose members suffer from psychological vulnerability will increase in the next five years. Three-quarters of respondents expect the extent of psychological vulnerability to grow after 2020. Regarding *social vulnerability*, results are only slightly more optimistic than those for economic and psychological vulnerability. Our findings thus clearly indicate that the majority of experts did not believe that the situation of families with children would improve in the near future. While this is not desirable from the perspective of European societies in general and European politics in particular, expected increases should nevertheless not be overly dramatized either. Only very few experts expected strong future increases of vulnerability.

Experts also indicated the (relative) importance of *five different societal forces* for the changes in vulnerability to be expected: (a) economic development, (b) changes in gender roles, (c) general cultural changes, (d) the development of employment factors related to the reconciliation of family and work and (e) changes in family policy. In general, each of the five forces was attributed some relevance for the future vulnerability of families with children. Some of these forces, however, were perceived to be more relevant than others. Experts assessed economic development to be most relevant for all three dimensions of vulnerability. Changes in family policy were also expected to be relevant for economic, psychological and social vulnerability. While the development of work–family reconciliation

scored high with regard to psychological and social vulnerability, changes in gender roles seem to be perceived of relevance primarily for psychological vulnerability. Parents responding to the family questionnaire thought that changes in family policies and in the reconciliation of family life and professional work will be most important for the future well-being of families. However, they also placed high value on the future economic development.

Findings gained from *assessments of fifteen drivers*—three indicators for each force—largely correspond to the results using the general evaluations of forces. Experts usually emphasised the effects of drivers referring to economic development (e.g. unemployment), family policy (e.g. public childcare) and—sometimes—reconciliation issues (e.g. job demands). For instance, experts estimated that a rise in earning inequality and a decrease in public financial transfers to families would contribute to an increase in future economic, social and psychological vulnerability. The consequences of changes in gender roles and other cultural aspects for the vulnerability of families with children were not considered to be as important unless psychological vulnerability was addressed. In this regard, the findings show that experts expected an increase in female labour force participation and a weakening of personal relationships to increase future psychological vulnerability.

What to conclude? On the one hand, there is a pessimistic evaluation of the future development of vulnerability of families with children in Europe. On the other hand, however, experts expect policies to be capable of reducing vulnerability in principle. Family policy was rated the second most important driving force of future vulnerability by experts and even higher by parents participating in the family survey. In addition, future policy might counteract unemployment and rising inequalities in earnings. Anyway, family policy is key to reducing poverty (e.g. Lohmann, 2009; Troger & Verwiebe, 2015) and to enhancing life chances of children in Europe in the future. Unsurprisingly, the respondents' assessments are largely in line with the existing literature. The next chapter will also discuss the relevance of policies.

6. Expert opinions on policies to stop the reproduction of vulnerability

6.1. The problem of vulnerability reproduction

Vulnerability is often passed on from parents to their children. Individuals who grow up in families where members suffer from vulnerability are at risk of starting families of their own that are affected by vulnerability as well. Already in the “Futures task force workshop” participants—who generally paid a lot of attention to children—pointed to the ongoing reproduction of vulnerability within families, raising the question of how to break this cycle of reproduction (cf. Philipov et al., 2014).

The discourse of intergenerational transmission of vulnerability within families in the literature is highly intertwined with the intergenerational transmission of class and education. Using EU-SILC 2011 data on 27 European countries, Bellani and Bia (2016) found that childhood poverty reduced probabilities of completing secondary education and thus has a detrimental effect on income as an adult. Even in their most conservative scenario growing up poor decreased later income on average by five per cent which in turn lead to a four percentage points higher poverty risk. In general, lower intergenerational mobility is associated with higher inequality (Causa & Johansson, 2010; Corak, 2013). Results of Whelan, Nolan and Maître (2013) analysing data from EU-SILC 2005 demonstrated effects of parental background on the economic vulnerability of adult children. In all ten European countries under study except Denmark, children of parents in elementary occupations were characterized by higher risks of economic vulnerability than children of parents with highly skilled non-manual occupations. In addition, adults who experienced bad economic circumstances in their family of origin as teenagers were at higher risks of economic vulnerability in all countries considered. Another important aspect of the discourse of intergenerational transmission of vulnerability within families are effects of the family of origin on one's own parenthood (including also the intergenerational transmission of divorce). McLanahan and Percheski (2008) argue that family structure affects parental resources that in turn influence the quality of parenting and thus child outcomes.

Experts participating in focus group discussion talked about policy measures which—in their opinion—would be crucial to prevent the “reproduction of vulnerability” from one generation to another. Three central aspects were identified as crucial for preventing the “reproduction of vulnerability” by the experts: education, reconciliation policies and social services for the

most disadvantaged families. The role of monetary transfers was discussed ambivalently by the participants.

6.2. Policy recommendations by experts in focus groups

Education, education, education

One key challenge for the future is to help vulnerable families not only temporarily—by mitigating the most urgent needs—but to improve their situation in a sustainable manner. In all six focus groups participants strongly emphasized the importance of education in this respect. Education was furthermore very widely defined including education of children, parents, employers and the society as a whole.

Education of children (schooling): Especially early childhood education was perceived to support children from vulnerable families, providing them with the skills necessary for breaking the “cycle of reproduction of vulnerability” via educational careers. Access to and participation in early education programs were perceived to be “*essential*” for “*fairness of chances*” (Bern). Better education later improves their position in the labour market when they enter adulthood. As one informant put it:

“Education is the beginning of the start of getting out of poverty, you are able to give everybody a basis for a better life.” (Brussels)

Some of the participants also mentioned that they see another advantage of education. The more highly educated are often more open-minded such that vulnerability produced by stigmatization might decline. Last but not least, education in schools offer also some protection and short-time escape from vulnerable environments at home. This argument is not only about serious conflicts or even violence at home. It is much broader. It is important that children are not confronted with their own situation and/or problems all the time—that children also experience a world that is very different to their vulnerable environment.

“It is really important for children who are in poor environments, and I mean poor economically, that they have somewhere where they don’t look upon themselves as poor.” (Stockholm)

The experts in our study discussed also numerous characteristics of educational systems, which are important for securing good education for all children and for reducing inequalities between them. Already at preschool level, formal childcare can provide good conditions for

developing children's skills and making sure that they enter the school system with similar levels of cognitive competences. This will improve the situation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the same vein, adjusting the working hours at school so as to give children the opportunity to do their homework under teacher supervision would also be supportive. Teachers should react to children's needs, compensating for their weaknesses and promoting their interests and strengths. Furthermore, education should be extended to topics related to healthy lifestyles and an active living. In that respect also the need for organising children's free time, including holidays was mentioned. This would be particularly important for parents who cannot afford to pay for various leisure activities.

Counseling parents (giving information and advice): Some informants noted that young parents are not always ready for their parental roles because the modern world poses so many new challenges to them and role models are often missing. Experts thus diagnosed a need for various courses on general parenting skills (raising a child, taking care of it, etc.)—not only for parents already suffering from severe problems but as preventative action for all parents. In addition, parents should be informed about available sources of support in case of any problems in their family. Finally, the informants emphasised that parents should also be educated with respect to their children's education. They should know how important education is and how to guide their children and encourage them to learn. Furthermore, it would be useful for young parents to learn more about what type of education offers the best employment opportunities.

“I think some parents still need more information what educational options—and what professional opportunities afterwards—their child actually has, because they may not be in an environment which can fathom these professional opportunities.” (Vienna)

“I can see it daily in my everyday work life that if parents are educated and informed they are more able to promote their children.” (Bern)

Sensitization of employers/ managers (raising awareness): The aim of educating employers is quite different but maybe also of same importance. The informants agreed that employers need to be “educated” about the relevance of family-friendly working environments. Many of them would just “not know the value of investing in an employee also in terms of supporting the development of his or her private life” (Warsaw). Experts emphasized that it is highly

important to influence organizational culture in order to improve the situation of families. The key argument behind is that parents need time to be there for their children.²⁹ Employers themselves will also benefit, they argued, as job satisfaction improves employee loyalty and productivity.

“It’s not about money but about happiness and equilibrium in the workplace, creating loyalty towards the company. When workers feel happy, they work more efficiently and are more loyal to their companies.” (Madrid)

Educating society (values, social skills): This aspect concerns educating all members of the society: promoting certain values and teaching various (soft, social) skills. Given societal changes, the informants acknowledged that people should learn how to work on having good interpersonal relations in their family and in the society at large. The importance of more empathy in social relations was mentioned, as was the need for promoting positive attitudes towards “family” in the society. Creating a “family-friendly” society was perceived as the very basic requirement for improving the situation of families and children.

Reconciliation policies, social services and financial transfers

Reconciliation policies were seen as a central aspect of any political strategy to counteract vulnerability. In order to ensure a good future for children, parents need to be able to earn enough money for a decent living and at the same time to spend enough (high-quality) time with their offspring. Our experts discussed aspects like availability, opening hours or quality of formal childcare but what they really stressed was that having time for children requires balancing paid work and caring for children, being there for them even though having to work.

“I mean, what does a child need? Attention and time. And time policies. If we are favouring a society that is incompatible with care for children, it implies that our model is generating neglected children.” (Madrid)

Overall, the interview partners stressed the need for policies to accommodate to parents’ needs to care. A higher flexibility of policy measures is called for, given an increasing diversity of family forms, cultural changes and new ways of living. This flexibility concerned

²⁹ Most discussants referred to aspects of *time with/for children* but one expert from Bern also noted, for instance, that day nurseries at the workplace would be of great help.

a choice regarding time before returning to the labour market but also the availability of various childcare options (e.g. institutional childcare, nannies or childcare facilities in companies). Finally, informants also stressed that when creating care policies one needs to consider the long-term consequences and perspectives of policies. For example, one needs to take into account the economic and welfare consequences of care leaves for the family and for the caring person, the consequences concerning gender equality and the costs for the welfare system.

With regard to those who are most disadvantaged, experts talked about several *social services* supporting vulnerable families. They discussed, for instance, the relevance of services addressing special needs, such as assistance to children or parents with disabilities. Furthermore, a need for psychological support was strongly advocated: mediation services for families with conflicts, counselling or therapy for children and their parents, etc. The dominant theme, however, touched upon how social support services could be improved to be more sensitive to people's needs. It was stressed that the state should offer options and support families but not dictate people how they should live. And most of all, it was emphasised that families in need should not be punished or stigmatised for their failures.

Financial transfers were understood as necessary to address the most urgent needs of vulnerable families. The informants mentioned tax policies (including VAT-related regulations to allow for lower food prices), direct monetary transfers as well as a necessity to invest in free health-care services. But overall, the informants agreed that monetary transfers and investments alone do not suffice to prevent or alleviate families' vulnerability or the reproduction of vulnerability; economic or financial support needs to be embedded in broad offers of education and in creating a family-friendly society. Otherwise, one informant mentioned, they could even be counter-productive regarding the reproduction of vulnerability across generations:

“There is an important study in the Netherlands (...) they found out that we already have the 3rd and the 4th generation of people having financial benefits from the state. Because they are brought up in a tradition of financial transfers from the state to the family, to sustain them and to be able to live, in poor conditions, but to live.”
(Brussels)

6.3. The relative importance of policy measures according to experts

In the focus groups, several forms of policy measures were mentioned but discussants obviously placed most emphasis on educational policies. For the expert questionnaire, ten policy measures capturing the most important aspects discussed in the focus groups were selected to see how single measures are rated in comparison to each other and whether the result that educational measures are most important can be replicated. Experts participating in the questionnaire study assessed the relevance of the following ten policy measures:

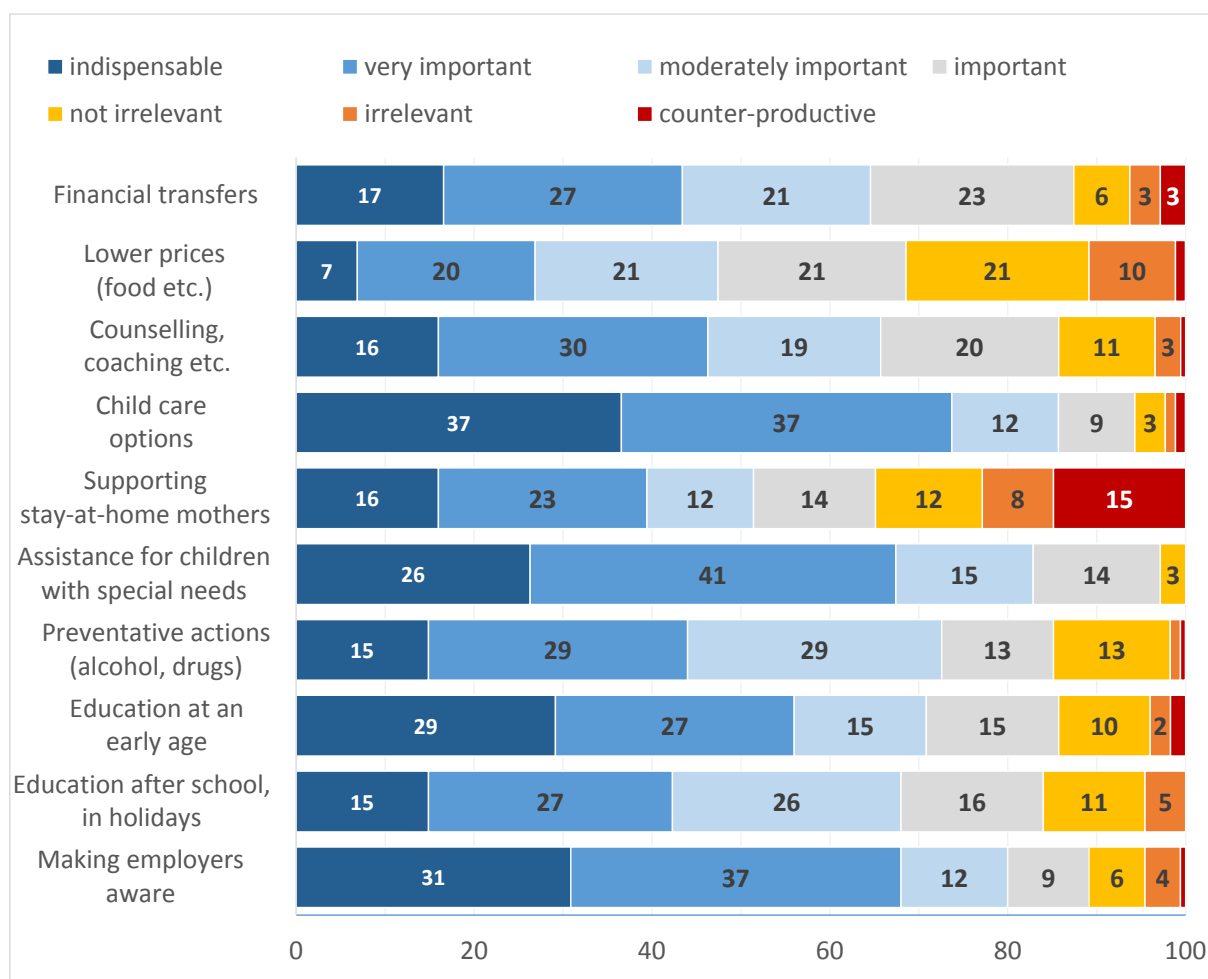
- direct financial transfers to families in needs;
- lower prices of food and other products of day-to-day importance;
- providing information, counselling and coaching for families (parents and kids);
- providing flexible, affordable childcare options for preschool children (age 0–5);
- supporting mothers who want to leave the labour market to take care of their children;
- organising assistance for children with special needs (e.g. migrant students with language deficits, disabled children);
- investing in preventative actions with regard to problems with alcohol, drugs or violence;
- providing education for all children already at an early age (age 3–5);
- organising education and mentoring for children after school and during holidays;
- making employers aware that it makes sense to care for the work–life balance of their employees.

In general, all ten measures were expected to be important. Even the measure rated worst on average, i.e. supporting stay-at-home mothers, was at least not irrelevant for more than two-thirds of the experts. Nevertheless, there were marked differences in the degree of perceived relevance as the shares of experts who thought that a specific measure was indispensable varied from seven to 37 per cent (lower prices of food and other products of day-to-day importance/ providing flexible, affordable childcare options for preschool children aged 0–5).

The three policy measures rated highest on average were (1) *providing flexible, affordable childcare options for preschool children*, (2) *organising assistance for children with special needs* and (3) *making employers aware that it makes sense to care for the work–life balance of their employees*. More than two-thirds of the experts thought that assistance for children

with special needs and raising employers' awareness are indispensable or at least very important in preventing children from the intergenerational transmission of vulnerability. Nevertheless, the relevance given to childcare for preschool children was outstanding. Almost three-quarters of the experts thought that childcare options are either indispensable or very important. An additional twelve and nine per cent stated that childcare options are moderately important or important to stop the reproduction of vulnerability. Less than two per cent rated this factor to be irrelevant or counter-productive.

Figure 6.1: Relevance of policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability



Note: For detailed wording in the questionnaire (policy measures) see main text.
Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations (N=175).

A high importance rating could be also observed for *providing education for all children already at an early age*. More than half of the responding experts believed that the provision of early education is indispensable or at least very important to stop the reproduction of vulnerability. At least of moderate importance were the following measures: (a) *investing in preventative actions with regard to problems with alcohol, drugs or violence*; (b) *providing information, counselling and coaching for families*; (c) *organising education and mentoring for children after school and during holidays*; (d) *direct financial transfers to families in needs*.³⁰

³⁰ For Europe in total, the average ratings of these measures were still higher than five on the 7-point-scale where 5 stands for “moderately important”, 6 for “very important” and 7 for “indispensable”.

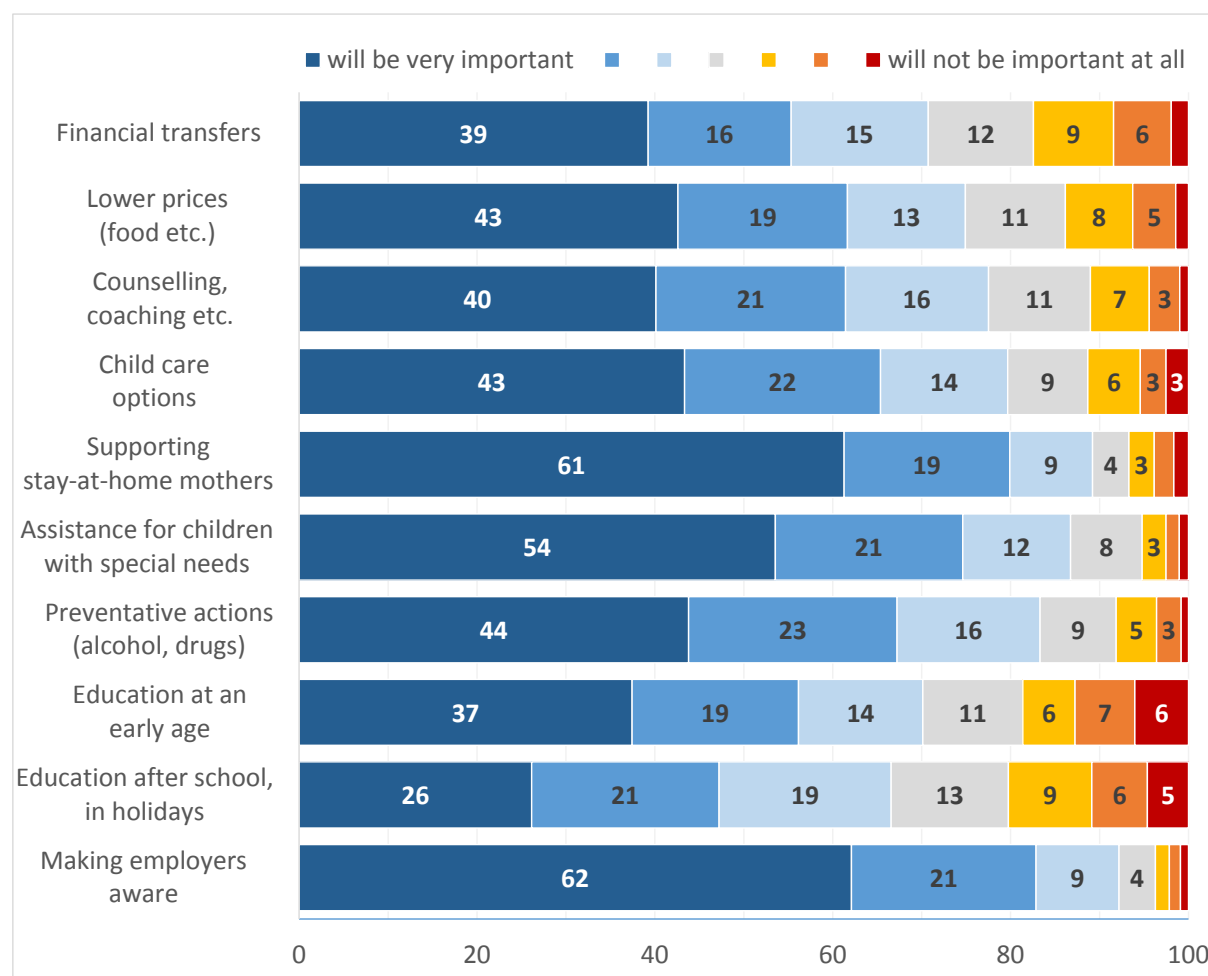
Two measures were clearly perceived to be of less importance in preventing children from inheriting vulnerability from their families of origin in Europe: *lower prices of food and other products of day-to-day importance* and *supporting mothers who want to leave the labour market to take care of their children*. A look at Figure 6.1 shows somewhat polarised opinions with regard to both measures but especially regarding the support for stay-at-home mothers. One in six experts thought that supporting mothers wanting to leave the labour market is indispensable to stop the reproduction of vulnerability but almost as many considered this to be counter-productive. Indeed, this policy measure is characterised by ambivalence: staying at home means that mothers can spend more time with their children but might also increase financial insecurity of families and undermine the career prospects of mothers—who are also often role models for their children.

Interestingly, some *differences between practitioners and scientists* could be found: Support for stay-at-home mothers and the relevance of counselling and coaching for families were more important for practitioners than for scientists. Scientists, on the other hand placed slightly more emphasis than practitioners on education after school and in holidays, childcare for preschool children, education at an early age and financial transfers. Maybe practitioners directly working with vulnerable families and in part responsible for counselling and coaching indeed perceive and thus highlight other aspects of vulnerability than scientists who are more involved in analysing abstract data and aggregated outcomes. While childcare was most important, and support of stay-at-home mothers least important, for scientists, practitioners considered assistance for children with special needs to be most important and lower prices of products needed for daily life to be least important (for details see Riederer et al., 2016).

6.4. What families think: conformity and differences with regard to experts' opinions

Parents were also asked how important certain policy measures will be if governments want to reduce vulnerability in the next generations. Beforehand, it was explained that the next question will be about children who grow up in families where members suffer from vulnerability, i.e. from social risks and problems such as poverty, stress and depression and/or a lack of support by other people. It was also made clear that vulnerability is often passed on from parents to their children and that individuals who grew up in vulnerability are at risk of starting families of their own that are affected by vulnerability as well. The ten mentioned policy measures were exactly the same as in the expert questionnaire.

Figure 6.2: Relevance of policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability



Note: The original scale ranges from 0 “will not be important at all” to 6 “will be very important”.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N=1,343).

Figure 6.2 displays the detailed answers that responding parents have given. The responding parents perceived *raising awareness of employers for work–family balance* and *supporting stay-at-home mothers* to be of prior importance, followed by *assistance for children with special needs*. With regard to one of these policies, there is a huge discrepancy with assessments by experts. For experts, *support of stay-at-home mothers* was (on average) the least important of these ten policy measures. It was (almost) the only measure where some polarization could be observed as a remarkable fraction of participants found that this measure is even counter-productive. Parents, on the other hand, were least convinced of educational measures (education after school, early schooling). Interestingly, those were exactly the policies whose relevance for inhibiting the reproduction of vulnerability was emphasized

most by experts in our focus group discussions. Views of scientists and practitioners seem to differ from opinions of parents.

6.5. Conclusions: Education, monetary transfers or flexible reconciliation?

The present chapter dealt with policy measures that should be able to mitigate or even stop the reproduction of vulnerability within families. In the literature, family structure, family policy and educational policy are considered to be important determinants of societal inequality (cf. Huber & Stephens, 2014; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; Solga, 2014). In focus groups, discussants primarily stressed the relevance of education to overcome social heritage (Mynarska et al., 2015). Indeed, education and childcare policies affect differences in intergenerational social mobility across industrialised countries (Causa & Johansson, 2010).

In focus groups, education was however more broadly defined than usual and comprised education for children, parents and other important societal actors, in particular employers. The experts emphasized the significance of formal childcare and early childhood education for children from vulnerable families, so they are provided with the skills necessary for improving their position in the labour market when they enter adulthood. As parenting nowadays was seen as particularly demanding (due to the rapid social and economic changes), educational programmes for parents were regarded as essential to improve skills for communication and conflict resolution. Parents should also be educated about the importance of schooling for their children's future. As for employers, they should become aware of that it is worthwhile investing in their employees' well-being and supporting them also in their parental roles.

Findings from the expert questionnaire confirm the relevance attributed to education—at least to some degree. The three policy measures identified as being most important were the *provision of childcare options* for preschool children, *assistance for children with special needs* and *raising the awareness of employers* regarding the work–life balance of their employees, closely followed by providing *education for all children already at an early age*. Thus, while education after school and during holidays was of medium importance only, the average relevance rating of early childhood education was very high. In addition, the two policy measures with highest relevance scores—childcare options and assistance for children with special needs—include educational elements. Raising the awareness of employers refers

to education in a broad sense. The only policy measure listed which referred to parents (providing information, counselling and coaching) was at least considered to be of medium relevance.

Experts perceived other suggestions such as lowering the prices of daily used products or supporting stay-at-home mothers as much less useful in stopping the transfer of vulnerability within families from one generation to the next. Support for stay-at-home mothers was even evaluated as counter-productive to this aim by a noteworthy proportion of experts. Parents participating in the family survey, on the other hand, did not share this opinion. For them, support for stay-at-home mothers was among the most important policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability. In line with experts, however, responding parents also emphasized the relevance of *raising the awareness of employers* regarding the work–life balance of their employees and the necessity of *assistance for children with special needs*.

There is much coherence between experts and parents but also some disagreement. The extent to which differences between opinions of experts and families result from their different positions remains an open question.³¹ Nevertheless, it seems plausible that the perspective of parents is different to the one of experts. While parents experience concrete needs in their daily life, experts usually adopt a more distant and forward-looking perspective. Financial support or staying at home, for instance, will solve problems of a family in the short run but not necessarily improve the situation of vulnerable families (as a large societal group) in the long run. Finally, it has to be said that the *relative ranking* of educational measures among all the other policy measures was lower with parents than with experts. Disregarding the other policies, however, the absolute ratings of parents and experts were very similar: both think that education is of great importance.

Which policy is finally needed to reduce future reproduction of vulnerability? Experts emphasized the relevance of (early) education and reconciliation policies. But availability and affordability of quality childcare or support for early childhood development differ across Europe (Bouget et al., 2015) as well as the way how public policies “structure a child’s

³¹ Differences will partly be due to differences in the sample composition of the two studies. While Spanish, Portuguese and German families dominate the family sample, the sample of experts is more heterogeneous. With regard to support for stay-at-home mothers, for instance, it is obvious that experts from northern Europe hold a different position than experts from other parts of Europe or parents from northern Europe. For details about regional differences in ratings see Tables A.6.1 and A.6.2 in the Appendix.

opportunities and determine the extent to which adult earnings are related to family background” (Corak, 2013, 80). Although childcare and education are on the political agenda for years (if not decades), existing (national) policies and current involvement of the European Union in education are usually characterised at best as “ambivalent and partly contradictory” (Agostini & Natali, 2015, 154). The rhetoric relevance of education and training has also not led to higher investments in education. Improvements of policies seem to be necessary to stop the reproduction of vulnerability within families. The arguments of focus group participants suggest that traditional education in a narrow sense might not be enough, that its contents matter and that education has to go beyond schools. Differences between experts and parents responding to the family questionnaire might also be a hint that the acceptance of policy measures among those who should make use of it might be crucial. Finally, non-educational policies were identified as relevant as well. An integrated approach combining different policy measures might therefore be an even better answer to future challenges regarding the reproduction of vulnerability.

Part III — Specific topics

7. Consequences of separation and re-partnering for fertility

7.1. How will higher separation rates affect fertility? Aims of present research

European countries have witnessed significant changes in the pattern of family formation since the 1960s. Over the past few decades, men and women have been marrying less, and they have been cohabiting and divorcing more (Kiernan, 2004); they have also been having fewer children than their predecessors, and at older ages. Because of the decreasing stability of marriages and consensual unions, higher-order unions have become more widespread (Billari, 2005) and childbearing is no longer restricted to only one marital or consensual union (Kiernan, 1999; Pinnelli et al., 2002). While it is widely accepted among scholars that the educational expansion and postponement of childbearing have contributed to lower fertility rates and may do so in the future, the role of partnership instability for fertility is less clear.

Three mechanisms have been identified with regard to how union disruption might affect fertility. These three ways, however, have partly contrasting consequences for fertility. On the one hand, union dissolution reduces the opportunities for conceiving and bearing children. At the same time, however, it produces a pool of persons who may enter new partnerships and have additional children in stepfamilies (Thomson et al., 2012). Union instability however may also lead to a delay of family formation, as many women and men are unable—or unwilling—to form a lasting union at younger ages, which is often seen as a precondition for parenthood (Basten et al., 2014, p. 60). It is the balance of these opposing forces that influences not only future completed fertility levels and family size but also the diversity of family compositions as, in any case, union dissolution increases the heterogeneity of childbearing. Some individuals will have “additional” births after re-partnering while union dissolution curtails time in union and reduces fertility for others (van Bavel et al., 2012).

Against this background, the present research aims to extend the understanding of the link between union dynamics and fertility and its change across recent birth cohorts. Childbearing is understood to be contingent on union status and stability while at the same time already born children affect union formation and dissolution. In order to evaluate the influence of cultural, institutional and legal context on the link between childbearing and partnerships, three countries characterized by different value systems—Italy, Norway and Great Britain—

will be compared. Analysing the interrelationships of partnership and childbearing, the societal context is highly relevant as it affects the acceptance of unmarried births, divorces, single parents and patchwork families.

Although in many countries being in a marriage is still seen as the ideal setting to start and complete family plans (Barlow & Probert, 2004; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001), we have witnessed a change in the link between marriage, cohabitation and fertility (Perelli-Harris et al., 2010). Furthermore, countries differ greatly by the cultural, institutional and legal context in which childbearing takes place (Klüsener et al., 2012; Perelli-Harris & Sánchez Gassen, 2012). For instance, while in Italy partnerships and childbearing are established in a traditional setting (Rosina & Fraboni, 2004), in Great Britain both unpartnered and unmarried births are frequent (Basten et al., 2014). In Italy, indeed, only slight increases of out-of-wedlock births and divorces have been observed—and this not until very recently (Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2010; Basten et al., 2014). In Great Britain or Norway, by contrast, fertility outside marriage is socially accepted and union dissolution has become a common experience, especially for cohorts born after 1960 (Basten et al., 2014; Kravdal, 2008). Therefore it is reasonable (and likely) to observe a stronger negative effect of union instability on fertility in Italy than in Great Britain or Norway. The expected negative effect in Italy, however, may be mitigated by late union formation and childbearing. In Italy, fertility levels are generally low—also for those with an intact union during their childbearing years.

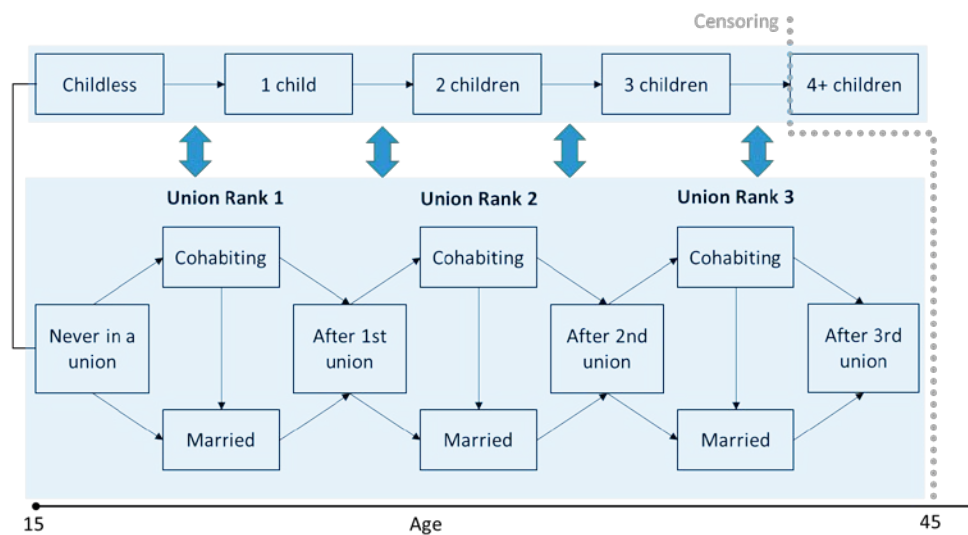
7.2. Data and method

The Italian data come from the multi-purpose household surveys on *Family and Social Subjects*, carried out in 2003 and 2009. The present study employs data from 30,255 women born from 1940 onwards that did not have their first child or enter a first partnership before the age of 15 or after the age of 49 and were born in Italy. For Great Britain, data and estimates of Beaujouan et al. (2014; 2015) are used. Their analysis is based on a series of datasets that comprise information on past fertility and partnership histories, i.e. ten datasets (2000-2009) from the *Centre for Population Change* GHS database 1979-2009 merged with the first wave of the *Understanding Society Survey* (2009). Their working sample consists of 61,718 women with consistent partnership and childbearing histories fulfilling the criteria described above (born in Great Britain from 1940 onwards etc.). The Norwegian data come from *Generations and Gender Survey* (GGS) conducted in 2007/08. Validation of GGS-based

cohort indicators shows that the latter provide an accurate account of demographic trends in Norway for cohorts born since the mid-1940s (Vergauwen et al., 2015). The survey includes information about 14,880 males and females born between 1927 and 1988. Applying the same criteria as for the other two countries results in a working sample of 6,589 Norwegian women.

A microsimulation model was developed to investigate the interrelationships of partnership and childbearing. Based upon an already existing implementation (Thomson et al., 2012), the models assume that childbearing is contingent on union status and stability and, at the same time, takes into account potential effects of children already born on union formation and dissolution. Hazard regression models of birth and union events were estimated for Italian, Norwegian and British women to provide input for the microsimulation model. The risks of conception up to the fourth birth are estimated as a function of the current union status and the union status at prior births. Furthermore, the risks of formation and disruption of first, second, and third partnerships are estimated conditionally on the number of previous births and the union in which they take place. Additionally, the model differentiates also between marriage and unmarried cohabitation (cf. Bélanger et al., 2010).

Figure 7.1: State space representation of the microsimulation model



Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* microsimulation model (for a prior version see Winkler-Dworak et al., 2015).

The basic microsimulation model is sketched in Figure 7.1. All women are assumed to be childless and never in a union at age 15. For the birth processes, the transitions up to parity 4 are considered. Transitions into and out of marital/non-marital partnership are included in the model up to union rank 3. We censor at conception of the fourth child or at age 45, whichever

occurs first. The simulation model is implemented in Modgen, a generic microsimulation programming language developed and maintained at Statistics Canada (2009). The microsimulation model generates, based on the parameters produced from the hazard regression analysis, hypothetical populations of women with different union and childbearing histories, even for those cohorts who are still in their reproductive age (1,000,000 synthetic life courses for each cohort). The latter allows to assess the changes in family forms that occur and expand across cohorts, including families which have been identified as vulnerable in workshops and focus groups held with stakeholders and policy makers (Philipov et al., 2014; Mynarska et al., 2015).

In the following, we discuss the simulation output for birth cohorts 1940-49 to 1970-79 by comparing completed fertility levels of the simulated life courses with one or another type of union history. First, however, we give an overview regarding union and birth histories in the countries under study.

7.3. Descriptive results: family trajectories in Italy, Norway, and Great Britain

Table 7.1 contrasts the family trajectories by age 40 of Italian, British and Norwegian women, over the cohorts 1940-49 to 1960-69. Overall, Italian women are more likely to remain unpartnered than British and Norwegian women, and the proportion and contrast has grown slightly in the last cohort. When there has been a first union, its issue differs widely across cohorts and countries. The overall proportion of women separating is much higher in Britain and in Norway than in Italy, and even more so in the recent period (23 and 22% against less than 7% in the 1940-49 birth cohort, 38 and 42% against less than 14% in the 1960-69 birth cohort). Because of this, the proportion of women in intact unions at age 40 has gradually decreased and reaches 57% in Britain, 55% in Norway, and 77% in Italy in the last cohort. Re-partnering, however, is much more widespread in Norway and Great Britain than in Italy.

In parallel, the number of women childless at age 40 remains relatively low in Norway (12%), has increased slightly in Britain (14% to 16%), but has jumped from 12% to 20% in Italy. Again, the context of births differs widely between the three countries. First of all, while births outside a union or before the first union remain rare in Italy (slightly more than 3% of all women experience this event), in Great Britain their level has passed from 5.5% to 9.4%, while in Norway the share of first births before a first union even declined across cohorts.

Births in cohabitation have not spread as much in Italy as in Great Britain or Norway, affecting less than 3% of all Italian women compared to more than 9% of British women born in 1960-1969. In contrast, 27% of their Norwegian peers born in the 1960s had their first birth in a cohabitation. Consequently, the proportion of births in married first unions has dropped much less in Italy than in Great Britain and in Norway, while already starting from higher levels: in the last cohort 72% of women had their first baby in a marriage in Italy and around 56% in Great Britain and only 38% in Norway.

Table 7.1: Unions and births to Italian, British and Norwegian women born 1940-69 (%)

Country:	Italy			Great Britain			Norway		
Birth cohort:	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69	1940-49	1950-59	1960-69
never in a union	5.4	5.7	9.3	3.1	4.0	5.3	4,0	3,1	3,6
first union									
intact	88.0	83.8	77.0	73.8	66.4	57.0	74,1	66,0	54,7
separated/not re-partnered	5.1	7.7	9.2	8.2	9.3	11.3	10,4	11,3	10,4
re-partnered	1.6	2.8	4.6	14.9	20.4	26.4	11,5	19,7	31,4
Childless	11.7	13.2	19.9	13.9	15.9	16.0	11,5	11,6	12,5
1st birth									
before first union	3.3	3.3	3.2	5.6	6.3	9.4	11,3	10,6	8,5
cohabiting first union	.8	1.2	2.8	.9	2.8	9.3	3,1	11,2	27,0
married first union	83.7	81.0	71.9	76.6	68.4	55.7	72.0	60,6	38,1
after first union	.6	1.4	2.4	3.0	6.7	9.7	2,2	6,0	14,0
2nd birth									
in 1st childbearing union	64.5	59.9	51.8	65.7	60.9	55.2	62,4	61,3	61,4
after 1st childbearing union	.4	.8	.9	1.9	2.7	3.7	3.0	3,6	3,8
3rd birth									
in 1st childbearing union	22.7	16.3	11.8	24.8	20.9	18.4	25,4	24,2	27,2
after 1st childbearing union	.2	.4	.4	2.5	3.0	4.0	2,5	3,5	4,3
4th birth									
in 1st childbearing union	6.9	3.5	2.0	7.3	6.1	4.8	6,8	4,2	5,7
after 1st childbearing union	.1	.2	.2	2.0	1.8	2.0	,8	1,4	1,8

Note: Shown are birth and union histories for women up to age 40. Cohorts refer to women born between 1940 and 1949, between 1950 and 1959 and between 1960 and 1969, respectively. Numbers give percentages.

Source: Authors' analysis of data from FSS 2003/09 (Italy), GGS 2006/07 (Norway) and Centre for Population Change GHS database 1979-2009 and USOC 2009 (Great Britain).

Differences in the context of first and further births act in accordance with the spread of separations and re-partnering, which is stronger in Great Britain and in Norway: many more births of all orders took place after the first union in these two countries, and also after the first childbearing union. Further births (of order 2+), already less frequent in Italy, remain extremely rare in step-families (less than 1% for births beyond the first one over the three

birth cohorts). Childbearing after the first fertile union seems to really make a difference in Great Britain, because while risks of further births tend to decrease in a first childbearing union, they tend to increase in subsequent ones. For instance, the share of women having a second birth in their first childbearing union passed from 66% in the 1940-49 birth cohort to 55% in the 1960-69 birth cohort, while it increased from less than 2% to almost 4% after the first childbearing union in Great Britain. In Norway, the number of second or third births after the first fertile union rose similarly to Great Britain, yet the share of Norwegian women having a second or third birth in their first childbearing union remained quite stable across cohorts.

7.4. Findings of the microsimulation I: completed family size—the role of first union status and age at first birth

Table 7.2 gives the completed family size of the simulated cohorts for Italian, British and Norwegian women depending on whether their first union remained intact or dissolved during their reproductive years (or at least until the conception of their fourth child). Overall, a negative effect of union instability on completed fertility levels is visible with Italian, British and Norwegian cohorts. More specifically, Italian women who experience a union dissolution on average end up with half a child less than their peers in an intact first union, where the difference is stable across cohorts. As expected, the difference in Italy is larger than in Norway and Great Britain. Moreover, fertility patterns are slightly more dispersed in case of separation, with significantly elevated levels of childlessness and smaller reductions in shares of women at higher parities, as would be expected in case of union dissolution and possible re-partnering (details not shown here). Again, the differences are more pronounced for Italian rates with rather strong reductions in the share of women with two or more children if first unions dissolve. This finding is not unexpected as re-partnering and further childbearing in subsequent unions is still rare in Italy.

Table 7.2: Simulated completed fertility at age 45 by union dissolution and cohort

Country:	Italy		Great Britain		Norway	
First union:	intact	dissolved	intact	dissolved	intact	dissolved
1940-49	2.04	1.51	2.08	1.88	2.21	1.85
1950-59	1.91	1.39	2.02	1.77	2.20	1.82
1960-69	1.80	1.27	2.04	1.77	2.33	1.91
1970-79	1.74	1.22	1.95	1.65	2.18	1.80

Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

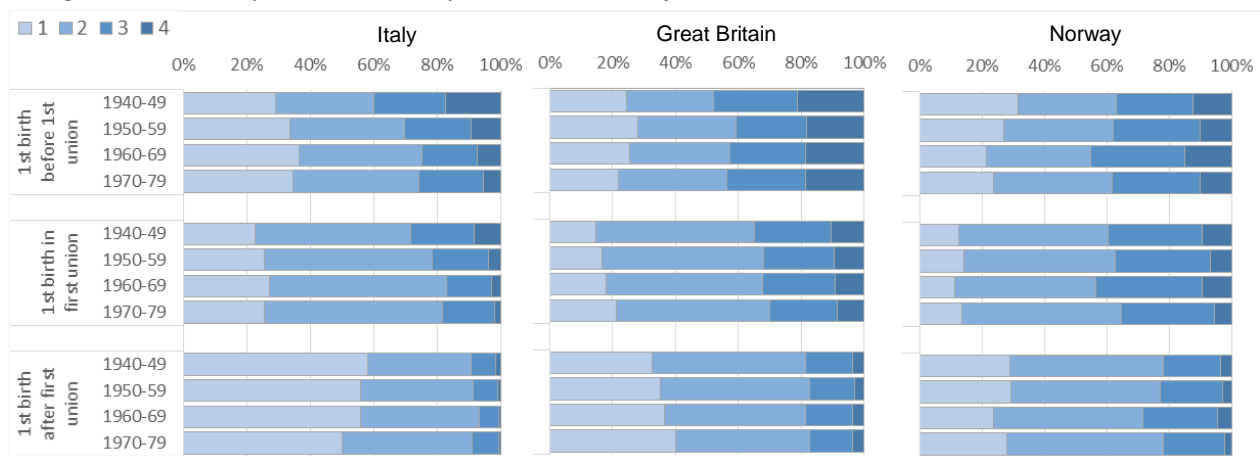
Table 7.3: Simulated number of births by union status at first birth

Country:	Italy			Great Britain			Norway		
First birth	before 1 st union	in 1 st union	after 1 st union	before 1 st union	in 1 st union	after 1 st union	before 1 st union	in 1 st union	after 1 st union
1940-49	2.25	2.15	1.50	2.45	2.30	1.89	2.18	2.36	1.95
1950-59	2.05	2.00	1.51	2.30	2.25	1.86	2.21	2.30	1.96
1960-69	1.96	1.93	1.50	2.35	2.23	1.86	2.40	2.42	2.09
1970-79	1.98	1.95	1.60	2.37	2.16	1.80	2.24	2.27	1.96

Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

In order to identify the key mechanisms through which union formation and dissolution may influence completed family size, we compare the simulated number of children at various markers along the birth and union histories. Table 7.3 differentiates between populations by union status at first birth: (a) women experiencing their first births before a first union, if any; (b) women having their births after a first union is entered; (c) women with first births after the first union is dissolved. The simulation results show that populations with pre-union births usually show higher fertility levels than populations with union births and even higher than if the first birth occurs after the first union is dissolved. The only exception is Norway where populations with first births in first union have the highest fertility.

Figure 7.2: Parity distribution by union status at first birth



Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

Figure 7.2 gives the results in more detail demonstrating that the simulated parity distribution varies significantly by the union status at birth. Compared to other groups, women with a first birth in the first union have most often two children. In contrast, the simulated parity distribution of women with a first birth after the first union was dissolved shows higher shares of women with only one child. Among populations with a pre-union birth especially high shares of women with four or more children can be found, but at the same time also high shares of women with only one child.

Populations with a first pre-union birth are on average 4 to 6 years younger than populations with a first birth in the first union while populations where the first births arrive after the first union is dissolved are on average 4 to 5 years older. To shed further light on the question how much union status at first birth affects fertility, the differences in average completed fertility levels reported in Table 7.3 were decomposed into differences attributable to differences in ages at first birth and into differences due to the partnership context (details not shown here). Findings suggest that fertility differences between populations with pre-union first births and populations with first births in first union can be attributed to the lower ages at which these pre-union first births occur. If these women would not be younger, they would have less children than those with first births in first union. Except from Norway, age at first birth does however not fully account for differences between populations with first births in first union and those with first births after first union. For that matter, union status itself is highly relevant in Great Britain and especially in Italy.

7.5. Findings of the microsimulation II: union dissolution effects at different parities

This section explores the impact of a union disruption on completed fertility levels for populations where all women form a union before having children (if any). Table 7.4 gives again simulated fertility levels. This time union dissolution is differentiated taking into account the family stage at which the separation takes place (parity).

In general, union instability reduces completed family size. The effect of union dissolution is however the smaller, the higher the number of children already born in the union. According to the results for all three countries, women dissolving the first union before a first birth occurs (if any) have about one child less than women whose first unions do not dissolve. This difference diminishes not only at higher parities but also shrinks across cohorts. Compared to their predecessors, recent cohorts enter first unions and parenthood at later ages. This different timing of family formation might also affect the impact of union instability on fertility. Exemplifying such an influence, Figure 7.3 shows the simulated number of births by single years of age (employing estimates) for the Norwegian cohort born 1960-69. In addition, the figure

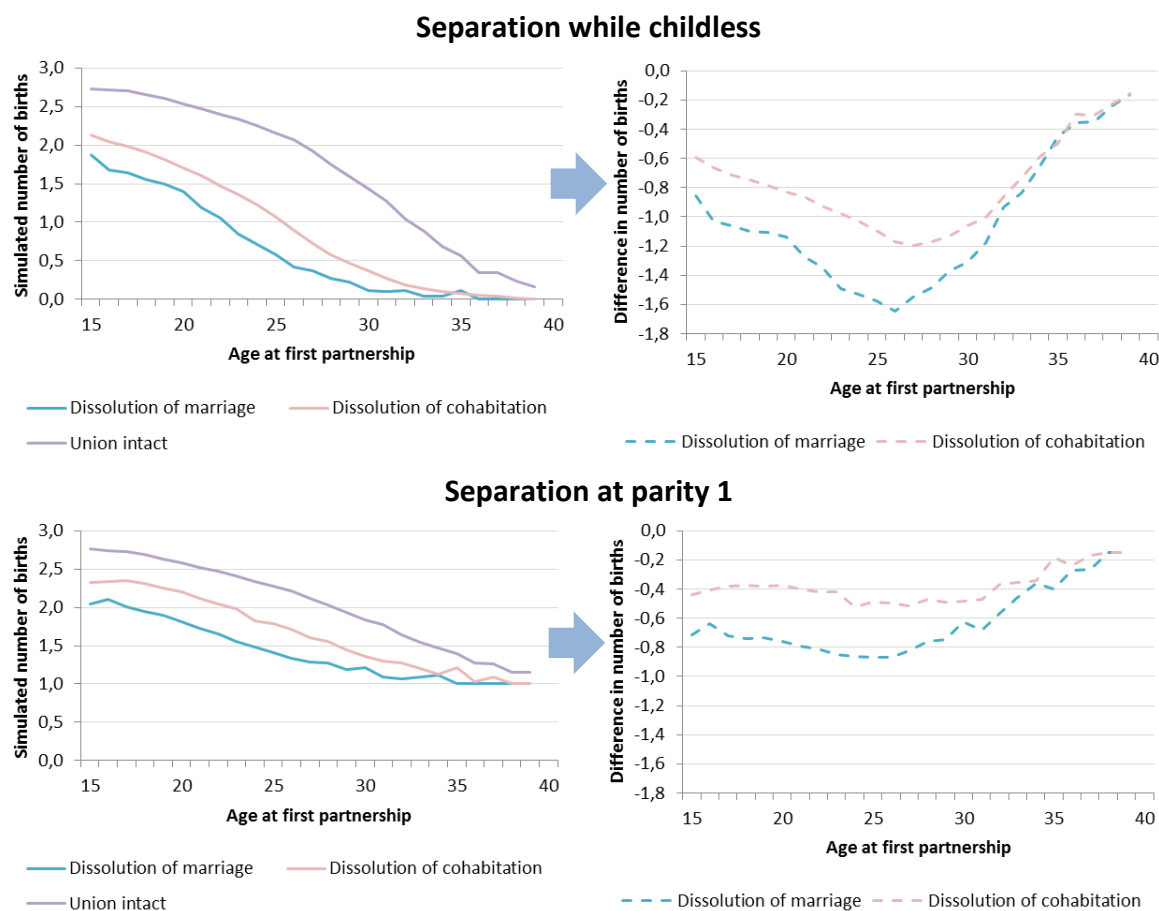
further

Table 7.4: Simulated number of births in populations by union disruption

Country:	Italy		Great Britain		Norway	
Union:	separated	intact	separated	intact	separated	intact
<i>Separation while childless</i>						
1940-49	.67	2.02	.95	2.05	.90	2.19
1950-59	.61	1.89	1.02	1.99	1.22	2.18
1960-69	.57	1.79	1.15	1.99	1.46	2.30
1970-79	.63	1.72	1.07	1.88	1.49	2.16
<i>Separation at parity 1</i>						
1940-49	1.31	2.14	1.67	2.31	1.58	2.41
1950-59	1.30	2.02	1.68	2.26	1.66	2.34
1960-69	1.32	1.95	1.71	2.24	1.90	2.46
1970-79	1.41	1.97	1.75	2.16	1.88	2.29
<i>Separation at parity 2</i>						
1940-49	2.14	2.47	2.28	2.53	2.25	2.58
1950-59	2.13	2.34	2.29	2.49	2.27	2.52
1960-69	2.11	2.28	2.31	2.49	2.34	2.61
1970-79	2.14	2.27	2.32	2.45	2.31	2.47

Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

Figure 7.3: Simulated number of births (left panel) and difference in simulated number of births (right panel) of women with a union disruption and women with intact first unions by age at partnership entry, type of union and parity at separation



Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women using transition rates of the Norwegian 1960-69 cohort in Modgen.

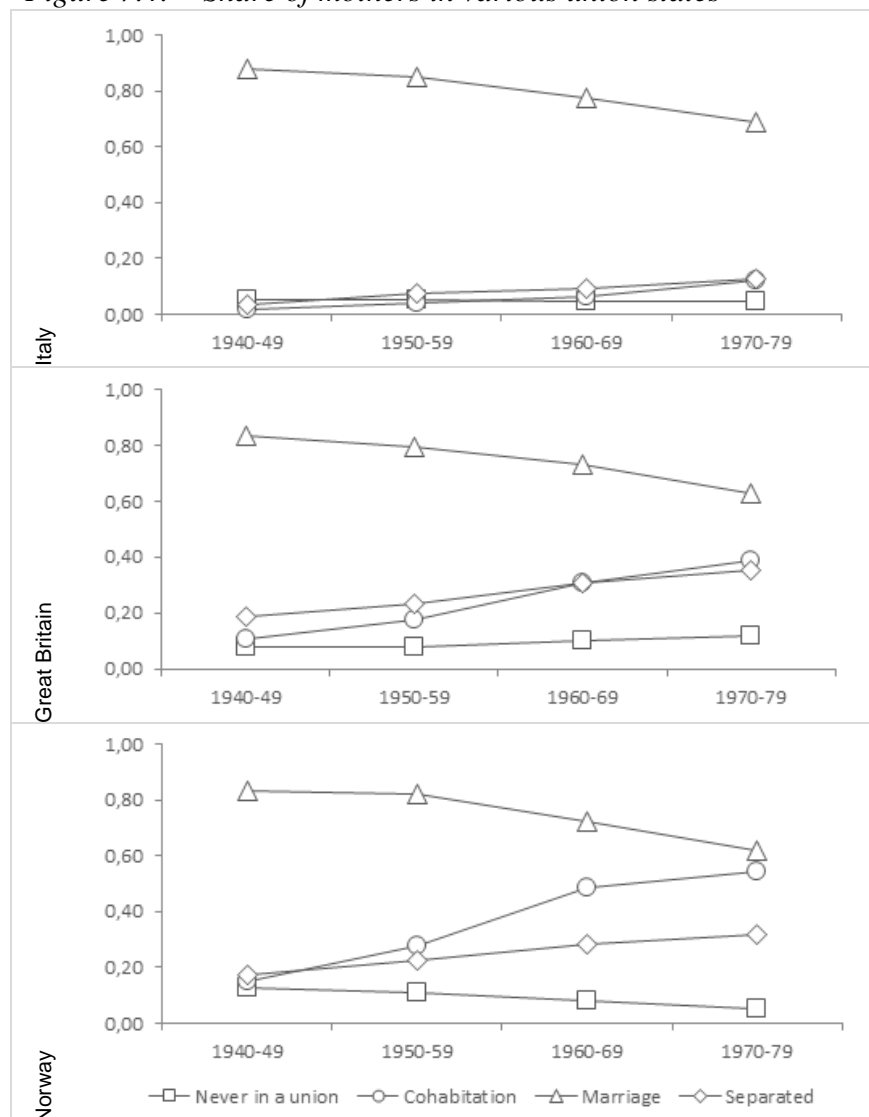
differentiates between unmarried cohabitation and marriage. The results suggest the following pattern: A younger age at the entry into the first partnership (union formation) allows more time to re-partner and to have further children. Differences between women in stable unions and separated women are largest when the woman's first partnership was established in her mid-20s. If union formation happened rather late, a separation does not matter that much for completed fertility. Observed differences are rather low after an age of 35 years at least. Furthermore, divorce has a larger negative impact on fertility than dissolution of unmarried cohabitation as the latter are on average dissolved at shorter durations than marital unions. Although the size and relative importance of the effects vary, findings are similar for the other cohorts and countries.

7.6. Findings of the microsimulation III: re-partnering, family types and births

Figure 7.4 finally shows the share of mothers ever in various union states according to the union and childbearing rates observed for Italian, British and Norwegian cohorts. Because of increasing union dissolution rates, the share of separated mothers, expectedly, is increasing in all three countries, hitting 13 per cent for Italian rates and even surpassing 30 per cent according to British and Norwegian rates for women born in the 1970s. Moreover, the share of mothers in an unmarried cohabitation strongly increases, though the Italian rates remain at a low level, while according to Norwegian rates half of all mothers are expected to live in an unmarried cohabitation with their children at least once in their family life course. At the same time, the share of married mothers decreases in all three countries. For the rates estimated for the 1970-79 cohort, only six out of ten mothers are expected to be married once in their family life. A British peculiarity is the high level of pre-union childbearing: between 10 and 12 per cent of all mothers in the 1970s cohort would have at least one pre-union birth under British rates. According to the Italian and Norwegian rates, these figures just would amount to 5 per cent of all mothers.

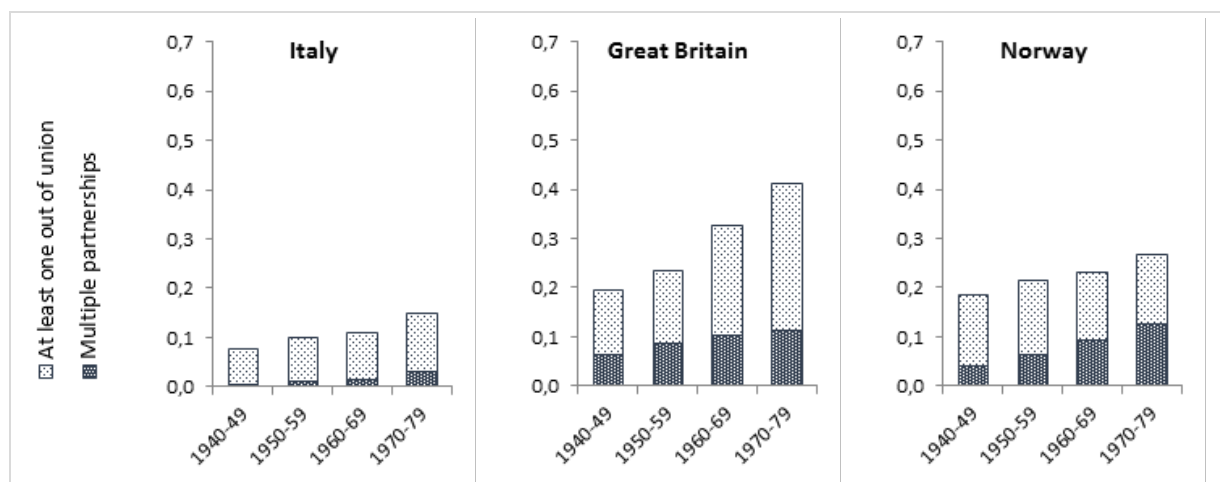
As mentioned earlier, fertility patterns are slightly more dispersed in case of separation, with significantly elevated levels of childlessness and smaller reductions in shares of women at higher parities, as would be expected in case of union dissolution and possible re-partnering. Looking at the union status among women with three children, families where children were born in multiple partnerships are rare in populations subject to Italian union and childbearing

Figure 7.4: Share of mothers in various union states



Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

Figure 7.5: Shares of women with three children who experienced multiple partnerships or gave to at least one child without being in an intact union



Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

rates, while such family forms are more prevalent according to Norwegian and British rates. According to our microsimulation output for Great Britain only six out of ten women born in the 1970s with parity three would bear their children in just one single union.

7.7. Additional analyses: the relevance of education

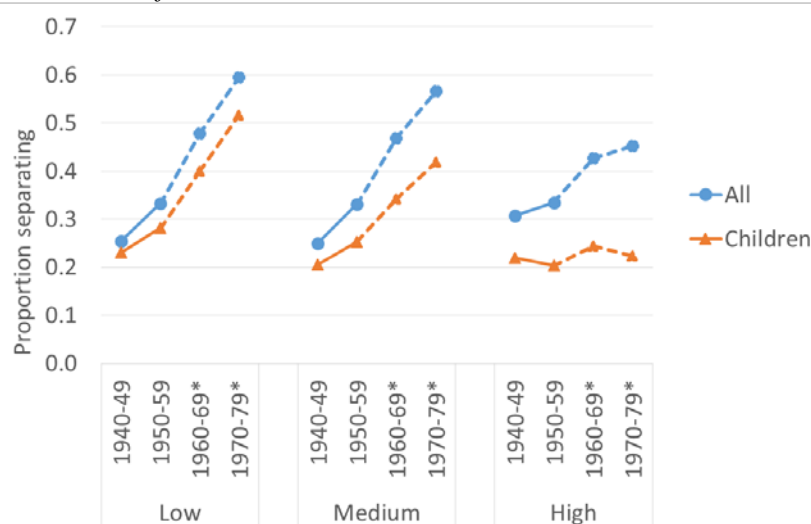
The microsimulation model developed in the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project was also used for further research asking whether the relation between union history and childbearing differs by level of education.³² Previous research has demonstrated that education affects partnership formation and childbearing (Kravdal & Rindfuss, 2007; Torr, 2011; Ní Bhrolcháin & Beaujouan, 2013). With regard to partnership stability, it is in particular important to consider that less educated usually enter their first partnership and marriage earlier, mainly because they remain enrolled in education for a shorter time (Marini, 1978; Prioux, 2003). Partnerships formed at young ages are however also more likely to break up (Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). Research from the US has found that higher educated women tend to follow family life trajectories with later childbearing and more frequently raising their children within marriage while lower educated women tend to pursue family life trajectories associated with early, non-marital childbearing and divorce (McLanahan, 2004).

As the large sample size of the British data set allows for more in-depth analyses, this data could be used to examine how the interrelationship between partnership and fertility differs by education and whether differences by education change across cohorts. For those born in the 1940s and 1950s all the information needed is documented in the data. For the younger cohorts still in reproductive age microsimulation was employed to project their family life trajectories. Therefore the hazard regressions and the microsimulation model of partnership dynamics and childbearing were separately replicated for three groups of education: high (first and higher degree); medium (teaching and nursing qualifications and ‘A’ levels); low (secondary school qualifications and below). Results reveal that educational differences in family experience are relatively small for British women born in the 1940s. Disparities, however, are growing for more recent cohorts. On average, lower and medium-educated women experience(d) a stronger increase in births out of union and in cohabitation, a greater

³² This research was done in collaboration with Ann Berrington (University of Southampton) and Eva Beaujouan (Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital), the latter one working in the EURREP project (Fertility and reproduction in 21st century Europe; ERC grant n°284238).

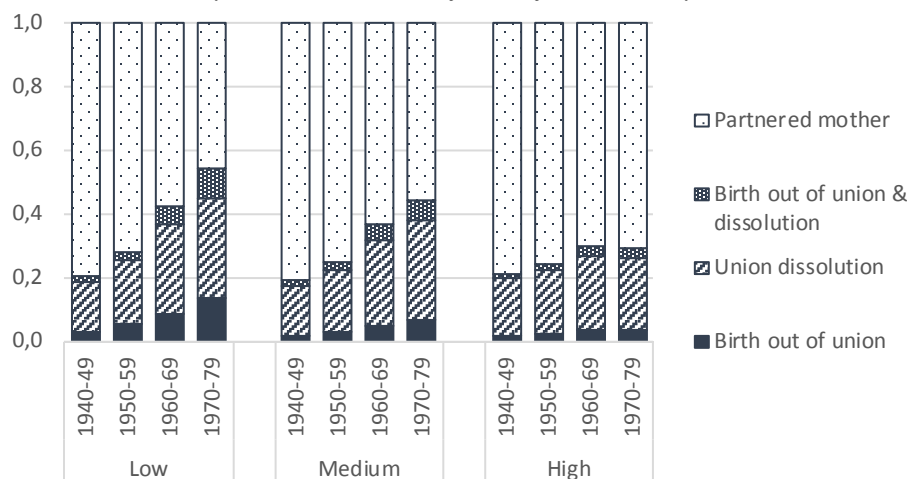
increase in union instability, more spells of lone parenthood and thus a longer overall time spent as lone mothers than higher-educated women. Figure 7.6 exemplifies these differences for union instability. In addition, the figure shows that separation rates are lower for mothers than for women in total (including childless women).

Figure 7.6: Proportion ever partnered who broke up by 45th birthday for Great Britain, all women and mothers



Note: Estimates using British survey data for older cohorts and estimates based on simulated family life courses using Modgen for younger cohorts.

Figure 7.7: Partnership histories of British women who were between 25 and 30 years old at time of their first birth by their 45th birthday



Note: Estimates from life histories of 1,000,000 women in each cohort for each country using Modgen.

However, the differences in union instability and childbearing out of union across educational groups might be driven by educational differences in the timing of family formation. Figure

7.7 gives partnership histories of women who were between 25 and 30 years old at time of their first birth. It demonstrates, for instance, that the share of mothers that have always been partnered shrinks in particular in the low and medium educated groups of women even for the same age at first birth. Among low educated mothers, the share of lone mothers who gave birth out of union and experienced a union dissolution rises nonetheless across cohorts.

7.8. Conclusion: Re-partnering only partly compensates effects of separation

Family dynamics are changing in Europe. The microsimulation presented in this chapter studied how cohort completed fertility is affected by partnership behaviours and to what extent this has changed over time. The effect of the increasing prevalence of union dissolution on completed fertility levels was investigated for Italy, Norway and Britain, three countries with different value systems. The estimated net effect of union instability was to decrease completed fertility of about half a child for Italian and about one fifth to a third of a child for British and about two fifth of a child for Norwegian cohorts. But the magnitude of the difference depends on the timing of union formation and separation: Union dissolution reduces completed fertility levels strongest for ages at first union formation around mid to late twenties and less for earlier and later ages at entry into partnership. In addition, re-partnering produces more children in new partnerships if the separation occurs earlier. Nonetheless, it is only if separation takes place after the second birth and if all women re-partner that additional childbearing would almost compensate for births lost due to union disruption.

These results have some implications for the future of families. If union formation and childbearing are delayed further, future fertility levels will decrease regardless of whether unions endure or are dissolved. Furthermore, if union dissolution becomes more common among childless women or women with one child, and if ages at first unions get closer to mid and late twenties, the negative impact of union dissolution on fertility might be reinforced. Even if all women would re-partner, however, the results of the microsimulation indicate that additional childbearing in subsequent unions would only partly compensate for the births lost due to union disruption. In addition, if the share of mothers having a union disruption is expected to further increase across cohorts, vulnerability of families with children might also increase because single parenthood often entails vulnerability.

8. Changes in attitudes: gender equity and fertility

8.1. Does higher gender equ(al)ity lead to lower or higher fertility rates?

For a long time the opinion that economic and societal progress inevitably leads to lower fertility was more or less unquestioned. During the last decades, however, several highly developed countries experienced a recovery of fertility thereby contesting this traditional view. Scholars found several—often but not necessarily interrelated—reasons for the new empirical trend of recovering fertility rates (e.g. Goldstein et al., 2009; Myrskylä et al., 2009; Surkyn & Lesthaeghe, 2004; Lesthaeghe, 2014). Some of the existing explanations refer to the development of gender role attitudes: For instance, McDonald (2000) ascribes low levels of fertility to a conflict between high levels of gender equity in individual-oriented social institutions and gender inequality in family-oriented social institutions. Increasing compliance of more progressive gender roles at the individual or household level with advancements of gender roles at the societal level could then lead to higher fertility (see also Arpino et al., 2015; Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015).³³ The negative effect of increasing gender equality on fertility at the beginning would change and become a positive one at a point where gender equality is widespread enough among the population to trigger changes in societal institutions and an adaption of welfare state policies.

In a differential equation model, Feichtinger and colleagues (2013) differentiated between traditionalist and egalitarian population subgroups and allowed for continuous flows from the traditionalists to the egalitarians. Assuming that the birth rate of egalitarians increases with their stock—due to a better societal support of their lifestyle—this model could reproduce such an U-shaped pattern of fertility development with increasing gender equality. The agent-based model developed in der *FamiliesAndSocieties* project goes one step ahead. It investigates a heterogeneous population of agents who derive utility from consumption and from meeting their individual fertility intentions while explicitly addressing the dynamic effects of gender equity on fertility.³⁴ The final aim is to explain the *development of fertility during a transition from a traditional regime* characterized by a dominance of the male-breadwinner model *to an intermediate regime* showing a conflict between individual desires

³³ Progress of egalitarian values may induce institutional changes (e.g. in terms of better childcare arrangements, evolution of social norms towards working mothers) that facilitate the compatibility of parenting and pursuing a professional career. Thus, parenthood becomes affordable with regard to dual careers, money and time.

³⁴ While “equality” means an equal division of tasks, “equity” does also allow for unequal divisions between the sexes as long as they are perceived to be fair. The model presented here refers to equity.

on the one hand and societal expectations and general conditions on the other hand *to a regime of advanced gender equity* at the household level as well as at the institutional level.

8.2. An agent-based model

The agents are characterized by their age x (female or male), sex s , level of available resources ξ , individual level of gender equity g , intended fertility f , number of dependent children n , parity p , family status (living in a union or not) and their network of friends. The resources ξ represent a universal set of endowments that captures monetary resources as well as the monetary equivalent of nonmonetary resources like for instance non-working time. The desired number of children—i.e. the intended fertility f —is drawn from a binomial distribution. Assuming that intended fertility to be slightly lower for more progressive households the probability parameter of the binomial distribution is adjusted to include an influence by gender equity g :

$$f \sim B(\rho, \eta'),$$

$$\eta' = \eta[1 - \gamma(2g - 1)], \quad (0 < \gamma \leq 1) \quad (1)$$

where η denotes the probability of the binomial distribution in the case of a medium level of gender equity, $g = 0.5$, η' determines the probability adjusted with respect to the individual level of gender equity g , ρ represents the upper bound of the distribution and γ is a parameter that adjusts the intensity of the influence that g has on f .

Unmarried agents look for a matching partner of opposite sex. This is achieved by a social distance between two agents i and j considering age x , endowments ξ and gender equity g ,

$$d_{ij} = w_1|x_i - x_j| + w_2|\xi_i - \xi_j| + w_3|f_i - f_j| + w_4|g_i - g_j|.$$

Agents who are unmarried and at marriageable age search the whole agent population for potential partners who are not part of their direct family (neither parent, child or sibling), unmarried, at marriageable age (adult), of opposite sex and at a social distance below a predefined threshold, $d_{ij} < t_1(x)$. This threshold $t_1(x)$ increases for ages > 30 by a small amount every year, since chances to find a good match on the “market” decrease with increasing age. Among all those agents who fulfil these conditions one is chosen randomly. If there is no appropriate partner, the agent remains unmarried and again tries to find a partner in the next time step.

By definition families consist of a mother, a father and n dependent children (n may be zero). If one partner dies who is part of a household without children, the household is disbanded and the widower returns to the marriage market. If both parents die in a household with children, the latter is disbanded and the children are assigned to a common household for all orphans (an orphanage). If one parent dies who is part of a household with children, the household becomes a single-parent household with children, while the widower returns to the marriage market. If such an agent finds another partner, they form a new household that includes both parents and their children (in the very rare case that both were part of widower households with children).

The two partners forming a household may have different levels of gender equity g . Immediately after marriage, however, these levels will be rather similar as a result of the matching process, with the maximum intra-household difference depending on w_4 and t_1 . Individuals may adapt their gender roles due to social effects exerted by their peers. It is assumed that gender equity at the institutional level, G , lags behind development at the individual or household level. Institutions cannot adapt as quickly as individuals or households since transformations require a chain of individual decisions at different organizational layers. Secondly, institutions only adapt if those people in the decision chain perceive changes in the society. These perceptions also lag behind individual developments. Therefore exponential smoothing of the average level of gender equity in the population was applied in attaining the institutional level of gender equity,

$$G(t) = w_5 G(t-1) + (1 - w_5) \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N g_i(t-1). \quad (2)$$

The households are endowed with a combined resource b capturing money and the monetary equivalent of time (de Laat & Sevilla-Sanz, 2011; Fent et al., 2013). To capture the heterogeneous distribution of resources a random variable ξ was drawn from a log-normal distribution to determine the individuals' level of resources ($\xi \sim LN[\mu_\xi, \sigma_\xi^2]$). Thus the household's budget that results from the endowment is the sum of individual endowments,

$$b_e = \xi_i + \xi_j,$$

where indices i and j denote the respective characteristics of the two partners. Moreover, it is assumed that more progressive households (those with a higher level of g) can achieve a higher income—since it is more likely that both parents participate in the labour market. This

advantage becomes stronger if it is supported by institutions (expressed by a higher level of G) and is given as

$$b_p = b_e \left(\beta \frac{g_i + g_j + G}{3} \right),$$

where β is a parameter to intensify or weaken the economic advantage of higher gender equity. Then, the budget of a household becomes

$$b = b_e + b_p = (\xi_i + \xi_j) \left(1 + \beta \frac{g_i + g_j + G}{3} \right).$$

These formulae only apply to households with two parents. Aims at describing the interplay between fertility, well-being and gender equity (between women and men), single households and single-parent households do not get assigned budget and utility.

Perceived consumption needs are higher for households that experience a mismatch between their local level of gender equity, g_i and g_j , and gender equity at the institutional level, G . For instance, it may be difficult to raise children for a more progressive family if the provision of childcare is insufficient. This would either require parents to accept reduced career opportunities or to engage expensive private childcare. On the other hand, a conservative family may experience high costs in a progressive society if the tax-benefit system is not designed to meet their needs appropriately. The function $h(g_i, g_j, G)$ quantifies the match of g at the individual level and G at the institutional level. It is assumed that $h(g_i, g_j, G) = 1$ if $(g_i + g_j)/2 = G$ represented in the functional form

$$h = 1 - \left(\frac{g_i + g_j}{2} - G \right)^2.$$

The level of consumption within a household then becomes

$$C = bh = (b_e + b_p)h.$$

We assume that children will consume less than adults and that the part of income that results from being more progressive (having a higher level of g), b_p , is consumed only by the parents. Thus, per capita consumption for the adults can be expressed as

$$c = \frac{b_e h}{2+n} + \frac{b_p h}{2}.$$

The agents derive a utility U from having n children and from consumption c (capturing consumption of goods, services and the monetary equivalent of time). Per definition agents' utility depends on consumption per capita and on the match of intended fertility f with actually achieved parity p . Therefore, the following functional form was chosen:

$$U(c, f, p) = \begin{cases} c^\alpha \left(\frac{\rho - (f - n)}{\rho} \right)^{1-\alpha} & \dots \text{ for } n \leq f \\ c^\alpha \left(\frac{\rho - k(n - f)}{\rho} \right)^{1-\alpha} & \dots \text{ for } n > f \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

where α is an elasticity parameter used to adjust the weight of the two components of the utility function, ρ is the highest number of intended fertility as used in the binomial distribution and k is a parameter that adjusts the disutility of getting more children than the intended fertility f . Each time step the agents check if

$$U(c, f, n + 1) > U(c, f, n).$$

If this condition is fulfilled for both partners and the female is below biological infertility age, they choose to have a(nother) child. If it is fulfilled for only one partner, the couple checks if their combined utility—i.e. the sum of their individual utilities—would increase or decrease by getting another child:

$$U_i(c, f_i, n + 1) + U_j(c, f_j, n + 1) > U_i(c, f_i, n) + U_j(c, f_j, n). \quad (4)$$

If this condition is fulfilled and the female is below biological infertility age, they choose to have a(nother) child. Inequality (4) is crucial for the childbearing decision, in particular if the partners disagree about their fertility intentions. Parameters α and k in equation (3) were calibrated such that childbearing behaviour of disagreeing couples matches existing empirical evidence (Testa et al., 2014).³⁵ A newborn child's probability to be female or male is based on a sex ratio at birth of 105 male to 100 female births.

The agents are connected to a network of friends and observe their friends' utility. This social network always includes parents, adult siblings and adult children and regularly includes other agents. The number of friends (those additional to family members) an agent actively adds to his network, n_f , is drawn from a uniform distribution. Thus, the agent searches for n_f agents—of both sexes—at a social distance below a predefined threshold, $d_{ij} < t_2$. During this friendship matching the agent doesn't regard potential friends' gender equity or intended fertility, i.e. the respective weights of the social distance function are zero for friendship search; $w_3 = 0, w_4 = 0$. All social ties are bi-directional, i.e. agents can gain new friends also passively. Thus, the social network consists of family and friends and is dynamic, i.e. new

³⁵ Testa, Cavalli and Rosina (2014) studied how frequently couples have a child in the following three years if they initially disagree on having (another) one. Depending on parity level and on which partner does (not) want the child, the probability of giving birth during the subsequent three-year period varied between 21 and 38 per cent.

friends may enter the social network (gained passively) and old friends may leave the network by dying, thus n_f changes during the agent's lifetime.

Every time step, adult married agents are influenced by their social network, by observing the utility and gender equity of their married peers. The agents assume that they cannot exactly observe other agent's utility and know that peers utilities are influenced by multiple factors (not only by g). Thus, this information is treated as imprecise, which affects imitation in multiple ways. If agents are among the most successful agents of their social network, they assume that they cannot gain by imitation. In this case they will not adapt their gender equity g with a high probability ($p = 0.75$), and with a lower probability ($p = 0.25$) will even feel affirmed and further increase their tendency. In the latter case they would thus further increase their g if they already had a rather high g ($g > 0.5$) and reduce g if they already had a rather low g ($g < 0.5$), or not change it if $g = 0.5$.

If agents are not among the most successful ones in their network, they will evaluate whether the more successful agents had a higher or lower g than themselves. To do so, they evaluate how many individuals in their network fulfilled each of the following conditions: (a) higher utility, while having higher g , (b) lower utility, while having higher g , (c) higher utility, while having lower g , (d) lower utility, while having lower g . As agents treat the observed utility as imprecise they treat individuals with a comparable (hardly differentiable) utility ($\pm 1\%$ of their own utility) as having equal utility and will not consider their results. If $(a - b) > (c - d)$ (i.e. higher g seems to be more successful), agents slightly increase their g . If on the other hand $(c - d) > (a - b)$ (i.e. lower g seems to be more successful), they slightly decrease their g . Should agents not be able to draw a clear conclusion by observing their network, i.e. $(a - b) = (c - d)$, then they do not change their g .

Children observe and learn from their parents during childhood, which shapes their initial gender equity (social imprinting process). A new-born agent starts to observe the parents' behaviour early on,

$$g_c = \frac{g_i + g_j}{2},$$

with g_c being the child's gender equity and g_i and g_j again denoting the gender equities of its parents. Furthermore, the child will continue to learn from its parents while growing up. It, however, only partially adapts to the changes (represented using exponential smoothing):

$$g_c(t) = w_6 g_c(t-1) + (1 - w_6) \frac{(g_i(t) + g_j(t))}{2}.$$

Children in the orphanage do not adapt their g during childhood and stay at the level last attained (retaining the memories of their previous family life). When children leave their parents' household they are initialized as adults and inherit traits from their parents (social imprinting process). If children grow up in a widower household or the orphanage, they still inherit the traits of their parents—else they inherit the traits of their living parents (i.e. even step-parents).

Intended fertility f , on the other hand, is only indirectly inherited via g since intended fertility was assumed to be slightly lower for more progressive households. Thus, intended fertility is again determined randomly, adjusting the probability parameter of the binomial distribution to include an influence of g . Endowment on the other hand is not inherited, but drawn from a log-normal random distribution with the same parameters as in the initial population.

$$\xi_c \sim LN[\mu_\xi, \sigma_\xi^2]$$

Gompertz' law was used to model mortality:

$$\mu(x) = \alpha_2 \cdot \exp(\beta_2 x).$$

Thus, the probability to survive from age x to age $x + 1$ is

$${}_1p_x = \exp\left(\frac{\alpha_2}{\beta_2} [\exp(\beta_2 x) - \exp(\beta_2 (x + 1))]\right)$$

and the probability of dying between ages x and $x + 1$ is ${}_1q_x = 1 - {}_1p_x$. Consequently, the overall probability of surviving until age x is

$$p(x) = {}_xp_0 = \exp\left(\frac{\alpha_2}{\beta_2} [1 - \exp(\beta_2 x)]\right).$$

For initialization, a stable population was assumed, growing at rate r and subject to Gompertz' law of mortality. Thus, the number of agents of each gender in every cohort is calculated as

$$N(x, t) = B(t) \exp(-rx) p(x).$$

For computing the number of female (male) agents in the population $B(t)$ is the number of female (male) births and $p(x)$ represents the female (male) probability of surviving to age x . The parameters α_2 and β_2 are estimated separately for men and women, based on mortality data of the 28 Member States of the European Union.

This initial agent population lacks family ties, which have to be created somewhat differently than during the simulation, as agents of specific ages are already given. First, partners are matched iteratively, starting with a more strict threshold $t_i < t_1$, which is then iteratively relaxed (if necessary up to values $t_i > t_1$ until most of the adult agent population can be matched). Second, after these have formed households, young adults are assigned parents of proper age and intended fertility, so that the young adults may start with family in their social networks and so that older adults have a parity that is similar to their intended fertility. Then, (minor) children are assigned parents of proper age and intended fertility. After creating these family ties, all adults include the assigned family members in their social network. Finally, all adults search friends and add these to their social networks as described above.

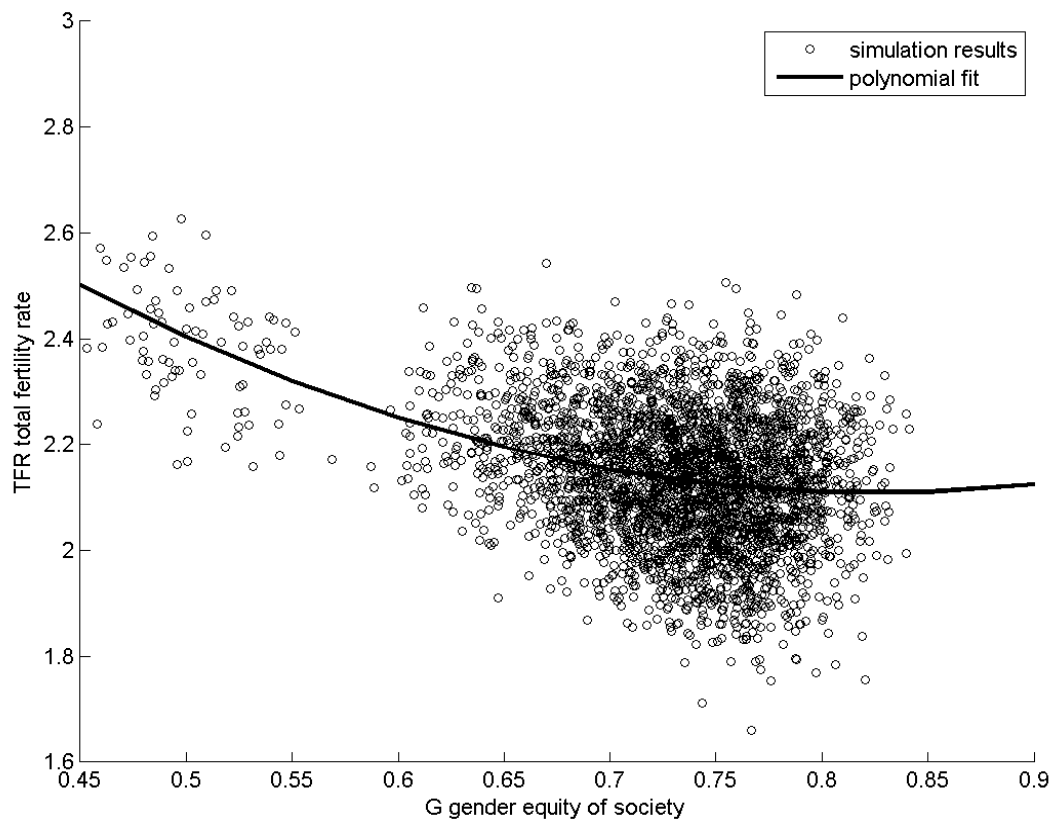
8.3. Main results of simulations

Simulation model runs were conducted with artificial populations with an initial size of 4,000 agents, to ensure that each age cohort has enough members to study fertility rates. To identify how the parameters α , β , k , w_5 and γ affect the results these parameters were varied (for details see Winkler-Dworak et al., 2015). Depending on the different parameter combinations, fertility developed heterogeneously in different simulation runs. In a calibration simulation experiment, parameter range combinations of α and k were identified that lead to results which qualitatively match the empirical results with regard to childbearing under discord. Further simulation experiments were then conducted with the respective range combinations of α and k only. The simulation runs were done for 150 time steps (years) with 44,128 different parameter combinations. After 150 time steps, data on gender equity, fertility, consumption and utility was recorded.

As expected, the parameter β that captures the influence of policy-making on gender equity had a positive and strongly significant impact on the level of gender equity in society. At higher levels, however, the marginal impact of β became weaker (a positive but diminishing impact of β on G). Results for α indicated that the level of gender equity will be the higher the more a society values consumption compared to meeting fertility intentions. Finally, γ had a negative effect on G . This means that a society with a more pronounced distinction between more and less progressive individuals with respect to their fertility intentions tends towards a lower level of gender equity.

More importantly, simulation runs also allow an assessment of the development of the association between gender equity G and fertility measured by the cohort total fertility rate at the end of the simulation. Results indicate a negative impact of gender equity G on fertility confirming the classical view that more progressive gender roles result in lower fertility. However, the simulation indicates a recovery of fertility after the society has passed through a transitional regime where the negative impact dominates. In addition, the parameters α , γ and k (the latter determines the disutility from exceeding intended fertility) had some negative impact on fertility while β had a moderate positive but diminishing impact.

Figure 8.1: Relevance of policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability



Note: The figure illustrates the influence of the numerical parameter G indicating gender equity on societal level and total fertility rate. The circles indicate the state of our simulations after 150 time steps (years). The solid line represents a polynomial model approximating the relationship. Increasing gender equality goes in line with a decrease in fertility.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* agent-based model (for details see Winkler-Dworak et al., 2015).

The circles in Figure 8.1 show combinations of G and cohort total fertility rate resulting from simulation after 150 time steps. The solid line depicts a polynomial model approximating this relationship. The negative correlation between gender equity and fertility is clearly visible. The recovery of fertility at advanced levels of gender equity can only be concluded from the polynomial curve which shows an upturn at higher levels of G . Similar results could be obtained with a fitted polynomial curve linking the policy parameter β and the cohort total fertility rate. The trend, however, is not that clear and the corresponding fit of the curve is not really good in this case.

Finally, total utility of agents in conservative and progressive societies were compared to each other. The agents derive utility from consumption—of goods and the monetary equivalent of non-working time—and from realizing their fertility preferences. Due to higher consumption per capita utility increased in more gender egalitarian societies.

8.4. Discussion: the proof of an argument

In this chapter, an agent-based simulation model was used to study the effects of gender equity evolution on fertility. The agents in the artificial population were heterogeneous with respect to their individual level of gender equity and their fertility intentions. They derived utility from consumption and from having children. Deviations between fertility and intended fertility resulted in a lower utility. The agents compared their own utility with the utility of their friends and adapted their gender attitudes if it seemed appropriate to them. The extent of the social environment allowing for more progressive gender roles could vary accordingly (as if policy-makers could decide). Starting from these assumptions, simulations with artificial populations have been run. Simulation results showed that the model did indeed lead to the supposed social effects for a wide range of parameter values, as long as they are in plausible artificial or empirically observable ranges. More government support (through β) might lead to a higher gender equity in the artificial society. In turn, higher gender equity would essentially result in lower levels of fertility—very advanced societies would, however, experience a slight upturn. Thus, the model confirmed the idea of a U-shaped relation between gender equity and fertility: A match between gender equity at the individual level and at the institutional level facilitates the realization of fertility intentions and thus childbearing. Accordingly, fertility increases again. Moreover, higher levels of gender equity led to more consumption and thus higher utility (well-being).

The agent-based model demonstrated how an U-shaped relation between gender equity and fertility can emerge, thereby providing a micro-founded explanation to the observation that some of the most progressive societies recently experienced an increase in fertility. The presented model can, nevertheless, still be improved.³⁶ For instance, the model might be extended to include different paths of family life considering aspects like timing of childbearing or separation and successive new unions. Most importantly, the addition of immigration could result in different patterns regarding gender equity and fertility. In some European countries immigration mainly comes from societies or selected sub-populations within these societies which still are at lower gender equity and higher fertility levels.

³⁶ One problem is that societies with fertility rates below the replacement rate could not be simulated. Since migration was not considered, below-replacement fertility results in a shrinking artificial population becoming too small to have a sufficient number of cases to obtain meaningful results.

Societies with different immigration patterns as well as different immigrant structures might have a significant impact on the question at hand.

9. Large families: Southern Europe and Germany in comparison

9.1. Introduction

After single-parent families, large families were identified as being most at risk of vulnerability by experts in focus groups discussions. Expenses for food, clothing, housing and education are rising with a growing number of children. As more children usually mean more pressure on income, time and opportunity, a higher number of children also increases the level of stress experienced by parents (Avramov, 2002). In addition, a woman with a high number of children often stays out of the labour market for a prolonged time. As one of the experts participating in the Brussels focus group said: *“Having only one child gives you the possibility still to work in a way that you can have a higher amount [of child benefits] after birth. But as soon you have two or three children you lose the flexibility”*.

In this chapter, we use data of the family questionnaire and focus on the situation of large families in three different countries: Portugal, Spain and Germany. The southern European countries *Portugal and Spain* were both hit hard by the economic downturn following the financial crisis of 2008. Furthermore, both the Spanish as well as the Portuguese welfare state belong to the *Mediterranean welfare regime* which is also called “familialistic”, meaning that individuals depend heavily on their families (Ferrarini, 2006; Mau & Verwiebe, 2010). Familialistic systems lack both the provision of services by the state and by the market. Germany is a contrasting case. It belongs to the class of *conservative welfare regimes* (Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1999). Welfare states belonging to the conservative type offer broad state support for families. Nevertheless, these welfare states are also often fostering female dependency on the family. During the last decade(s), however, support to women combining paid work with family responsibilities has been steadily increasing (Fleckenstein & Lee, 2014; Morgan, 2013).

Table 9.1 shows that the share of households with dependent children at risk of poverty or social exclusion is much smaller in Germany (18 per cent) than in Portugal or Spain (28 and 33 per cent, respectively). The difference considering all households with children amounts to about ten percentage points. With large families (3 or more children), however, the difference is much more pronounced: While less than 20 per cent of large families are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Germany, it is more than 40 per cent of large families in Portugal and Spain. Although Germany is also characterised by high rates of poverty and social inclusion

among single-parent households, figures for large families are similar to the average household with children. This makes Germany a good reference for comparisons with Portugal and Spain.

Table 9.1: Families at risk of poverty or social exclusion

Share of households <i>at risk of poverty or social exclusion</i> in %	2004-05	2009-10	2014-15
<i>Households with dependent children</i>			
Germany	17	18	18
Portugal	25	25	28
Spain	26	29	33
<i>Single persons with dependent children</i>			
Germany	40	52	40
Portugal	45	51	49
Spain	47	53	52
<i>Large families (2 adults and 3 or more dependent children)</i>			
Germany	16	22	18
Portugal	45	41	40
Spain	44	48	46

Note: The rate shown is the average rate or the rate for the only available year, respectively.
Source: Eurostat (2016; data from EU SILC).

Table 9.2: Central characteristics of the compared parents

in %	Germany	Portugal	Spain	Total
<i>Number of children</i>				
Three children	30	67	63	57
Four children	36	20	20	24
Five or more children	33	13	17	19
<i>Age of youngest child</i>				
below 3 years	46	33	37	38
3 to 5 years	21	24	24	23
6 to 9 years	20	17	17	18
10 to 15 years	7	19	15	15
16 to 30 years	6	7	7	7
<i>Children living in same household</i>				
none	3	2	2	2
children below age 16 only	69	66	71	68
children 16+ only	4	5	5	5
both younger (< 16) and older children (16+)	24	27	22	25
<i>Share of mothers</i>	70	59	75	67
<i>Share of married parents</i>	89	90	88	89
<i>Share of those living together with a partner</i>	91	95	94	94
<i>Share of those living together with grandparents</i>	8	8	8	8
<i>Share of parents with tertiary education</i>	58	86	62	72
N (100%)	276	499	366	1,141

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations.

The subsample of the family questionnaire respondents used for the following analyses is characterised by the fact that all parents included have at least three children. Four out of ten have even more than three children. Our sample includes parents who are between 23 and 73 years old. Less than 14 per cent were 51 years or older. Average age of parents was 42.6 years (Germany: 42.2, Portugal: 43.2, Spain: 42.0 years). Six out of ten have children below school age. Mothers are clearly over-represented: The share of women ranges from 59 per cent in Portugal to 70 per cent in Germany. Nine out of ten are married. Not all parents, however, live together with their children in one and the same household (around 2 per cent do not). We did not want to rule them out since they are still parents (with a large family). The number of total household members ranges from 1 to 14. On average, 5.6 people reside in one household (Germany: 6.0, Portugal: 5.4, Spain: 5.5 people). More information on the parents of our sample is presented in Table 9.2.³⁷

³⁷ It also has to be noted that more than two-thirds of respondents are highly educated (in Portugal even 86 per cent).

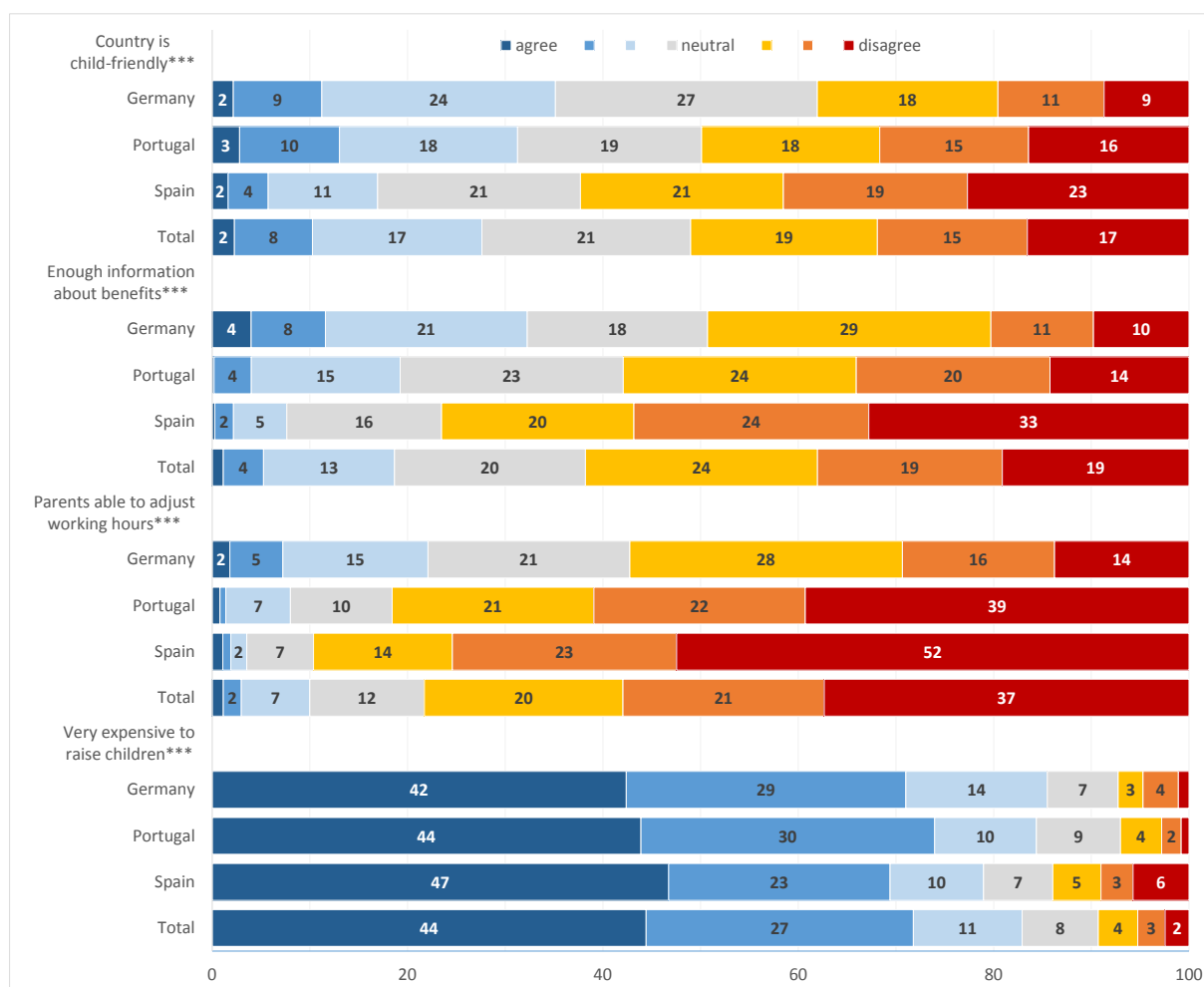
9.2. How family-friendly are Portugal, Spain and Germany?

To get an overview of the general situation in the respective countries, Figure 9.1 shows how family-friendly respondents perceive their country of residence to be. In general, parents from large families clearly articulate room for improvement: Only 17 per cent of Spanish parents, 31 percent of Portuguese parents and 35 per cent of German parents agree that their country is child-friendly. Spanish parents also report a strong information deficit: About 77 per cent do not think that parents get enough information about benefits available to them. The same is true for 58 per cent of respondents in Portugal and 50 per cent in Germany. These findings raise the question whether governments are doing enough to support families with children.

Differences between welfare state arrangements and affectedness by the economic crisis seem to be well reflected by these results as well as other findings (not shown in the Figure). For instance, in Spain 92 per cent of respondents agreed that the government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for (62 per cent articulated very strong agreement). Only three per cent disagreed. In Germany, on the other hand, 64 per cent agreed on this issue (30 per cent strongly) and 17 per cent disagreed. Portugal is usually in-between these countries. Around 80 per cent agree (33 per cent strongly) while only seven percent disagreed that the government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for.³⁸

³⁸ At least to some degree this might also reflect cultural differences. But cultural differences as such are also affecting the construction of the welfare state.

Figure 9.1: Parents' perceptions of the family-friendliness of their country of residence



Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N = 1,141).

Responding parents also assessed the general ability of parents to adjust working hours to meet family needs. In Spain, almost 90 per cent of parents from large families disagreed that parents are able to adjust (52 per cent strongly). The same holds for comparable 82 per cent in Portugal (39 per cent strongly). Even in Germany, the share of parents disagreeing amounts to 58 per cent (but only 14 per cent disagreed strongly). But how much time do parents of large families actually spend for professional work? Especially in Portugal, we see high full-time rates (69 to 80 per cent among respondents and their partners, respectively). In Spain, the share of the unemployed is higher than in the two other countries (9 vs. 2 or 3 per cent). Respondents from Germany are more often working part-time, being homemakers or enjoying parental leave than respondents from Portugal or Spain.³⁹ This fact may contribute to explain

³⁹ Table A9.1 in the appendix gives a detailed overview regarding the employment situation of the responding parents and their partners (in case they have one).

at least some of the country differences in answers regarding the ability to adjust one's working time.

Differences in employment might also reflect differences in values and attitudes. In Germany 28 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work while 20 per cent strongly disagreed. Among respondents from Portugal or Spain, 34 and 42 per cent strongly agreed with this statement and only seven and 13 per cent strongly disagreed, respectively.⁴⁰

Finally, Figure 9.1 demonstrates that parents of large families in all three observed countries find it expensive to raise children. Around 47 per cent of Spanish respondents, 44 per cent of Portuguese respondents and 42 per cent of German respondents strongly agree. Indeed, more than 17 per cent of respondents from Spain report great difficulties to make ends meet with their monthly total household income—compared to ten per cent in Portugal and nine per cent in Germany.⁴¹

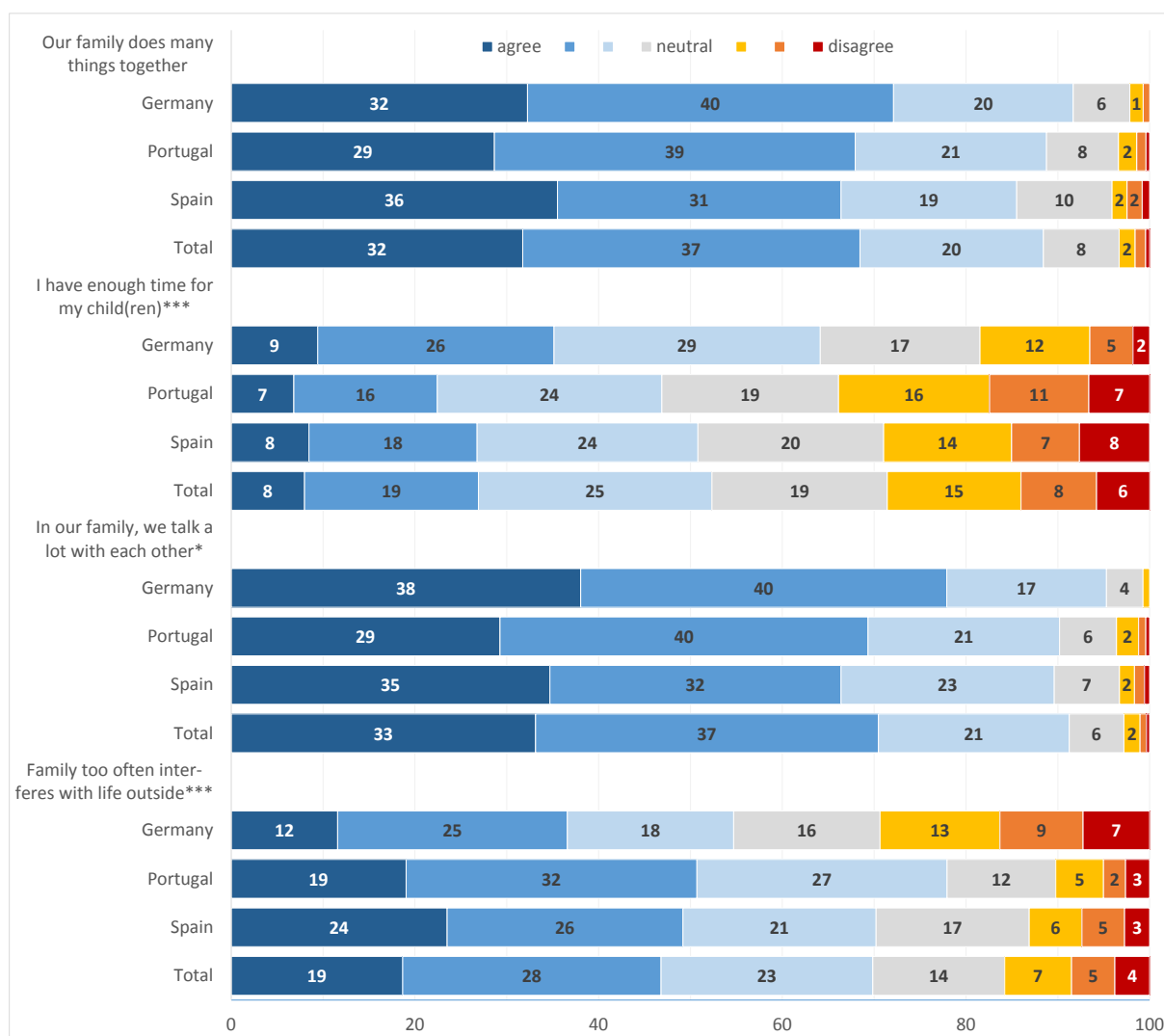
9.3. The situation of respondents' own families and policy measures to improve it

In focus group discussions experts noted that the well-being of any family strongly depends on having close ties. At the same time some of them have concerns about negative side effects of individualisation processes as relationships within families may get increasingly loose. The parents we have asked using the online questionnaire, however, report that their (large) families do many things together and that they talk a lot to each other (see Figure 9.2). Nevertheless, a significant part of respondents perceive themselves as not having enough time for their children (34 per cent in Portugal, 29 per cent in Spain and 19 per cent in Germany). On the other hand, the majority of parents agree that their family life too often interferes with other areas of life (professional work, friends, sports, cultural activities etc.). This is especially the case in Portugal (78 per cent) and Spain (71 per cent). But even in Germany more than half of the parents are of the same opinion (55 per cent).

⁴⁰ Total agreement reached 53 per cent in Germany but 70 per cent in Portugal as well as in Spain.

⁴¹ The share of respondents who make it very easily amounts to 14 per cent in Germany, four per cent in Portugal and two per cent in Spain.

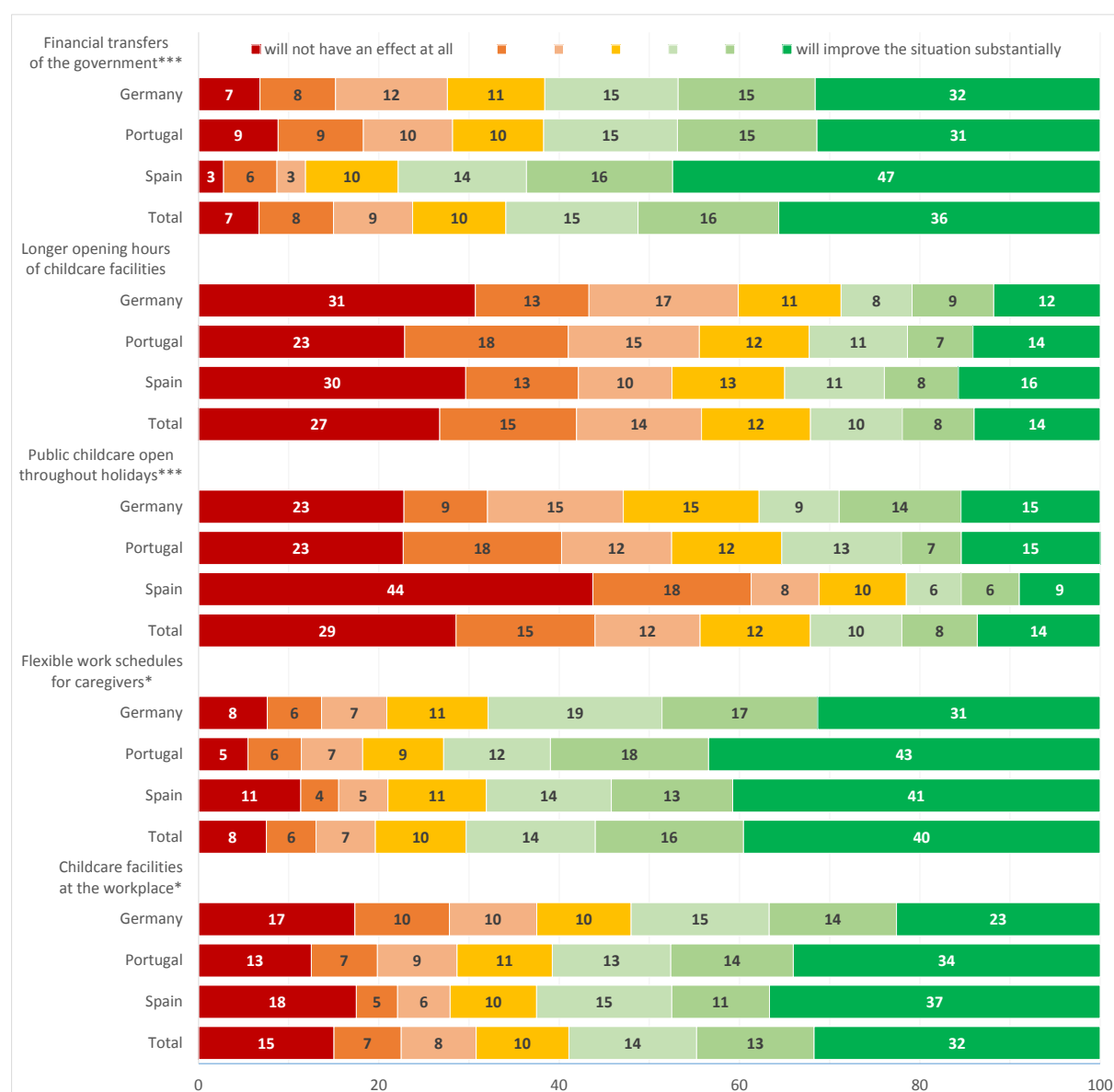
Figure 9.2: Assessments of parents' own situation



Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N = 1,141).

How could the situation of parents from large families be improved? One might suggest that policy measures like an extension of childcare services would be relevant to help parents cope with different responsibilities that are arising in different areas of life. At least with regard to large families it seems, however, that longer opening hours of childcare facilities and public childcare facilities that are also open throughout the holidays will not help most parents (see Figure 9.3). Public childcare during holidays would at least improve the situation of 38 per cent of German parents but only of 21 per cent of Spanish respondents. Childcare facilities at the workplace, however, would be more effective as more than half of the responding parents report that such facilities would improve their own situation (52 per cent in Germany, 61 per cent in Portugal and 63 per cent in Spain).

Figure 9.3: Assessments of policy measures that could improve the parents' own situation



Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N varies between 943 and 1,005).

On average, financial transfers of the government and flexible work schedules for caregivers seem to be more popular among parents of large families. Financial transfers stand out in Spain where the financial crisis has left its marks and where 77 per cent of respondents said that governmental transfers would improve their situation. In Portugal, 73 per cent of parents reported that flexible work schedules would help them. All in all, none of the suggested policy measures seems to be completely irrelevant. Furthermore, the relevance of measures directly linked to work–family reconciliation (childcare at the workplace, flexible work schedules) reflects what experts in focus group discussions have highlighted.

9.4. Worries about the future of today's children

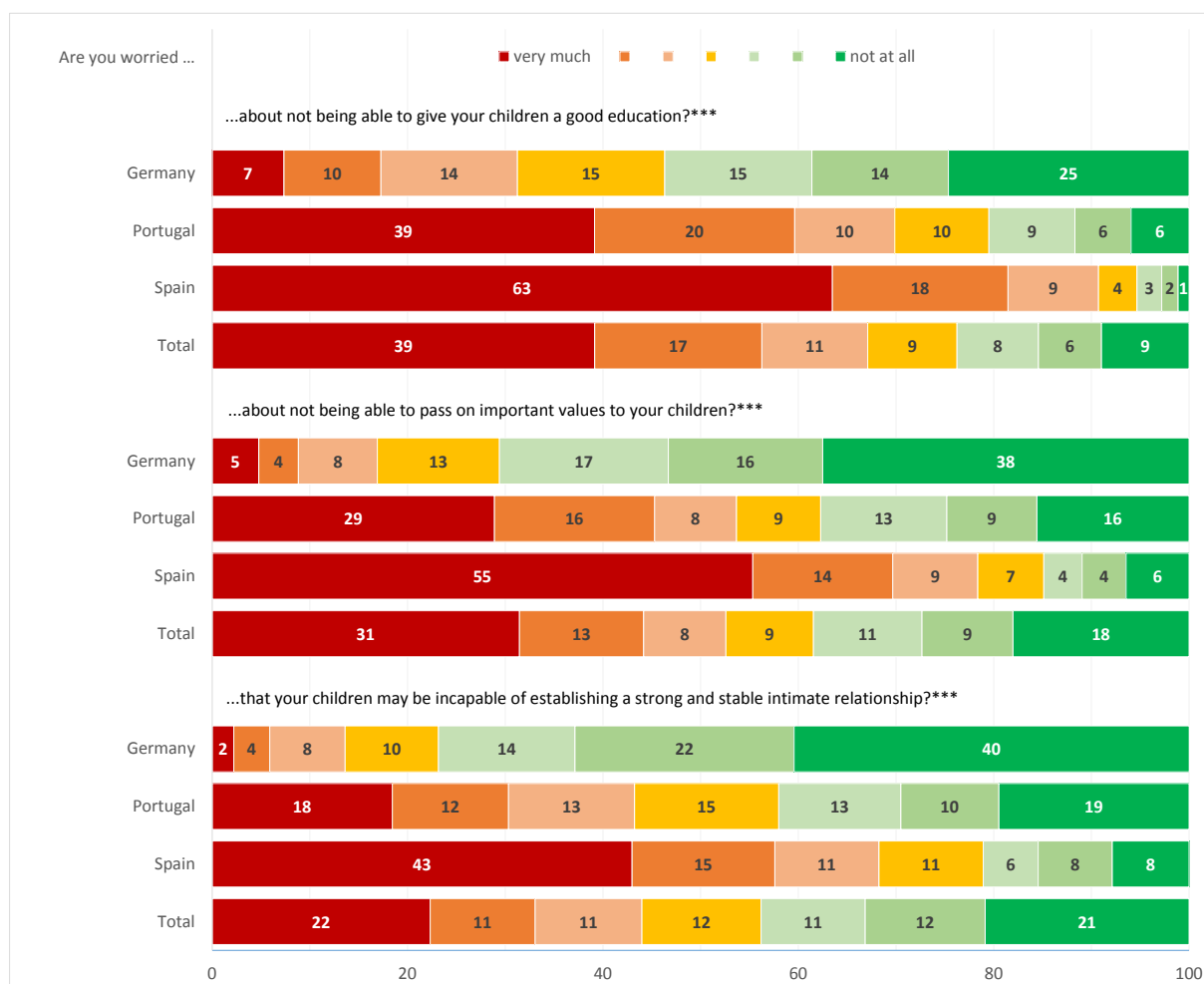
As already mentioned above, some experts in focus group discussions had concerns about side effects of the ongoing individualisation. For instance, one participant diagnosed that young people would be afraid of entering a stable relationship. Another expert feared a future generation who would not know how to be in relation with someone. One reason might be, a further participant suggested, that parents can no longer teach values to their children as they could in the past. Indeed, in Spain, at least 78 per cent of parents seem to be worried that they might not be able to pass on important values to their children (55 per cent very much worried). Figures are somewhat smaller but still substantial in Portugal (see Figure 9.4). In Germany, in contrast, most parents do not seem to be worried about teaching values. The same is true for worries that one's own children might not be capable of establishing strong and stable intimate relationships. While only 14 per cent of German parents seem to be worried in this regard, the share of worried parents amounts to 43 per cent among Portuguese and 69 per cent among Spanish respondents.

Our informants in focus group interviews also highlighted the relevance of education. Among parents of large families in Southern Europe, worries about the education of children are widely spread. Nine out of ten responding parents in Spain report being worried about not being able to give their children a good education (eight out of ten in Portugal, cf. Figure 9.4). In Germany, a much smaller fraction of parents shares this concern (three out of ten). Corresponding differences between countries exist with regard to future labour market perspectives of today's children. While 27 per cent of parents in Germany think that their children will easily find jobs when they are grown up, only twelve per cent in Spain and eight per cent in Portugal express the same opinion. More similar across countries, however, is worrying about education. In all three countries, more than half of respondents doubt that schools promote the development of individual strengths and skills necessary for (entering) the labour market (see Figure 9.5).

For further analyses, the mean over the three items shown in Figure 9.4 was used to measure *worries about the future of one's own children* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$). Regression analyses show that differences between countries cannot be reduced to differences in sample composition. On average, parents are clearly more worried about their children's future in

Spain than in Portugal

Figure 9.4: Worries about one's own children



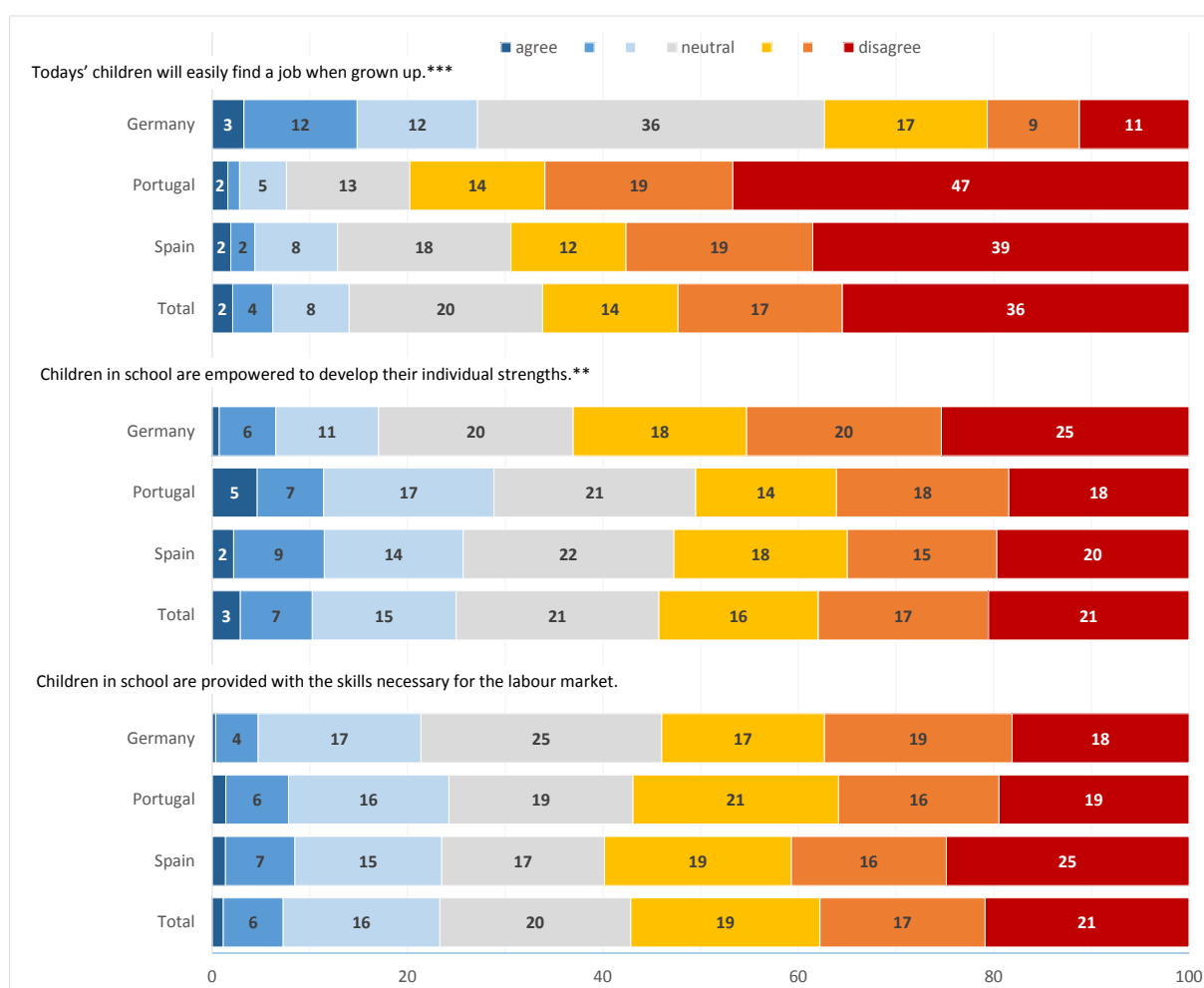
Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N=1,116 parents with children below age 25).

and still more so in Portugal than in Germany.⁴² In general, parents are less worried if there is a partner who is living in the same household. Worries are the bigger the more they feel a shortage of time to spend with their children and the harder they have to make ends meet with household income. Interestingly, worries about the future of children are also increasing with the level of parents agreeing that the government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for and with the level of agreement that it is important to hold on to tradition (i.e. the customs handed down by one's religion or family). While missing

⁴² These analyses are only described verbatim in the text. Detailed results can be found in Tables A.9.2, A.9.3 and A.9.4 in the Appendix.

governmental support may be seen as obstacle, high relevance of traditional values may set standards difficult to achieve by future society. Looking at the three countries under study separately, it can be seen that there are no gender differences in Germany and Portugal. In Spain, however, fathers seem to be more concerned about their children's future than mothers. Feeling a shortage of time for children seems to be more relevant for worries perceived by parents in Germany than in Spain. Attitudes regarding governmental responsibility clearly affect parental worries about the future of their children in Portugal and to a lesser extent also in Spain, but hardly in Germany. Finally, the subjective relevance of tradition is most important for worries in Spain but seems to be more or less irrelevant to German parents.

Figure 9.5: Worries about today's children in general



Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N=1,141).

9.5. Conclusions: Vulnerability of large families and worries about their children

In southern Europe, Portugal and Spain, large families show higher risks of vulnerability or social exclusion than the average family with children. Parents from large families find it very expensive to raise children. Furthermore, family life often interferes with other activities including work. According to our findings, flexible work schedules for caregivers, financial support by the government and childcare facilities at the workplace are necessary to improve their situation. Regarding the future of their children, parents from large families were especially concerned about a good education and the future labour market chances of their children.

These findings cannot be used to provide a general list of more and less important policy measures. According to Buhr and Huinink (2012), for example, large families and parents with lower education are more likely to prefer financial transfers while small families (one child) or potential future parents who are childless argue more often for institutional childcare. Family policy has to consider all types of families. Nevertheless, large families are often identified to be vulnerable families (in particular in Southern Europe; cf. Figure 3.1). Furthermore, our results do not emphasize any specific policy measure. Rather, a combination of different measures seems to be necessary to improve the work-life balance and thus vulnerability of large families.

Finally, this chapter clearly demonstrated existing differences between countries. Needs and worries of parents from large families were usually much smaller in Germany than in Portugal or Spain. Especially Spanish parents—who saw the greatest necessity for financial support by the government—reported a high level of worries about the future of their children. This indicates the specific challenges for European welfare states most hit by the aftermath of the crisis in 2008.

10. Consequences of migration and refugee crises

10.1. Introductory remarks

The *International Organization for Migration* explains in its recent report (IOM, 2015) that migration itself often improves the living conditions of people and does thus not necessarily lead to vulnerability. Nevertheless, migrants frequently face vulnerability because they are often confronted with “legal, cultural and social barriers” as well as “obstacles to accessing formal housing, employment, education, health and other social services” (ibid.; p. 75). Among those barriers and obstacles are a lack of linguistic skills, legal and administrative barriers, an insufficient access to social networks, missing knowledge of local environmental and social context, inadequacy of skills for local labour markets as well as a lack of representation, discrimination and xenophobia (ibid.; pp. 81-82). These and other factors⁴³ can lead to exclusion, segregation and marginalization. Therefore they explain the overrepresentedness of migrants among those who live in conditions of vulnerability (IOM, 2015). Experts in the focus group discussions indicated that migration might be relevant but they did not place too much emphasis on this topic. Nevertheless, the refugee inflow in 2015 has reminded us that at least specific groups of migrants are often suffering from vulnerability.

As already mentioned, migration was not ranked by informants among the most decisive factors for future vulnerability of families with children in the focus group discussions conducted in the last quarter of 2014 and the first half of 2015. In addition, experts from different regions brought different aspects of migration on the table. For instance, emigration has been discussed in Spain (the youth leaving the country) and Poland (absent fathers working abroad), while immigration and problems with specific subgroups of the migrant population were mentioned in Austria and Switzerland. In Sweden, participants argued that it is not migration per se that affected vulnerability but rather characteristics of migrant

⁴³ Important factors that influence the experience of vulnerability for migrants comprise gender, age, education, occupational skills and ethnicity (IOM, 2015, p. 83).

populations (educational background etc.).⁴⁴ The so-called “refugee crisis” dominating societal discourse in the last year was at this point clearly not imagined by our participants.⁴⁵

Against the background of the refugee flows coming to Europe in the second half of 2015, however, we decided to modify our questionnaire and included specific questions about refugees and their future impact on vulnerability of families with children in Europe. First, experts were asked to indicate whether they thought that the current flow of refugees might have influenced their answers on future vulnerability. While about one-quarter of the respondents stated that the refugee flow was relevant for their ratings, six out of ten negated such an influence.⁴⁶ Second, experts were requested to assess the effect of the current and future flows of refugees on future vulnerability of families with children. The corresponding results will be discussed in some detail in this chapter. Before, however, a short overview over migrants in different regions of Europe and the vulnerability risks for refugees and asylum seekers in particular will provide the background for findings obtained with focus group discussions and the expert questionnaire.

10.2. Migration flows, ethnic minorities and refugees in Europe: an overview

Migration patterns in Europe have changed over the last decades (see Mau & Verwiebe, 2010). For a long time emigration from Europe (mainly to North America or Australia) exceeded immigration to Europe. During the 1950s, however, labour migration and emigration from postcolonial countries to Europe increased. Income differentials also started to attract workers from Southern and Eastern Europe coming to industrial regions in central Europe (i.e. Austria, Belgium, Germany, France or the Netherlands).⁴⁷ For many years, central European countries actively recruited immigrant workers. Economic downturns in

⁴⁴ What matters for vulnerability, it was further argued, is thus the capability of host societies to integrate migrants into educational systems and labour markets. Unemployment was perceived to be important for vulnerability, not migration.

⁴⁵ In three out of six discussions the word “refugees” was not even used (Brussels, Madrid, Warsaw). Syria was only mentioned in the Swiss focus group; but only once because a family from Syria was taken as an example; the Syrian origin was not emphasized at all.

⁴⁶ With regard to the first chosen dimension of vulnerability only, about 62 per cent of the experts indicated that thoughts about the current flow of refugees did not influence their ratings (N=175). Taking into account all 203 statements on the three dimensions of vulnerability, “no, I don’t think so” was reported 122 times (60%), “maybe, I don’t know” 25 times (12%), and “yes, certainly” 56 times (28%), respectively.

⁴⁷ The most prominent migration model (developed by Lee, 1966) differentiates between push and pull factors. *Push factors* work at the country of origin and trigger emigration (e.g. religious or political persecution). They are especially relevant in case of refugees and asylum seekers who want to escape from war and/or persecution. *Pull factors* at the destination attract people (e.g. good job opportunities or a higher living standards). Such factors usually dominate in case of labour migration (higher salaries, better working conditions).

consequence of the oil and energy crises of the 1970s as well as technological change (de-industrialisation) then led to a much lower demand for foreign workers and stricter migration rules. Migration due to family reunions or for political reasons became more important (i.e. forced migration; asylum seekers and refugees). In the 1990s and early 2000s main inflows to central Europe came from the Balkans, former socialist countries and Northern Africa. Migration within Europe was triggered by the European Union guaranteeing the freedom of movements for workers and starting exchange initiatives like the Erasmus programme (Mau & Verwiebe, 2010).

Patterns of migration vary widely in Europe. Roughly speaking, northern and western European countries have a longer history of immigration than southern European countries that were mainly sending and not receiving countries (Carta et al., 2005). For example, Spain or Ireland were for a long time characterised by emigration but became very attractive to immigrants during the 1990s and early 2000s. After the financial crisis in 2008/09, the situation has somewhat changed again as emigration for work increased (especially with high youth unemployment). Eastern European countries, on the other hand, are usually characterised by labour emigration to Western Europe and immigration laws are frequently very strict. In some of them, large groups of hardly integrated ethnic minorities exist (Mau & Verwiebe, 2010). In line with immigration histories and policies, the composition of immigrant populations also differs by countries. While large parts of immigrants are from elsewhere in Europe, at least the Mediterranean countries and those with a colonial history also have significant immigration from beyond Europe (Carta et al., 2005).⁴⁸

During the last two decades, “instability in and around Europe has significantly increased the number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe” (Carta et al., 2005). In addition,

⁴⁸ Going more into detail, Mau and Verwiebe (2010) differentiate between seven regions in Europe characterized by distinguishable migration regimes: (1) the Scandinavian regime aiming at assimilation of immigrants that has a tradition of welcoming refugees—most Northern countries, however, were for a long time mainly confronted with inner-Scandinavian migration; (2) countries in north-western and central Europe with high immigration from former colonies—subgroups often living in ethnic enclaves within countries (mostly districts/quarters in large cities); (3) German-speaking countries with their history of labour migration with usually not fully integrated ethnic minorities (e.g. of Turkish origin); (4) Mediterranean countries facing immigration from Northern Africa as well as South- and Middle America—some of them (especially Italy and Greece) are confronted with huge problems due to illegal immigration; (5) central-eastern European countries with low shares of immigrant populations but labour immigration from Belarus, Russia or Ukraine; (6) the south-eastern European countries Bulgaria, Rumania and Slovakia characterized by very restrictive migration policies and lowest low immigration but large ethnic minorities; (7) the Baltic countries with high shares of foreign population (mainly with Russian citizenship) that suffer from demographic decline due to labour emigration to Western Europe or the United States.

there is a large number of undocumented immigrants (often called “illegals”) who did never enter official asylum application procedures. They often perform low paid, physically hard and psychically stressful jobs and build a new societal underclass. In recent years, the public discourse focused on refugees from Africa, Afghanistan, Chechnya or Syria. News headlines reporting about drowned refugees or luckily arrivals of small and overcrowded fragile crafts on Mediterranean islands are very common these days. The mass migration of Syrian refugees in 2015 led even to controversies about open borders within the European Union and seems to trigger another wave of closing policies.

10.3. Specific vulnerability risks of refugees and asylum seekers

In the literature, immigrants and ethnic minorities are quite often mentioned as potentially vulnerable (e.g. Hooijer & Picot, 2015; IOM, 2015; Juang & Alvarez, 2010; Milcher, 2006). Their vulnerability is multidimensional, referring to economic or financial issues, social and psychological aspects as well as inequalities in health. Difficulties may stem from missing language skills, low education, or educational certificates not being accepted in their destination countries, as well as from labour market discrimination (see Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Blume et al., 2007; Jargowsky, 2009; Kazemipur & Halli, 2001; Nazroo, 1998; 2003; Revenga et al., 2002). Asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants who often face unique risk factors are usually not covered by existing social services (Carta et al., 2005).

Emigration is always a huge challenge as almost everything in life changes (climate, language, culture, social relations, status etc.). Every person emigrating perceives an affective loss (Carta et al., 2005). For the specific group of immigrants who are fleeing from danger, however, the psycho-social process of loss, grief and change is even more complex—not to mention the harm for children who are not always accompanied by their families but often separated from them or even orphaned (see Eide & Hjern, 2013). Specific stressors for forced migrants comprise traumatic experiences both in the country of origin as well as during an often difficult and risky journey.⁴⁹ Children are in particular vulnerable “given the fact that their parents or guardians are themselves often overwhelmed and unable to attend to their emotional needs” (Pumariega et al., 2005, p. 583). Adults themselves do usually lack someone who mourn their severe loss with them and do not have room, time or financial

⁴⁹ Examples are war, torture, rape, famine, forced separation from family and friends, crossing rivers or open water, capsizing in rafts, witnessing deaths (cf. Carta et al., 2005; Pumariega et al., 2005).

capacity for common rituals. Frequently, they cannot even be sure whether they lost family members or friends by death or not (Wenzel & Kinigadner, 2016).

Times of arrest and detention, stressful interviews with officials and long periods of waiting for asylum decisions are huge burdens (Wenzel & Kinigadner, 2016). Living in refugee camps with restricted opportunities for privacy becomes frustrating with time—especially without prospects of employment and a “normal life” in the near future. Aggravating the difficult situation, factors like economic insecurity, social marginalisation, discrimination or a lack of legal documents often complicate living and worsen mental health (Carta et al., 2005). For accepted refugees, pressures to send money home or family estrangement add problems to already harsh conditions. Stressors after a successful emigration also include living in neighbourhoods with (for the host society) comparatively low living standards and high rates of crime and problems with acculturation (Pumariiega et al., 2005).

Indeed, psychological vulnerability is a serious challenge for many refugees and asylum seekers who are generally at a high risk of mental health problems. Frequent diagnoses comprise depression disorders, anxiety disorders and mood disorders—particularly post-traumatic stress disorders or the so-called *chronic and multiple stress syndrome* where symptoms of depression arise jointly with anxious, somatoform and dissociative symptoms (Carta et al., 2005). A successful escape does mean that all problems have been left behind and “[l]atter psychological stressors can often re-activate the emotions and memories” that are associated with the traumatic events experienced before and during the journey to a new country, “especially for children and adolescents” (Pumariiega et al., 2005, p. 583).⁵⁰ Regarding the reproduction of psychological vulnerability, economic and social vulnerability are relevant as risks for the second generation increase with chronic stressors created by unemployment and poverty as well as experiences of marginalisation and discrimination.

⁵⁰ Research suggests that also children from refugees sent back to their parents’ country of origin after years often suffer from serious problems due to indirect traumatization or because they were snatched from their familiar surroundings—their well-known socialization context (cf. Wenzel & Kinigadner, 2016).

10.4. Focus group discussions: immigrants, refugees, children left behind and the relevance of education

In focus groups, we did not address the situation of immigrant populations explicitly. Nevertheless, migration was an issue. In several discussions informants noted that migration might matter as an additional factor complicating already difficult situations. For instance, single parents or large families of migrant origin might be in a particularly difficult situation, mostly because of problems in finding jobs (especially when poorly educated), having lower income and due to lack of social network. The issue of problems related to local language was mentioned as well, also in the context of raising children (e.g. not being able to communicate with teachers or to help children with school homework). In general, however, the situation of migrants was discussed with different intensity and with different connotations in our research settings, clearly reflecting differences in migration patterns between the countries. Findings will thus be presented by focus groups.

Brussels: Focussing on the European Union rather than single nations, the issue of migration was not discussed in detail. Large families, however, were discussed with regard to immigrants and ethnic minorities. One participant explicitly mentioned that the public debate about support for large families is sometimes overlapped by discussions about migrant families. Another one referred to the situation of Roma families in Eastern Europe. In addition, a further discussant noted that ethnicity and migration will affect the cultural dimensions of social change. With higher numbers of immigrants from very traditional countries, a re-increasing proliferation of traditional gender roles would not be unlikely any more. This expert also emphasised the role of education for immigrants:

“If you are socially excluded in a migrant community, for example, and you are obliged to stay at the home et cetera, (...) when you have more education you are able to learn new values, you are able to sustain yourself more independently, you are also able to getting out of the social exclusion, so it has a broad impact on a lot of factors in life. This is not only about equal chances, it’s also about well-being.” (Brussels)

Stockholm: In general, being a migrant was not perceived as very problematic in Sweden. Experts agreed that the overwhelming majority of immigrants adopt to Swedish lifestyles very well after a while. An establishment allowance and support programmes addressed to refugees who are coming to Sweden were mentioned as “a good incentive too, to make people

come into society faster”. Although it was noted that some immigrants might have lower incomes, it was emphasised that this is due to missing education and/or unemployment but not because of immigration per se. Finally, language deficits of immigrant families were thematised in discussions about the relevance of childcare and a good educational system.

“If you have high migration and the parents do not know our language and you send the kids home with homework in Swedish and they should have help from their parents at home to solve them, you will not have equal opportunities.” (Stockholm)

Vienna and Bern: The issue of migrants, and especially of refugees, was seen as difficult in the discussions in Austria and Switzerland. In Vienna, the situation of minor refugees was portrayed as extremely vulnerable, i.e. those coming to Austria without parents:

“When I take the migration background, considering children without parents, and these are refugees who have come here without their parents, then these kids are the poorest, in my eyes, for they won’t have any aunt here or any other person to confide in. And that means they have to build their whole social network from scratch here, so they deserve particular protection.” (Vienna)

Moreover, in the Austrian setting, the issue of specific ethnic (migrant) communities was discussed and presented as a more general problem. One expert noted that some of these communities live somewhat separated from the rest of the society, with their own value systems, rules and rituals:

“The entire sphere of the migrants, we don’t have any figures about that, we don’t know a lot actually, and the way I see it, there is a massive formation of parallel worlds that we don’t even fully register, that we actually don’t know anything about, and in this respect my greatest worry is a socio-political one: that this type [of family] is not accompanied and supported at all, so essentially we do not know what kinds of things are developing there.” (Vienna)

In Switzerland, refugee children arriving without parents and socio-economically disadvantaged immigrant groups were also mentioned. In contrast to immigrants from Germany, an expert assumed, those from Southern Europe might be among the first who lose their jobs in case of another economic downturn. It was emphasised that early childhood education is especially important for the integration of foreign-language speaking children, also to avoid the reproduction of vulnerability across generations:

“Lots of parents, who are coming to Switzerland as guest workers, have a low level of education, and that is why they are not able to learn a language fast, and they either stay, they write a few words which they need for their work, and this is why they are disadvantaged with regards to language. And this is why they cannot participate and integrate and this has a big influence on children. If parents are not able to participate and also then the children pass this on. So this is often passed on to the following generation, and sometimes they do not live in an environment where they feel comfortable, where they can express themselves. They are, I can’t say ghetto, but they are in their niche and they can’t develop themselves.” (Bern)

In addition, specific challenges for schools were mentioned as some teachers are confronted with school classes mainly consisting of children with immigrant background.⁵¹

Two specific groups were only thematised in Bern. First, illegal immigrants without a residence permit (called “sans-papiers”) probably suffer from the highest vulnerability risks as *“categories with regards to the residential status play a big role for how the families live and if they can fulfil their needs, if they can fulfil the needs of their children etc.”* Second, expatriates may be confronted with specific aspects of vulnerability (e.g. a lack of social support in critical situations due to small private networks). Furthermore, children of expatriates show higher risks of social isolation. Extreme vulnerable cases are multi-located families in case of separation or divorce. A related issue, however, was also raised in another focus group discussion.

Madrid and Warsaw: The Spain and the Polish focus group have in common that emigration was a main reference point of discussions on migration.⁵² In Spain, it was noted that young people migrate out of Spain, leaving their elderly parents behind. In Poland, the informants discussed the situation of children, who are “left behind”, when one or both parents leave to work abroad. If one parent works abroad, this is associated with a difficult psychological situation with potential problems in the family which might lead to a divorce. If both parents work abroad and, for instance, grandparents are looking after a child, legal problems add to the picture on top of all other problems (as grandparents are not the legal guardians).

⁵¹ In case immigrant parents are not familiar with the local language, teachers can often not communicate with them and vice versa. On the one hand, this raises the question how to motivate parents then to help with the integration of their children. On the other hand, this leaves also room for discrimination.

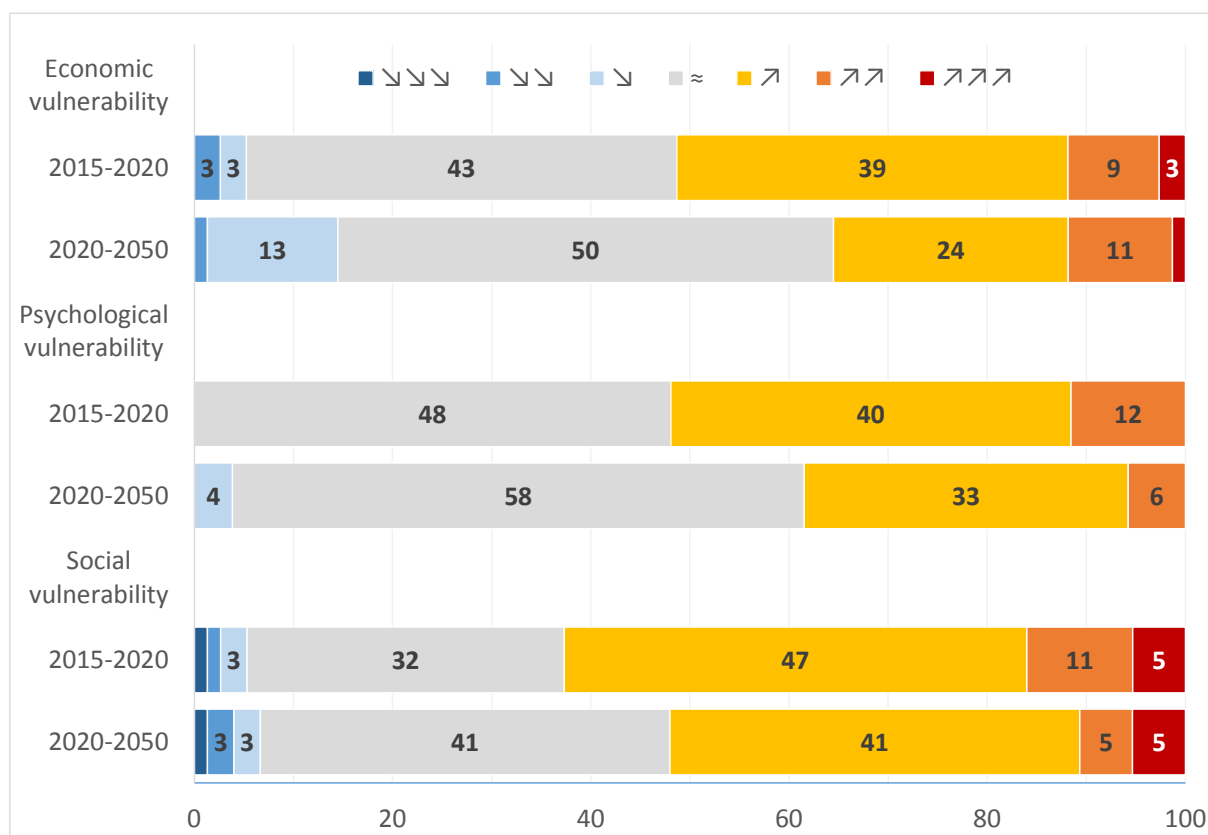
⁵² Nevertheless, immigrant families were listed among those who are potentially vulnerable in Spain. Their situation, however, was discussed very briefly and only in relation to other factors (e.g. migrant solo parents).

“There are two subcategories: First, children whose parents are abroad—temporarily or for a longer period of time—and they stay with their grandparents, the grandmother or with somebody else from their family, but this person is not able to act as a rightful custodian. And this brings a lot of problems (...) Second, there are children, with one parent abroad, being absent for some time. And there we also have a prospect of family breakdown. In my opinion it is a really serious challenge that we will be facing and the number of such families and such children will be increasing.”
(Warsaw)

10.5. Expert questionnaire results: Consequences of refugee flows for vulnerability

In our online questionnaire, experts were requested to assess the effect of the current and future flows of refugees on future vulnerability of families with children in a chosen country. Results are represented in Figure 10.1.

Figure 10.1: Estimating consequences of current and future refugee flows on expected shares of vulnerable families with children in Europe



Note: $N_{\text{economic vulnerability}} = 76$, $N_{\text{psychological vulnerability}} = 52$, $N_{\text{social vulnerability}} = 75$. This figure differentiates between estimates that the share of vulnerable families will strongly decrease (strongly decrease), moderately decrease (moderately decrease), slightly decrease (slightly decrease), stay roughly the same (stay roughly the same), slightly increase (slightly increase), moderately increase (moderately increase) or strongly increase (strongly increase) due to current and future flows of refugees.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

At least in the short run (until 2020) the majority of experts assumed increasing shares of vulnerable families. Nevertheless, a very large part of the experts did not think that the current and future refugee flows would affect the economic and psychological vulnerability of families with children, especially in the long run (until 2050). Summing up, between 43 and 58 per cent of respondents expected the share of families suffering from economic or psychological vulnerability in Europe to remain more or less unaffected by current or future refugee flows. At least in the case of psychological vulnerability, this might be somewhat surprising as refugees trying to escape war and expulsion often struggle with psychological problems. It is, however, also unknown how many of them (will) have children.

The finding for Europe in total might also be influenced by the fact that European countries are not affected by refugee flows to the same degree. Differences between findings of focus

groups seem to be at least partly influenced by the country background of the focus group settings. Thus, it is reasonable to analyse the data of the expert questionnaire for European regions characterised by different migration patterns and legal regimes, separately. Analyses differentiating between six different regions of Europe⁵³ reveal that the share of experts assuming negative consequences from current flows until 2020 was usually larger in western, German-speaking and northern parts than in southern and eastern parts of Europe (Table 10.1). For the development until 2050, however, the picture is not that clear though experts for German-speaking countries or Northern Europe are more pessimistic with regard to economic vulnerability than others (Table 10.2). But with regard to social vulnerability, experts from Southern Europe are most worried (ten of 13 expecting increases of social vulnerability between 2020 and 2050 due to future refugee flows).

Table 10.1: Estimating consequences of refugee flows on expected shares of vulnerable families with children in Europe between 2015 and 2020

Region	Economic vulnerability				Psychological vulnerability				Social vulnerability			
				(N)				(N)				(N)
%	↘	≈	↗		↘	≈	↗		↘	≈	↗	
Central western Europe	14	43	43	(7)	0	43	57	(14)	7	27	67	(15)
German-speaking part of Europe	7	27	67	(15)	0	43	57	(14)	10	19	71	(21)
Western Europe	0	50	50	(6)	-	-	-	(2)	-	-	-	(4)
Northern Europe	8	8	85	(13)	-	-	-	(1)	0	10	90	(10)
Southern Europe	0	59	41	(22)	0	63	36	(11)	0	46	54	(13)
Eastern Europe	8	69	23	(13)	0	50	50	(10)	8	58	33	(12)
Europe (total)	5	43	51	(76)	0	48	52	(52)	5	32	63	(75)

Note: This table differentiates between estimates that the share of vulnerable families will decrease (↘), stay roughly the same (≈) or increase (↗) between 2015 and 2020.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

Compared to estimates regarding economic and psychological vulnerability, the ones for impacts of refugee flows on future social vulnerability are somewhat different. With 32 (41) per cent of the experts assuming no consequences for social vulnerability of families in Europe between 2015 and 2020 (2020 and 2050), the numbers for social vulnerability are smaller than the corresponding ones for economic and psychological vulnerability. At least some of the respondents seem to be worried about social vulnerability, especially in the short

⁵³ The six regions are *central western Europe* (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands), *German-speaking part of Europe* (Austria, Germany, Switzerland), *western Europe* (Northern Ireland, Ireland, United Kingdom), *northern Europe* (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), *southern Europe* (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) and *eastern Europe* (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia). Some regions comprise more countries than others to guarantee case numbers that were high enough for the analyses conducted.

run. Around 47 per cent of the experts assumed a slight increase of social vulnerability until 2020, and an additional 11 and 5 per cent a moderate or even a strong increase (Figure 10.1). Given the definition of social vulnerability in the questionnaire, it can be assumed that these experts expected stigmatisation and discrimination to grow, probably resulting in a lack of social support.

Table 10.2: Estimating consequences of refugee flows on expected shares of vulnerable families with children in Europe between 2020 and 2050

Region	Economic vulnerability (N)				Psychological vulnerability (N)				Social vulnerability (N)			
%	↘	≈	↗		↘	≈	↗		↘	≈	↗	
Central western Europe	14	57	29	(7)	0	57	43	(14)	7	53	40	(15)
German-speaking part of Europe	0	40	60	(15)	0	71	29	(14)	10	38	52	(21)
Western Europe	17	50	33	(6)	-	-	-	(2)	-	-	-	(4)
Northern Europe	23	31	46	(13)	-	-	-	(1)	10	30	60	(10)
Southern Europe	18	50	32	(22)	9	45	45	(11)	0	23	77	(13)
Eastern Europe	15	77	8	(13)	10	70	20	(10)	8	58	33	(12)
Europe (total)	14	50	36	(76)	4	58	38	(52)	7	41	52	(75)

Note: This table differentiates between estimates that the share of vulnerable families will decrease (↘), stay roughly the same (≈) or increase (↗) between 2020 and 2050.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

From an analytical point of view, it is not only interesting to know whether estimates for different European regions differ but also whether ratings of scientists and practitioners are coherent or not. Results for the comparison of expert groups are given in Table 10.3. Taken short- and long-term estimates together, it turned out that practitioners seemed to be more optimistic with regard to the effects of refugees on economic as well as social vulnerability. Though only small percentages of experts thought that vulnerability might decrease, these fractions are a little larger with practitioners than with scientist. Practitioners who are often working with vulnerable families, however, did *not* assume any decreases in psychological vulnerability with refugees while some scientists did, at least in the long-term perspective (2020–2050). Practitioners may have more (personal) experience with refugees and their psychological health problems than different groups of scientists have. The difference is striking: While almost every second practitioner expected psychological vulnerability to increase between 2020 and 2050 due to refugee flows, every fifth scientists did so.

For further analyses, the ratings for different dimensions of vulnerability and time periods (2015–2020 and 2020–2050) were pooled to build a somewhat larger sample of expert estimates. These analyses considered that several ratings were done by one and the same

expert. Findings—detailed results are shown in Table A.10.1 in the Appendix—confirm that experts from eastern Europe are less pessimistic regarding vulnerability due to refugees than German speaking countries. The findings furthermore indicate that increases of vulnerability due to refugee flows are expected to be larger (1) for the period from 2015 to 2020 than for the period from 2020 to 2050 and (2) for social vulnerability than for economic vulnerability. Interestingly, male experts—on average—expect higher future increases of vulnerability due to refugee flows than female experts. Finally, while attitudes regarding the role of the welfare state and traditions had no influence, the general degree of optimism or pessimism regarding the future vulnerability development strongly affected estimates about the effect of refugee flows: The more experts thought that future vulnerability of families with children will increase, the more they also believed that it will increase due to current and future refugee flows.

Table 10.3: Estimates of consequences of refugee flows on future shares of vulnerable families with children by practitioners and scientists

Region	Economic vulnerability				Psychological vulnerability				Social vulnerability			
%	↘	≈	↗	(N)	↘	≈	↗	(N)	↘	≈	↗	(N)
2015-2020												
Practitioners	13	42	46	(24)	0	45	55	(33)	7	22	70	(27)
Scientists	2	44	54	(52)	0	53	47	(19)	4	38	58	(48)
2020-2050												
Practitioners	17	50	33	(24)	0	52	48	(33)	15	30	56	(27)
Scientists	13	50	37	(52)	11	68	21	(19)	2	48	50	(48)

Note: This table differentiates between estimates that the share of vulnerable families will decrease (↘), stay roughly the same (≈) or increase (↗) between 2015 and 2020 or 2020 and 2050, respectively.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

10.6. Conclusions: Immigrants in Europe—different topics in different regions

In focus groups, migration background and in particular language deficits were first and foremost seen as factors adding difficulties to already otherwise vulnerable families (e.g. making it harder for single parents to get informal childcare or to find a good job). In addition, focus group discussions revealed that specific groups of immigrants might face different kinds of problems while only the risk of social vulnerability due to small networks (or even isolation) is relevant to all of them (even for well-paid expatriates and their children). Nevertheless, vulnerability of immigrants and ethnic minorities is often multidimensional: economic hardship, psychological symptoms and missing social embeddedness in the host

country often go hand in hand. Specific risk factors might add to difficult situations. For refugees, for instance, traumatic events may be of special importance and unaccompanied minors might need most support.

Summarising experts' assessments of effects of current and future flows of refugees on future shares of vulnerable families with children in Europe, there are at least three messages: first, it seems that experts expected more negative consequences in the short run (until 2020) than in the long run (until 2050). A share of experts explicitly believes that in particular economic vulnerability of refugees will not have longstanding consequences (i.e. that it will decrease again after an increase in the first years).

Second, there were regional differences in the expected effects of refugee flows. These differences are in line with the existing variety of migration regimes in Europe that were also visible in focus group discussions. For Eastern and Southern Europe emigration is at least as important as immigration while the latter dominates the discourse about migration in central and northern European countries. Critical views on immigrant parallel societies and worries about the future were primarily discussed in Austria and Switzerland while participants of the Swedish focus group were more optimistic about integration processes.

Third, it were not the future prospects for economic or psychological vulnerability of families that were perceived most negative, but the effects of refugee flows on the social vulnerability of families with children. Social vulnerability refers to stigmatisation, discrimination and a lack of social support. This result can be interpreted as a warning that social cohesion in European societies may be at risk—a thought that should probably stimulate thinking about policies to avoid such a future development.

Part IV — Outlook

11. Families' futures in Europe

11.1. Introductory remarks

In the previous steps of the qualitative strand of our research, we *first* identified the well-being of vulnerable families with children as our main topic and focus for following research activities, we *second* defined and explored key dimensions of vulnerability of such families and we *third* identified and described key factors (drivers) that might influence their vulnerability in the future. The quantitative online survey with family experts then brought additional information on these drivers and on their possible future developments. In the final step, we consider how different combinations of these factors might shape families' futures. To do this, we build hypothetical scenarios of how the main drivers develop to create different likely and unlikely versions of the future and discuss the situation of vulnerable families in these scenarios.

Even only focusing on five main forces, 25 different combinations between them are possible (25 scenarios). Going slightly more into detail, using the fifteen drivers included in the questionnaire (three drivers for each of the five dimensions), we end up with 225 possible scenarios. Discussing every factor mentioned in focus groups, the number of possible scenarios would be hard to imagine. As we cannot sketch all thinkable scenarios in the present report, we followed a different approach. We developed scenarios using the following procedure: In a first step we built upon experts' knowledge and thought about the most pessimistic scenario as a warning (a dystopia) and the most optimistic scenario (a utopia) as an ideal state of the future. Then we constructed scenarios leading to these outcomes via “backward induction” from the outcome to developments of vulnerability driving forces that are necessary to “produce” such an outcome. While in the pessimistic scenario, all three dimensions of vulnerability are extremely high, there is no vulnerability at all in the optimistic scenario. These scenarios serve as a reference.

For the sake of simplicity, we start by combining developments of three forces: economic development, work–family combinations and broad societal aspects (the cultural environment). After sketching these scenarios, gender issues will be reflected upon in an

otherwise medium scenario. Finally desirability and effectivity of different policy measures within the various described scenarios will be discussed.

11.2. Reference points: the dystopian and the utopian scenario

In the first step, we create an extremely pessimistic version of the future. We use information collected in all our previous work (both qualitative and quantitative) to consider what developments would need to occur in order to increase economic, psychological as well as social vulnerability of families. The pessimist's version of the future might be considered as the most extreme negative outcome of an economic crisis if accompanied by unfavourable cultural and social changes. At the other end of the continuum, we would find a utopian vision of the future with all developments combined in such a way that economic, psychological and social vulnerability would (virtually) cease to exist. In a second step we will construct such a scenario. Table 11.1 gives an overview on these two scenarios that are described in more detail in the following.

Table 11.1: Reference scenarios

	Economic circumstances	Employment: work–family reconciliation	Cultural and social circumstances	Vulnerability		
				economic	psychological	social
Dystopia (pessimistic scenario)	long-lasting crisis, low GDP and income, high (youth) unemployment, high inequality	high work demands, no family-friendly work environments, lack of flexibility, high work related mobility	low tolerance towards “others”, weak social links due to competition, conflicts within families due to stress, low investments in children	very high	very high	very high
Utopia (optimistic scenario)	high GDP, further economic growth, low unemployment, high income, some inequality paired with social mobility	work available for all, family-friendly work environments, flexibility possible when needed, limited mobility	open/tolerant societies, strong emotional bonds, low levels of conflict, high investments of parents in children	none	none	none

The dystopian scenario

The simplest way of looking at this scenario is to consider it as the most extreme version of a long-lasting and severe economic crisis. In this hypothetical future, unemployment is extremely high and the labour market becomes highly hostile. There are high demands from employers with respect to required skills, working hours, employees' mobility and availability. As labour supply is high, employers can freely choose whom they want to hire, and fire workers without any problems as the next ones are already standing in line waiting to be employed. Therefore, on the one hand employers' expectations increase while on the other employees happily accept even very demanding jobs at low salaries. Consequently, wages generally remain at the low level. Only a very small fraction of the society—with some highly specific skills or otherwise privileged—can make large amounts of money, making this

inequality in income particularly visible. The working environment is characterised by high levels of stress and competition. While availability of employees is expected (in relation to time and place of work), no flexibility is offered to them, even if needed. The employers do not recognise a need for work–life balance and employees are generally exploited. Spatial mobility (or even economically driven migration) might become a necessity for many people.

In such a difficult setting, most families are in an adverse economic situation or face high economic uncertainty, at the very least. Young people have difficulties entering the labour market (high youth unemployment) and keeping their jobs. Consequently, entry into adulthood (leaving the parental home and starting a family of one's own) becomes really difficult. Providing for a family gets to be a real challenge. In most families, only one person is employed if any.

According to the experts who completed the online questionnaire, economic developments (especially unemployment, income inequalities and job demands) are crucial for all types of vulnerability. Therefore the severe economic crisis would impact not only on the economic well-being of families but also on their social and psychological well-being. With difficult labour market conditions, any “outsiders” would probably be treated as competitors and may be perceived as a threat, turning the society towards a less tolerant and more closed one. Such a development would leave the door open for xenophobic and nationalistic movements and might thus impair the well-being of whole societal groups. In the extreme version, even members of the same social network would compete for scarce resources and social relations would deteriorate. Moreover, economic hardship would increase levels of stress and conflicts within families. Altogether, in the pessimistic scenario, negative economic changes are accompanied by unfavourable social and cultural shifts. In this dystopian scenario, members of the society do not collaborate but compete and become less tolerant and open. Consequently, some societal groups (e.g. migrants or ethnic minorities) become isolated and the general level of trust and support within society is low.

The parenting behaviours also change in this scenario. As families have limited economic resources, they are not always able to invest in children. The majority of parents might try to do everything to sustain a decent level of living for their children and reduce spending money on themselves. Some other parents, however, will immediately start neglecting their children to have some money to spend for themselves. As the pressure for parents rises, investing in

children (both in terms of time and money) might cease to be a priority for all parents in the long run as they have to focus first and foremost on providing basic economic security. As a consequence, relationships between parents and their children also deteriorate.

The highly unfavourable combination of economic and cultural forces would put vulnerable families in an extremely adverse position. In the pessimistic scenario, not only does the number of vulnerable families increase, but they also experience all types of vulnerability more frequently. As already noted above, the experts recognised that the severe economic crisis will lead to an increase in economic, psychological and also social vulnerability. Moreover, increased poverty, stress and conflicts, intolerant attitudes and generally impaired social relations result in higher instability of families as well as in an increase of violence and crime, all of which are relevant factors for people's health status.

The utopian scenario

At the other end of the continuum, we can envision a very optimistic—utopian—version of reality, when economic prosperity is incontrovertible and sustainable (without any potential threat for nature and social environment). It means a virtual lack of unemployment and overall high incomes, observed in a long-term perspective (stable). Work is available to people of different skills and working conditions generally improve. As our experts noted, this would have a positive impact on numerous life dimensions. With the economy developing, the well-being of employees becomes important—not only their productivity—and employers need to create good working environments to attract the best workers. As an important element of individual well-being, the work–life balance becomes crucial for employers as much as for employees. The use of modern technology allows for higher productivity without putting additional stress on employees and also allowing for their flexibility, when needed. It also diminishes a need for employees' mobility and physical availability, allowing e.g. for tele-working. Indeed, in the online questionnaire experts perceived work-related geographical mobility of parents as increasing vulnerability of families—especially the psychological aspect of it. In the utopian scenario, with high work supply, spatial mobility related to work can be a choice (with no negative impact on the well-being of families) rather than a necessity.

With economic prosperity, the level of income is generally high, without any striking economic inequalities. People feel economically secure. The situation naturally translates into

an easy start into adulthood. Youth unemployment is also virtually non-existent and the salary in one's first job is sufficient to start a new family. General economic stability also encourages this transition.

In the optimistic scenario, all cultural and social changes also act against different types of vulnerability. With emphasis on work–life balance and economic security, people spend more time in the family and in their social networks. Their social ties become closer and more meaningful: they are socially embedded, able to receive emotional as well as practical support from different sources. Nobody is treated as competitor in the society, as there is enough work for everybody, and consequently social networks become also more diversified, including people from different backgrounds and of different characteristics. This means that there is a larger array of available options for emotional and practical support (more alternative solutions, if needed). The result is an open and tolerant society characterised by social cohesion.

With both economic security and social cohesion, the levels of stress are generally low. There are low levels of conflict in families and the quality of intimate relationships is high. People are able to invest time and money in the well-being of their families and in their children's development. With enough resources, they can create an excellent environment for their offspring.

11.3. Introducing gender roles: making the story more complex

Not only are the two above scenarios extreme but they are also simplistic in a way that they do not consider a dimension of gender roles. This dimension was, however, considered as highly important for family futures in all previous steps of our research program. In this subsection, we will briefly recover the arguments debated in focus group discussions before introducing gender roles into the scenario-building process. We will show that it is hardly possible to assure the well-being of vulnerable families regardless of what type of attitudes prevails in society. This is due to a diversity in risks and benefits that vary with the prevalence of different gender role attitudes.

Why gender roles matter

Gender roles define what is acceptable and approved for women and men. They shape people's preferences for certain lifestyles and delineate desirable life-scripts for both genders. Gender ideology, attitudes related to women's and men's roles in society have an important effect for the well-being of families. In the discussions with experts, two consequences of egalitarian gender attitudes were considered as particularly relevant for family well-being: women's participation in labour market and men's involvement in household and childcare duties. Men's involvement in family life was generally perceived as favourable, which was also confirmed in the online survey with experts. We observed, however, some ambivalence regarding women's paid work.

On the one hand, in our experts' opinions, women's paid work improves the financial situation of vulnerable families and allows for expanding one's social network (better social embeddedness). Consequently, it counteracts financial and social vulnerability. However, it can also be a source of stress and put too much burden on women's shoulders (in particular if not counterbalanced by men's higher involvement in household duties). This was also recognised in the online survey, where women's higher labour force participation was perceived as a potential source of increased psychological vulnerability. On the other hand, several experts and practitioners stressed that in some cases it is highly beneficial for the well-being of a family if a woman stays at home (if she wants it and the family can afford it). She can then invest her time fully into her children's development. This solution was seen as favourable especially in the case of large families, where costs and the burden of organising childcare are high. However, even if less egalitarian gender attitudes prevail and a single-breadwinner model is willingly accepted within a family, it usually brings some financial challenges. The family is deprived of the woman's income and the arrangement has a negative impact on her pension and overall financial security.

To sum up, our qualitative work showed both benefits and risks that are related to egalitarian as well as more traditional gender role attitudes (the latter oriented towards a male-breadwinner model of a family). They are briefly summarised in Table 11.2 below. First, it is important to recognise that these benefits and risks are strongly intertwined with other economic and social developments. Put differently, prevailing economic and societal circumstances influence which of these risks may be especially problematic. Second, it is also relevant for policy-makers to identify the risks that are related to dominant gender role models under a specific socio-economic scenario. Depending on the combination of economic

developments and the prevailing regime of gender roles, different policies will be needed to improve the well-being of families. This is an interesting point for scenario building as well as policy-making. It is thus crucial to introduce the gender dimension into our scenarios.

Table 11.2: Gender role attitudes (GRA) and vulnerability

Dominant GRAs	Egalitarian GRA	Traditional GRA
Lifestyle preferences	both sexes involved in professional work as well as childcare	men are predominantly breadwinners, women predominantly caregivers
Consequences for work life	both partners are economically active	male breadwinner: only one income (or women at maximum part-time)
Consequences for children/ family life	women need to be supported by men and/ or others/ institutions	women able to provide childcare on their own
Consequences for Vulnerability		
economic	positive: higher family income, increased financial independence of women	negative: less financial security due to lower family income, negative impact on women's pensions
psychological	possible benefits: self-confidence due to success in professional areas possible risks: double burden, high(er) levels of stress	possible benefits: lower levels of stress, concentration on family life possible risks: feelings of being trapped at home (social isolation and loneliness)
social	possible benefits: social contacts outside home, expanding women's networks (protection against exclusion) possible risks: not enough time for children and other family members (and/or friends)	possible benefits: time to invest in children's developments, improve relations to family members and/or contacts in the neighbourhood possible risks: social isolation if only contacts with children and other close family members

Introducing gender roles into the reference scenarios

In the case of the *utopian scenario*, with excellent economic prosperity, financial security of all individuals can be assured, regardless of their gender role attitudes and preferred work–care arrangements. With (virtually) unlimited economic resources, the welfare state could introduce additional measures to protect families from any of the risks associated with both lifestyles, no matter if a woman wants to stay at home with a child or be active in the labour market. With high salaries and family-friendly employers, both partners could flexibly organise their work to have enough time for their family life and leisure. The welfare state could also afford to offer high-quality childcare for the time span both parents are working. In the case of single parents who are working, high salary and wide availability of high-quality childcare would also prevent any form of vulnerability. If a woman wants to stay at home with her children (less egalitarian preferences), the economic situation of her family is not problematic either. In the utopian scenario, the salary of the husband is high and governments could additionally afford to pay some form of a salary for stay-at-home mums, recognising their workload in the private sphere. Subsidies for single mothers staying at home with their children could be even higher and facilities of high-quality childcare providing them with some leisure time could still exist. Together, these measures would prevent any form of vulnerability.

Taken together, full flexibility could be offered in the utopian scenario, such that each family could follow their preferred options, in line with their gender role attitudes, without being exposed to a risk of vulnerability. It is notable that several practitioners and experts in our study emphasised that such flexibility was in fact strongly desired. It was also reflected in the online survey, where both types of policies were perceived as good for the well-being of families: those oriented towards work-and-family reconciliation as well as those supporting parents who want to reduce their workload. In the utopian version of the future, everything could be achieved. After all, gender role attitudes might not matter much if almost unlimited resources allow for a broad and flexible policy and a tolerant society accepts the diversity of existing family forms (which was also assumed in the utopian scenario).

In the case of our pessimistic, *dystopian scenario*, on the other hand, (almost) all families would be at risk regardless of the gender roles they lived. Women's employment could naturally improve the financial situation of families but with extremely high unemployment it might be essentially impossible. In most cases, women would not be able to work even if they strongly desired to (nor would men's employment be universal). With low salaries and high labour market insecurity for both genders, economic vulnerability would be experienced almost universally regardless of people's lifestyle preferences. Gender role attitudes might thus be of secondary relevance.

In a sense, gender role attitudes do not matter much for the situation of families in both extreme future scenarios. All families would be at risk or all families would be secured. These extreme scenarios, however, are very unlikely. This was recognised by the experts in focus groups as well as by participants of the online survey (for instance, the vast majority of experts did not expect a decrease in the real GDP per capita). However, in case of any middle path of economic and societal development gender roles will be crucial. In the next step we outline two future scenarios that differ with respect to gender roles assuming an economic situation at the medium level. As element of these scenarios, we discuss which policy measures could meet the varying demands that are associated with specific gender role arrangements.

A medium development: why gender roles matter now

Let us assume now that the economy remains relatively stable at an average level, with some moderate ups and downs. In other words, we describe no extreme course of actions but rather a middle path with some moderate growth and occasional but limited financial turmoil only. Such an economic development was perceived as most likely by the vast majority of our experts. In a nutshell, it means that the resources are to some extent restricted (at the micro as well as at the macro level). It is not a case of heavy economic crisis, but it is not ongoing prosperity either. People experience unemployment although its levels are not high (at least not for longer periods). Incomes remain at a relatively good level. It is possible to accumulate high income in a household although it requires much effort. In addition, governments cannot afford implementing all policy measures and need to be selective in what they dedicate money to. The situation is characterised by a certain scarcity of resources.

The gender equity⁵⁴ scenario: The most characteristic element of this scenario is that it assumes egalitarian gender role attitudes spread universally in society and high participation of women in the labour force. In addition, this includes the assumption that in the long run policies are in line with predominantly egalitarian attitudes (e.g. priority of reconciliation policies to support female labour force participation).

In this scenario, most families are financially secured, with both partners active in the labour market. Salaries are not very high but sufficient to provide for the family. With two salaries, families are able to afford a decent/good standard of living. Even if one partner is unemployed for some time, the family is not immediately pushed into poverty. If a long-term unemployment occurs, however, it increases the family's financial vulnerability substantially. Therefore measures should be introduced to reduce risks of structural unemployment, shorten periods of frictional unemployment and guarantee open labour markets. At the same time, unemployment benefits remain low, since priority is given to reconciliation policies. To allow for both partners to participate in paid employment, high-quality childcare options are widely available. They are also crucial for single parents who have to rely on institutional childcare even more.

⁵⁴ In this section, we use the term “equity” if we refer to actual behaviour (e.g. an egalitarian division of tasks) in contrast to (egalitarian) attitudes. The term “equity” thus refers to an (almost) equal division in both spheres, the private sphere of family life and the public sphere of professional work. As such we explicitly do *not* refer to “equity” in the sense of equity theory (e.g. Adams, 1965; Walster et al., 1978).

Childcare is a top priority to governments. It is available for small children, but various options are created for children at school age as well: after school and during holidays. Childcare is also an issue for companies. In the race for best talents, at least large successful companies offer high-quality childcare at or near the workplace. Additionally, flexible working arrangements are promoted—including part-time jobs and telework—to allow parents to organise childcare with even more ease. With high gender equity, men are involved in childcare and it is as likely for men to work part-time as it is for women. At medium-level salaries, however, this is not very common for financial reasons (to avoid a risk of financial vulnerability).

Balancing work and family life remains the most important challenge for the majority of parents. With work being an important part of the lives of both men and women and with childcare largely outsourced, it is necessary to find ways to spend high-quality time with one's children. It is equally important to secure good, warm contacts in families and relations between generations. An important challenge is also to promote a work–life balance among employers, who—given the medium level of economic development—have relatively high expectations of their employees (in terms of their productivity: expected skills, working time and availability). In other words, with economic vulnerability addressed, efforts must be made to avoid social and psychological vulnerability.

In the egalitarian society, new challenges also arise for single parents after a divorce. Based on the respective legislation, shared custody allowing both parents to be equally involved in raising children will be the rule. Both parents should also be active in the labour market and their employment is supported by respective reconciliation policies. In this scenario, shared custody reduces risks of economic vulnerability as in principle, a child can easily spend time either with the mother or the father, since both are used to looking after the child. However, shared custody would still increase stress by having to organise daily life in accordance with the former partner's needs, matching the schedules of both parents and their children (in extreme case they even might not live in the same town any more). Conflict between former partners is likely to occur and time needed to uphold arrangements might be missed for social life.

Given that gender equity is a ruling ideology shared by virtually all society members in this scenario, non-egalitarian life choices are disapproved and not supported by any policy

measures. As such this scenario is not equal to the utopian vision of the future in which resources were sufficient to equally support all life choices. Although a high degree of tolerance and openness of a society might mitigate social vulnerability, social groups cherishing different values and attitudes need to adapt to the egalitarian ideology to avoid other forms of vulnerability.⁵⁵ In this scenario, as gender equity is supported, a woman who wishes to become a housewife does not receive any support from the state. She becomes dependent on her spouse, which might have a negative impact on her financial as well as psychological well-being.

The male-breadwinner scenario: In this scenario, orientation towards a male-breadwinner model is central.⁵⁶ Traditional gender role attitudes prevail in society, with people turning towards role specialisation and division of labour in families. A fair share of the population (women with children) decide—and are encouraged—to leave the labour market. Consequently, there is enough work for men, but their salaries need to suffice to secure the financial standards for their families. Therefore men often need to work long hours or even take additional jobs. Since the male-breadwinner family model is universal, institutional childcare is very basic. Consequently, even in case of economic hardship, mothers are basically not able to work and to contribute to family income. Their involvement is possible only if informal childcare is organised (e.g. provided by other family members or within a social network).

With a dominant-breadwinner model ideology and the labour market being oriented towards men, women's employment is generally problematic. As managements of companies consist of men with traditional gender role attitudes, companies neither invest in the education and training of women nor in reconciliation policies supporting mothers. Young women are oriented towards family formation and themselves do not invest in their professional development. It is also unlikely for them to enter the labour market when their children have

⁵⁵ This issue calls for attention in societies with increasing numbers of immigrants who have more traditional attitudes.

⁵⁶ In theory, a total reversal of gender roles would also be possible (female breadwinner, male housekeeper). Just think about extreme technological change where male-dominated jobs in industries are no longer existing due to perfect automatization. Under such conditions, a large fraction of men might be pushed into the private sphere of the household. Assisted reproductive technology might further reduce traditional expectations regarding motherhood and add to the plausibility of such a scenario. Our experts, however, did not discuss such a dramatic role reversal. Therefore, we discuss the more traditional male-breadwinner extreme to compare it with the gender equity scenario. At any rate, most of the content describing this scenario would probably still hold as long as "women" would be replaced by "men" and vice versa.

grown up. Their self-realisation lies mainly within the house and family life. Consequently, women's financial security depends entirely on their partners' income or on social support (e.g. state subsidies). If the economic situation of a country allows it, some compensatory payments to stay-at-home wives can be introduced, but with a majority of women staying at home, the payments are low.

Since women are largely excluded from work-based social networks, they create social networks within their families as well as among neighbours. Children are raised in the feminine environment and they often lack high-quality contacts with their fathers. This becomes particularly difficult in case of divorce. Financial vulnerability remains extremely high for single mothers (children universally stay with the mother after a divorce): as they rarely work, they usually need to rely on child support payments from their ex-husband and the child is virtually deprived of a father figure. These means that a large fraction of single mothers are also heavily dependent on support by their original families (grandparents etc.). Unless economic upturns allow for high welfare provisions to single mothers, it is therefore necessary to keep the divorce rate at the lowest possible level. In the extreme case, since traditional values are strongly supported in the society, divorces can be illegalised to protect women and children.

11.4. Policies: Which measures work under which circumstances (in which scenarios)?

In the prior sections, we discussed different possible scenarios for future families with children (summarised by Table 11.3). In this way, we showed that in extreme future scenarios gender role attitudes do not matter much for the situation of families. The pessimistic scenario can be seen as a warning, while the optimistic one might be considered utopian: the idea that we wish for but that is hardly plausible. In any other scenario of economic and societal development, however, gender role attitudes will matter much and—depending on the prevailing gender roles—different policy measures will be employed to counteract vulnerability. In the gender equity scenario, reconciliation of family life and professional work via childcare support and flexibility of working arrangements might help mitigate psychological and social vulnerability. (Because both partners are economically active, the risks of economic vulnerability should not be large in this scenario.) In the male-breadwinner scenario, on the other hand, reconciliation is not an issue because female employment as well as male engagement in parenthood are both not wanted by individuals. Instead financial

support to families who cannot live by means of a single income would be preferable. *Indeed, it is important to realise that with a medium-level economic development (the most likely prediction), the well-being of families will largely depend on what gender role attitudes prevail in society and on whether policy measures match these preferences.*

The usefulness of policies is heavily dependent on aims and targets but also on acceptance in the population. If parents can afford it, they will avoid making use of any existing policy measure that is in opposition to their will. In the male-breadwinner scenario, reconciliation policy would be largely useless. Maybe childcare facilities would help single mothers and husbands might be happy about flexibility at work, but as long as women want (and are expected) to stay at home with their children and as long as fathers are not held responsible for spending more time on work than on family life, they will not have much impact on the well-being of vulnerable families. On the other hand, measures like financial support for stay-at-home mothers are obviously of limited usefulness to mothers who want to return to work as quickly as possible after having given birth to a child.

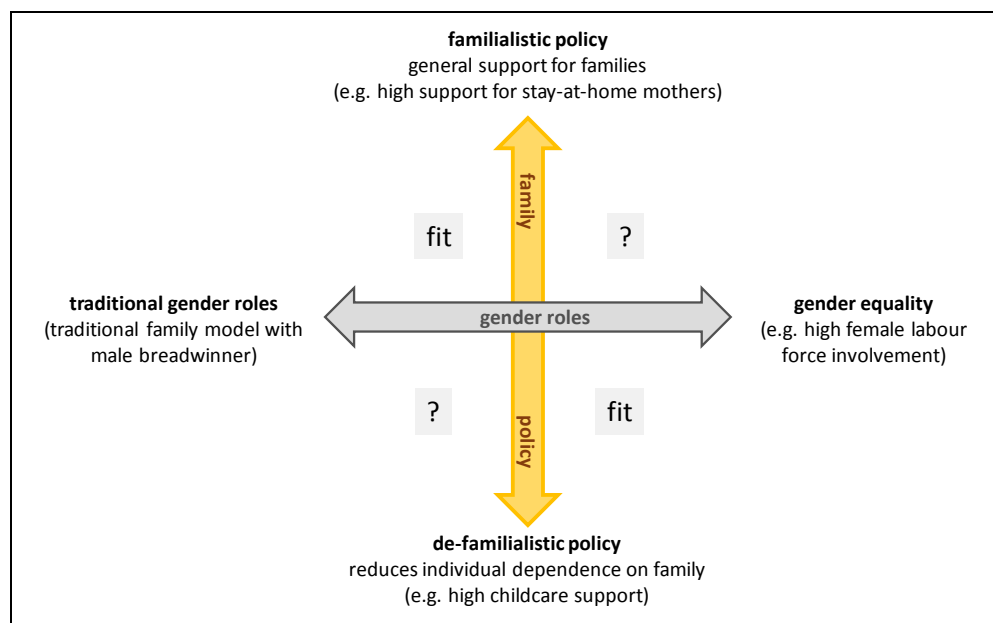
Table 11.3: Summary of discussed scenarios

	Dystopian scenario	Utopian scenario	Gender equity scenario	Male-breadwinner scenario
Economic development	long-lasting crisis	stable growth	medium	medium
Social/cultural development	social conflict	social cohesion	medium	medium
Gender role attitudes	mixed	mixed	egalitarian views dominant	traditional views dominant
Policy measures	none; not affordable	comprehensive; everything possible	support work-family reconciliation for both sexes	support for stay-at-home mums and traditional families
Work-family balance	irrelevant	no problem	dependent on effectiveness of policies	separation of tasks in couples; difficult for single parents
Well-being/vulnerability of families with children	high levels of economic, psychological and social vulnerability	high well-being, no vulnerability	degree of vulnerability depending on policies	degree of vulnerability depending on policies

These basic insights that hold for the discussed policy measures (childcare, financial transfers etc.) should also be true with regard to legal regulations, private options of support for parents and policy measures that go beyond family policy in a narrow sense. The cultural environment is very important for the effectiveness of legal regulations, whether regarding marriage and recognition of paternity (legal fatherhood status) or divorce laws and custody

issues. As long as shared custody is not accepted by society at large, for instance, it will probably not affect the vulnerability of children to a great extent. Children might stay with mothers facing high risks of vulnerability. Risks arising with the spread of shared custody, on the other hand, are different (e.g. mobility issues, stress) and create other challenges for policies supporting different family types and arrangements. In any case, basic family law regulations are an important part of the picture. This legislation has to fit preferences, too, and will affect well-being in combination with policy measures offering direct support. Similar to public childcare, to give another example, support by others and thus relationships to grandparents or neighbours will be more important if egalitarian gender roles prevail. If gender role attitudes and accordingly preferences for lifestyles are diverse, tolerance will be more important to avoid high levels of social and psychological vulnerability resulting from discrimination or stigmatisation. Policy makers might then focus on measures affecting cultural change.

Figure 11.1: Interdependency between gender issues and family policy



In the literature, family policy measures are often assigned to one of two categories: “familialistic” policies, enlarging individuals’ dependence on the family, or “de-familialising” ones, increasing the independence of single family members (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1999; Leitner, 2003; 2006). Familialistic policies are usually policies directed at all families. They aim at supporting families by strengthening them in their care function and are thus usually in line with traditional gender roles. Transfers to stay-at-home mothers are a good example.

Defamilialising policies, on the other hand, help families by unburdening them from certain tasks, thereby increasing the time that family members have available for their own activities. From a historical perspective, the introduction of such policies allowed women to be more independent. Thus, they are normally in line with egalitarian gender perspectives.

We could observe in our scenarios that vulnerability is probably lowest when policies support the realisation of preferred lifestyles. However, family policy would not be as successful in curtailing the vulnerability of families with children if gender role attitudes were not in line with existing policies or vice versa. Figure 11.1 depicts the four possible combinations (or situations). Once the problem is re-framed in this way, it seems to be obviously linked with arguments already inspiring the agent-based model in the quantitative part of the *FamiliesAndSocieties* foresight activities (i.e. the agent-based model discussed in Chapter 8 of the present report), namely the findings that gender equity can lead to lower as well as higher levels of fertility. This graph seems to extend (or deepen) the thoughts of authors like McDonald (2000) who explicitly understands low fertility as results of misfits between high gender equity in some and low gender equality in other social institutions. If we replace “fertility” by “well-being” (or “well-being of parents”), the similarities between this theory and our findings become obvious. While McDonald (2000) focuses on support for parental employment and a reduction of work–family conflict, Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Lappegård (2015) do not dismiss the relevance of policies but refer to a broader gender revolution including male engagement in the private sphere of the family.

11.5. Conclusions: what we have learned from the foresight exercise

In contrast to previous foresights by the OECD (2011b; 2012) or the *FamilyPlatform* project (Kapella et al., 2011; Uhlendorff et al., 2011), we focused on more narrowly defined facets of possible futures. This very clear focus allowed us to go for more depth. We let our experts decide what future developments are crucial for the future well-being of vulnerable families.⁵⁷ Therefore, the content of our scenarios is different from those created in previous projects and

⁵⁷ Using only those factors that were identified to be most relevant in focus group discussions, we decided for a parsimonious approach that allowed us to go into more detail with regard to a smaller number of driving forces. Future studies may add other factors and again increase the complexity. For instance, technological progress or educational mobility could be explicitly addressed as drivers. Different developments would then probably further diversify scenarios. (In a utopian (dystopian) scenario, both would be high (low).) In addition, other policy dimensions like educational policies or housing policies could be added to enrich the picture.

we are able to highlight different consequences of future developments. For instance, in their “Golden Age?” scenario, the OECD highlighted greater personal choice but also higher female labour force participation. They did not consider gender roles to the same extent as we do, however. Consequently, considerations based on our experts’ opinions show, for instance, that greater personal choice should include also a woman’s ability to choose to withdraw from the labour market and dedicate her time to family matters.⁵⁸

Creating some ‘stylised’ (extreme) pictures of future states allowed us to demonstrate possible risks and challenges that vulnerable families might be faced with. Of course, one might argue that extremes are unlikely to happen, but the role of the foresight is to keep us alert for even the most unlikely scenarios. It could be shown that in the pessimistic scenario, well-known policy measures would most probably have hardly any meaningful effect. In this respect, a discourse about chances and limitations of existing family policy might be initiated by our findings.

First and foremost, however, our thought experiment has demonstrated that the well-being of families is largely dependent on what attitudes and preferences prevail and whether policy measures match these preferences. The link between gender (role) arrangements and welfare policy seems to be obvious (cf. Pfau-Effinger, 2005) but its potentially diverse implications for future policy nevertheless have to be made clear. By illustrating these interdependencies, we might furthermore add an additional aspect to existing demographic theories about the role of gender arrangements (e.g. Goldscheider et al., 2015; McDonald, 2000). The actual relevance of these issues can hardly be underestimated in the light of existing differences in prevailing gender role attitudes across Europe (e.g. Panova & Buber-Ennsner, 2016).

The knowledge of different alternative scenarios of the future should stimulate thinking about policies and their effectiveness and meaning under different circumstances. This chapter was a first step in this direction delivering an interesting and important point of departure for further thinking, especially—but not only—regarding policy-making.

⁵⁸ The difference between previous foresight approaches and the present one is obvious when Figure 1.1 is compared to Figure 11.1. We tried to go one step ahead: Depending on the combination of economic developments and the prevailing regime of gender roles, different policies will be needed to reduce vulnerability and improve well-being of families with children.

12. Conclusions and policy implications

12.1. Different perspectives following from different approaches

The final chapter of the present report draws upon specific aspects and results discussed in previous chapters to reveal some future options for policy-makers. Experts participating in the expert questionnaire study expected policies to be capable of reducing vulnerability. Family policy was rated the second most important driving force of future vulnerability after economic development. The relevance of policy was even more pronounced for the parents responding to the family questionnaire. They attached the greatest importance for future well-being of families with children to changes in welfare and family policy and to the reconciliation of family life and professional work. In the following, we once more want to broaden the perspective. This refers to at least two aspects: First, we take up again the results of different research activities as different methods accentuate different topics and allow for different insights that can inspire a variety of policy recommendations. Second, though our focus lies on families with children we will not restrict our attention to the parent-child relationship only. By doing so, we would run the risk of failing “to recognize other ways that parents actively manage their children’s social and intellectual opportunities outside the family and that other socialization agents influence children’s development” (Parke, 2013, p. 13). As has already been emphasised in the introduction, families are embedded in several social systems.

This chapter is organized as follows: First, future demographic trends are sketched. Second, we use expert questionnaire ratings to build a likely scenario. In contrast to the foresight scenarios in the previous chapters, these two approaches allow to consider more plausible developments that are closer to the present (and hopefully at least the near future). Third, we want to take up the probably most important topic discussed in our focus groups: work–family reconciliation. As experts repeatedly argued that it is not only money that matters (earnings gained by employment) but also time available for children, we will sketch suggested policy objectives and shortly strive the issue of time policy. Fourth, focus groups and online questionnaires covered the important topic of vulnerability reproduction within families and measures to overcome social heritage in the next generation. A summary of the arguments should once more emphasize that education is important. The efficacy of measures will however depend not only on *what* is implemented but in particular on *how* it is implemented. As a variety of policy measures were perceived to be relevant, we will also argue in favour of

a mainstreaming approach that builds upon monitoring employing synthetic indices. Fifth, we want to remind the reader regarding some not previously discussed other topics (e.g. refugees) repeating further messages from the present research that could also be relevant to future policy making.

12.2. Demographic trends affecting vulnerable families

Demographic trends are highly relevant as they affect families' lives in many ways. Ongoing urbanisation, for instance, increases the number of children that are growing up in artificial environments. Ageing may support intergenerational solidarity (availability of grandparents) but foster intergenerational conflicts as well. Educational expansion might reduce vulnerability if (and only if) children from lower strata get the chance to overcome their social heritage. Future family configurations and family sizes are also subject to diverse demographic trends: mainly to fertility, union formation and dissolution. Although demographers construct projections of many trends, projections of families are considerably rare. Usually they figure within projections of households which are done by some national statistical offices. Useful syntheses of similar projections are reported in OECD (2011a; 2012). Below we expose a short sketch of future changes in the major trends and illustrate family change with data that comes mainly from these OECD-publications.

Before the end of the first decade of this Century fertility reached very low levels, yet a rebound was observed in several countries from values around 1.6 to values around 1.8. The economic crisis however halted this tendency and fertility remained low. It is unlikely to expect a sizeable increase in fertility during the next two decades. The replacement level of 2.1 will hardly be reached. A modest rebound can be assumed however where the crisis is not as influential or could fade away. While fertility levels are not expected to change much, postponement of births to higher ages is expected to continue. It can bring some women to ages where fecundity decrease significantly. Women might thus increasingly demand for assisted reproduction technologies (ART) whose effect on the level of fertility will nevertheless remain very small.

In the past, the increasing educational level of women has contributed to a postponement of partnering and childbearing. Postponement may bring about a decline in the number of children in the family. If the population is homogeneous with respect to postponement of

births, in particular the share of large families may decrease. Yet large families are usually observed among specific segments of the population defined by ethnicity, religiosity, place of living or regions within a country, and also by education of parents. Under the prevalence of a heterogeneity it can be expected that the share of large families will not be significantly influenced by postponement of births at older ages.

An increasing number of international migrants may raise issues of integration and social cohesion (see Chapter 10); in particular if diversity leads to growing disparities between majority and minority groups. In addition, the development of the share of large families could be altered by immigration. If immigration flows are dominated by migrants from cultures where large families prevail, the share of large families could increase. Recent immigration flows are however dominated by refugees. The effect of immigration on the composition of family configuration would be small if refugees return to their countries. But many of them might also stay in Europe (Buber-Ennser et al., 2016).

An outstanding trend is the increase in dissolution of cohabitating couples. Divorce rates are also not expected to decline (at least not to a large extent). Hence family dissolution may bring about a rise in single-parent families. This is underlined by the OECD syntheses (OECD 2011a; 2012)⁵⁹ as well as the results of our microsimulation. The simulation showed that the timing of union formation and separation is crucial for future fertility levels. If union dissolution becomes more common, particularly for childless women, the negative impact of union dissolution on fertility would still be reinforced even if all women were to re-partner. In addition, the share of mothers having a union disruption was expected to strongly increase resulting in a rise of single parenthood (for details see Chapter 7).

From the point of view of our interest in vulnerable families with children we summarize that demographic trends are likely to lead to an increase in the shares of single-parent families and of immigrant families. To these we can add an increase in same-sex families as a result of the liberalization of the legal system in an increasing number of countries.⁶⁰ The share of large

⁵⁹ For example, towards 2025-2030, the share of single-parent families will increase by 27 per cent in Norway, 22 to 23 per cent in the United Kingdom and France, by ten per cent in Austria and nine per cent in the Netherlands. Germany is an exception with an expected decline by 16 per cent. The proportion of single-parent families in this country was unusually high as a result of supportive policies that dominated in the German Democratic Republic.

⁶⁰ It is indicative that EUROSTAT publishes statistical data for this kind of family configuration.

families is not likely to decrease although its increase is also not likely. Taken together, the share of those family configurations that are at higher risks of being vulnerable (according to experts in focus group discussions) is likely to increase during the next one or two decades.

12.3. Experts' expectations: a likely scenario based on questionnaire results

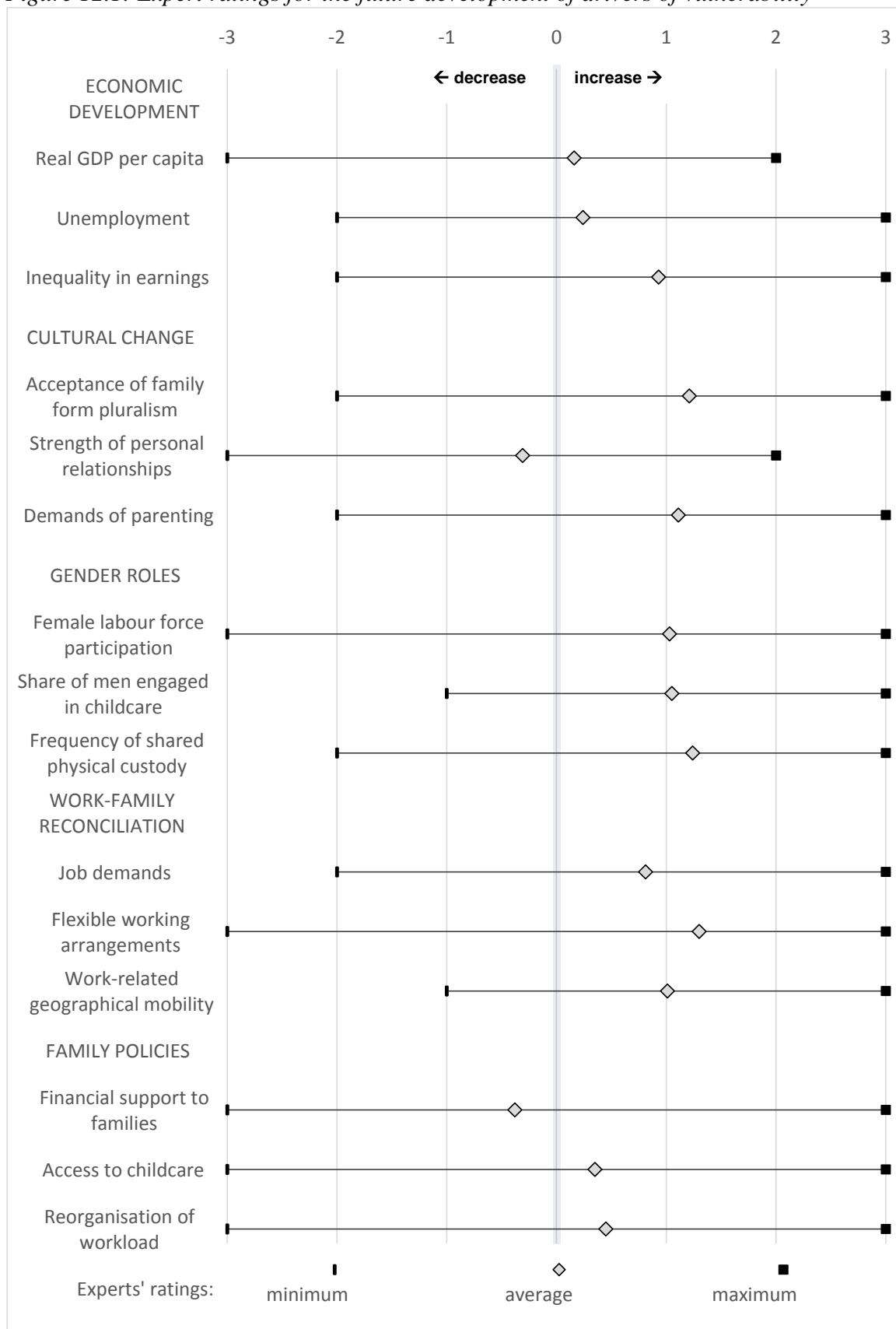
Expectations of experts themselves vary considerably. Usually, at least some experts saw the future in a somewhat different light than the majority (see Figure 12.1). This fact reflects the heterogeneity of European countries but also the uncertainty of future developments, both underlining the need for very different hypothetical scenarios and their reflections. Looking at average ratings, however, some trends for Europe that may be expected become visible. While experts do not believe in considerable changes in real GDP per capita or unemployment, they overall expect that inequality in earnings will rise in the future. The same is true for demands of parenting, job demands and work-related geographical mobility of parents. Experts also believe that female labour force participation in Europe will increase further, as well as the share of men engaged in childcare, the frequency of shared physical custody after divorce and acceptance of the pluralism of family forms. While financial support for families is assumed to decrease, other types of family policy may be enforced. Nevertheless, the expected changes in policies remain rather small on average.

What would such a scenario imply for the future vulnerability of families with children? In general, experts assumed that shares of families affected by economic, psychological and social vulnerability would increase in the future (see Chapter 5). Most pessimistic were expectations regarding the psychological vulnerability of families with children. According to our experts, an increasing inequality in earnings would affect all three dimensions of vulnerability under study. Higher female labour force participation would raise psychological vulnerability although the increase in male engagement in childcare would at least partly reduce it. Increasing job demands (longer working hours, higher work commitment etc.) and higher work-related geographical mobility of parents would both increase psychological vulnerability; the first one also social vulnerability. According to average expert estimates, other likely developments, such as more frequent arrangements of shared physical custody or a higher acceptance of diversity in family forms, would not be that relevant for vulnerability. Policies could have a strong impact, but assumed changes are small. Largely in line with the

experts' overall assessments, these developments should lead to higher vulnerability, not only but in particular with regard to non-economic dimensions of vulnerability.⁶¹

⁶¹ Estimates regarding the effect of refugees discussed in Chapter 10 of the present report were not considered in this scenario. As experts, however, emphasised effects of present and future refugee flows on social vulnerability, the findings do not affect the conclusion that the consideration of non-economic dimensions of vulnerability seems to be at least as relevant as that of the economic ones.

Figure 12.1: Expert ratings for the future development of drivers of vulnerability



Note: N = 176. Experts assessed whether the driver will strongly decrease (-3), moderately decrease (-2), slightly decrease (-1), stay roughly the same (0), slightly increase (+1), moderately increase (+2) or strongly increase (+3) until 2050. The figure presents the average rating as well as the minimum and the maximum value chosen by respondents.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

What policies would improve the situation of families with children in such a scenario? According to our experts, both financial support for families and better access to childcare could reduce all three dimensions of vulnerability while government support for fathers and mothers to reorganise their workload when they want to dedicate time to parenting (reduce worktime or temporarily quit their job) would at least reduce social vulnerability. In terms of the prior discussion in Chapter 11, we could characterise this scenario as one that indeed combines medium economic development with an increase in gender equality. Therefore, especially measures allowing improvements in work–family reconciliation—measures such that both time and financial resources for children can be secured—seem to be crucial.

12.4. Work–family reconciliation and time policy

In focus groups, experts emphasised the relevance of work–family reconciliation to avoid vulnerable states. In this respect, they went far beyond childcare and other “classical” policy measures but rather discussed the necessity for parents of finding time for children and their needs. A better future for children requires both secure financial means and time for parents to be there for their children.

The link between paid work and family life appeared to be indeed central for the concept of vulnerability because it covers economic, social as well as emotional dimensions. The inability to reconcile these two spheres of life is likely to lead to serious economic problems. Parents can get trapped in precarious jobs or they may feel forced to limit their working hours which, in turn, substantially reduces their income. In extreme cases, they might need to leave the labour market altogether. They would then no longer be able to meet the financial needs of their family. Being out of the labour market can also reduce the social contacts parents have, limiting their social embeddedness. Facing substantial difficulties regarding the reconciliation of work and family, parents might also choose to greatly reduce quality time with their offspring for the sake of economic safety but this is bound to have a negative impact on the relations with their children and on the children’s emotional well-being. Problems with reconciliation of work and family life are also related to time pressure and high stress levels. Indeed, the link between paid work and family life was central throughout all our discussions with the experts.

Consequently, central forces deciding about the future of vulnerable families were also related to the work–life balance: changes in institutional childcare provision, changing gender roles (women’s higher participation in the labour force, but also the higher involvement of fathers in childcare) as well as the role of the “culture of workplace” and employers’ attitudes towards their employees’ family responsibilities. Even economic growth—necessary for low levels of unemployment, decent levels of wages and substantial public support for families—may induce vulnerability if pressures and stress are not accompanied by more general changes in the workplace culture (e.g. if employers are not considerate of parental duties). A more positive attitude of employers towards parents and a friendlier working atmosphere could substantially improve the situation of families, but in general, the modern culture of workplace was not evaluated favourably by our informants. According to the experts, flexible measures enabling parents to reorganise or reduce their workload to have more time for parenting are needed.

The issue of “time for parenting” refers to “time policy”.⁶² Time policy comprises two interlinked aspects: First, policy measures should influence societal time structures. Second, policy usually aims to change other societal structures by changing time structures. Time policy is then a means to reach a specific end (Rinderspacher, 2015). Regarding the family, time policy might refer to diverse aspects like childcare all around the clock, self-determined working hours or time for parenting (and grand-parenting). Policy suggestions refer to changes of the rhythm of the day, the week, the year or even much longer periods. In addition, it has to be considered that, on the one hand, available time contingents can be divided between tasks at one point in time while, on the other hand, time for specific tasks can also be organised in/ shifted to different time periods across the life course. Time policy as such may thus go beyond the usual concept of planning and could also aim at organising life courses to avoid “rush hours” in individual lives.⁶³

⁶² An overview over time policy activities in Europe can be found in a special issue of the time policy magazine (available at http://www.zeitpolitik.de/pdfs/zpm_26_0715.pdf). For more information on time policy as well as research see the “German society for time policy” (<http://www.zeitpolitik.de/>) and the “International Society for the Study of Time” (<http://www.studyoftime.org/>).

⁶³ For more information on these and related topics see <http://www.zeitpolitik.de/zeitpolitikmagazin.html> (most information unfortunately only available in German).

12.5. Hindering the reproduction of vulnerability

Another topic of central relevance in the present report was the reproduction of vulnerability within families. The question how policies could support children to overcome disadvantages and risks based in their social heritage was lively debated in focus groups. All experts agreed that this is indeed one of the main challenges for present and future policy makers. In our online questionnaires experts and parents rated the usefulness (or relevance) of ten specific policy measures. These ten measures were derived from focus groups results and represent most of the potential areas of policy intervention that were mentioned in these discussions. While it is obviously possible and meaningful to think about them in more detail as well as to add further measures, they still deserve some more attention in the summarizing chapter of this report.

Experts participating in focus groups saw education, employment and the creation of a more family-friendly society as indispensable in supporting vulnerable families and protecting the children living within them. While financial transfers are required to address the most urgent needs of vulnerable families, they alone do not solve the problem of reproduction of vulnerability, but might even lead to the socialisation of state dependency. Instead, it is crucial to facilitate families to sustain themselves. Regarding children, discussants in focus groups primarily stressed the relevance of *education* to overcome social heritage. Successful education results in opportunities for children and was seen being the first step out of poverty. Education referred not only to schooling as such but was understood in a broad manner. Parents, for instance, have to be involved and might need information, advice and support. It has to be clear to them what opportunities their children could have and how they may support them. In addition, the structure of educational systems and educational contents could be optimised and further developed to provide an ideal environment for children. Our experts provided us with an unbelievable number of suggestions that are worth thinking about. Some of them could even be extended. For instance, giving advice to children themselves may be embedded in a mentoring program to provide positive role models how to overcome disadvantages by social heritage.

Findings from the expert questionnaire confirmed the relevance attributed to education—at least to some degree. The three policy measures identified by experts as being most important were the *provision of childcare options* for preschool children, *assistance for children with*

special needs and *raising the awareness of employers* regarding the work–life balance of their employees, closely followed by providing *education for all children already at an early age*. Parents participating in the family survey, however, did not emphasise policy measures referring to education. Maybe the quality of, and the confidence in, the educational systems have to be increased.⁶⁴ It should be considered that not only the provision of education matters but also how it is implemented. Furthermore, especially parents who (a) cannot spend as much time with their children as they want to and/or (b) are themselves not familiar with and/or in favour with the educational system may get the impression that extended education only takes their children away from them—a thought that brings us back to the argument for parental involvement in education and that is also pleading for sensibility in interaction with parents. They should be supported and not stigmatised.

12.6. Policy options: monitoring and mainstreaming

In a recent report by Eurofound (2015), it was emphasized that family policies often lack a coherent and integrated policy framework. According to the authors, an adequate income, the provision of adequate childcare, sufficient information for parents and support in reconciling care responsibilities with employment are desperately needed to overcome vulnerability. Our findings confirm these results and extend the list of meaningful policy measures. In particular, the experts in focus groups also recognised a necessity for a comprehensive strategy and complementary policies in supporting vulnerable families and the children in them: single measures have to go hand in hand with each other. Disregarding relative rankings of single measures, it has to be noted that all of the ten policy measures presented in the questionnaires were identified as relevant by the largest part of our participants. An integrated approach might thus be the best possible answer to future challenges.

Operative policy monitoring would be helpful to identify measures that complement or counteract each other. In monitoring, policy measures need to be evaluated from the perspective of well-being (or vulnerability) of families. Yet monitoring a large list of adequate policy measures is time-demanding and can hardly be effective. An appropriate way would be

⁶⁴ Experts suggested that the importance of education should be promoted among parents. It has to be considered, however, that most parents already stated that educational measures are of high relevance. The difference between experts and parents *only* appears in relative rankings, as parents—in contrast to experts—emphasize the relevance of other policy measures more than that of educational measures. In addition, it would be plausible that some parents think that childcare and education during holidays are not helpful because it may further reduce the spare time of their children as well as the time they themselves can spend with their children.

to give priority to certain policy aspects and link them with indices related to family well-being (or vulnerability). This match assures that contradicting policies would be avoided. After the selection of policy aspects and the development of appropriate indices, monitoring can be implemented. Monitoring should then also include the acceptance of offered policies by parents. Views of parents might differ from those of both experts and policy-makers.⁶⁵ If options are not accepted by parents, however, they are likely to be hardly ever used and would thus be ineffective.⁶⁶

The synthetic indices describing the object of interest may refer to the three dimensions under study: economic, psychological and social vulnerability. During recent years the use of indices constructed for specific policy purposes has been expanding. One of these indices, the material deprivation index constructed and followed by Eurostat is regularly used for monitoring poverty. The index covering the risk of poverty and social exclusion is directly relevant to material vulnerability. It can be effectively used for monitoring the economic dimension of vulnerability. The other two dimensions of vulnerability of families are not linked to a similar index. Obviously, if such indices were available the monitoring of vulnerability change could be improved. Potential candidates for indicators covering also these two dimensions do unequivocally exist. Regarding psychological and social vulnerability, for instance, one might think of items derived from well-established depression scales or questions capturing a lack of social support and missing social capital. However, it might be too demanding for statistical bodies to consider an index specifically for the vulnerability of families with children and for the reproduction of that vulnerability. These indices can be constructed by scientific experts from different disciplines. A potential research would first have to identify the components of the index and then to combine them.

Very important for an integrated approach might be *mainstreaming family*. Mainstreaming has become very popular since the 1990s (e.g. mainstreaming gender, mainstreaming aging). The ten policy measures identified as most important by experts participating in the focus group discussions and later evaluated by experts and parents in the online surveys belong to different social or economic policies, some to more than one. For example, the first measure

⁶⁵ This was obvious in case with most educational measures but in particular with regard to support for stay-at-home mothers. This policy measure was, on average, regarded as the least important one by experts but as the second most important one after raising awareness of employers by families.

⁶⁶ Eurofound (2015) suggests additional qualitative monitoring to deepen the understanding of (a) real day-to-day problems of parents and (b) the (non-)functioning of policy programs.

(direct financial transfers) belongs to family policies but also to policies that fight poverty. This also holds for the second measure as lower prices can be understood as indirect (financial) transfers in kind. Childcare is a fundamental measure related to family policies but also to policies related to the reconciliation of professional work and care for the family. Assistance to disabled children is an item that belongs to well-designed policies for the disabled in line with the international *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Several items in the table relate to education policies. To these items we can add others not explicitly specified here although they are bound to have an effect on vulnerability: for example, policies related to employment and unemployment, policies mitigating income inequality and other economic policies. In general, the list of relevant policies is extremely large, indicating that family vulnerability can permeate, and does permeate, numerous policies. Therefore it is a topic that has been mainstreamed across diverse policies. With the inclusion of the matter of interest in a broad circle of policies mainstreaming bears important advantages.

12.7. Further issues

In this final subsection, we want to come back to some issues that were prominently discussed within the present report but not mentioned (at all or in detail) in the concluding chapters on the future of families so far. This refers to topics like migration and refugees or the specific relevance of workplace related policy measures.

Migration and consequences of the refugee crisis: The focus of this report was (vulnerability) of families with children. Children and families who were fleeing from their home countries due to discrimination, violence and/or persecution, children and families who encountered numerous challenges and hard times also during their flight, these children and families are vulnerable and should be provided with shelter and support in any case. On average, experts in our questionnaire study expect an increase in vulnerability from 2015 to 2020 due to present refugee flows. The same is true with regard to the present and future refugee flows for the period between 2020 and 2050. For the long run (2020-2050), however, the opinion that *economic* and *psychological* vulnerability will increase was not anymore prevailing among experts (less than 50 per cent support it).

Although fears of alleged “welfare shopping” are widespread in several countries in Europe (Dalla Zuanna, Hein & Pastore, 2015), it seems that refugees arriving during the so-called

“refugee crisis” in 2015 are usually educated and willing to work. Recent evidence from Austria (Buber-Ennsner et al., 2016)⁶⁷ confirms that the refugees’ education is—though not on European level—much higher than the average levels in their countries of origin.⁶⁸ Most of the participating refugees had some work experience and intended to participate in the host society’s labor market. Avoiding economic vulnerability it is thus central to give those immigrants access to the labor market. In general, migrants’ skills could be better used and, most importantly, it is worth to *invest in migrants’ children* (Dalla Zuanna et al., 2015). Offering language training, mentoring and long-term career paths could foster (labor market) integration of refugees (Eurofound, 2016). Doing so, Europe could realize the enormous (economic) potential of these people and hinder (economic) vulnerability and its reproduction. Where local authorities and market institutions fail to provide resources and opportunities, migrants will be forced to rely on networks of origin or ethnicity. Although these networks are advantageous to migrants because they often provide organizational as well as emotional support and allow to perpetuate culture and customs of places of origin, they carry the danger of segregation and isolation (IOM, 2015).

The difficulty of psychological problems is that they do not automatically end when you leave the place where its causes are rooted or when economic vulnerability has been overcome. Nevertheless, a large share of experts did not only expect economic vulnerability *not* to increase further in the future but also psychological vulnerability. Indeed, children who are treated well and supported to overcome their traumatic experiences have good chances to lead a normal and successful life. To increase their opportunities and enhance the quality of treatment, resources for additional psychological care and professional training is necessary. Due to the high degree of cruelty in reported experiences, specific individual histories and different cultural backgrounds, even professionals often reach their limits in supporting minor refugees. “A globalised and interdisciplinary approach and capacity building will be required to face the continuous challenge and offer a broad range of challenges for psychologists and (other) health care professions.” (Wenzel & Kinigadner, 2016: 135)

⁶⁷ Buber-Ennsner and colleagues (2016) asked 972 refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan who arrived in Austria in the summer and fall of 2015. The surveyed population mainly comprised individuals from young families with children.

⁶⁸ In addition, even the more religious men frequently tended to support modern views on gender and family issues—often a contrast to prevailing opinions in their countries of origin (Buber-Ennsner et al., 2016).

Experts were most pessimistic with regard to *social* vulnerability: More than five out of ten expected even a further increase of social vulnerability until 2050 while less than one out of ten thought that it will decrease after 2020. Social vulnerability refers to discrimination and a lack of social support and according to our experts these might be the most important challenges for the future. Long-term integration policies are necessary as the majority of the refugees might want to stay in Europe (e.g. three-quarters of the interviewees in Buber-Ennser et al., 2016). Policies need to strengthen the public confidence and societal trust in migrants (Dalla Zuanna et al., 2015). In addition, local policies targeted toward the inclusion of migrants and allowing their participation in public affairs can mobilize their skills and capacities for the well-being of the whole community (IOM, 2015), thereby showing the added societal value of migration.

Gender equity: In the scenarios presented above, utopia allowed for different gender role attitudes. Actually, however, there are many good reasons why gender equity is preferable to a traditional regime that favours the male-breadwinner model (and sticks women and men to predefined roles). Regardless of any normative aspects, many findings of our research support this view. On average, experts in focus groups preferred more gender egalitarian perspectives, even though acknowledging different individual preferences. Some explicitly stated that they do not see any disadvantages in higher female labour force participation that would however bring economic advantages for women themselves, the family and the society at large (GDP growth). Men's involvement in childcare was furthermore perceived to be beneficial for children and fathers. In addition, experts and practitioners also emphasized that poor measures for work and family reconciliation (e.g. poor childcare options, not family-friendly working environment) have a negative impact on economic, social as well as psychological vulnerability of families. Last but not least, the simulation results of the agent-based model showed that increasing gender equity improves the well-being of agents as utility derived by individuals from consumption increases as egalitarian attitudes spread through the society (also encouraged by policy measures).

A final point highlighting the benefit of more gender equal arrangements and the need for work-family reconciliation and facilitation policies of female employment can be seen in the fact that often children stay with mothers after parental separation. More gender equity would

allow for more involvement of men in raising children as well as more economic security and financial independency for (single) mothers at all ages (pension entitlements).⁶⁹ Microsimulation results and projections reported by the OECD (2011a; 2012) both indicate that separation and re-partnering will remain an important trend for the future of families in Europe. The share of single parents is likely to increase.

We do not want to conceal that some of our results also indicate that a more traditional division of labour can be beneficial in specific situations. However, first and foremost, a traditional division of task that was freely chosen and agreed upon by equal partners is (though somewhat risky) not necessarily opposing gender equity. Second, although families with children share a lot of needs and concerns, different families (and different types of families) will always have specific needs that may differ from those of the majority of families, too. These needs should not be ignored. In such cases, flexibility is recommended. Specific families' well-founded needs (and expectations) need to be met as the variety of family will probably even further increase in the future in Europe.

Acceptance of policy measures: As already noted in previous chapters, policy measures that are highly rated by parents are not always those favoured by experts. This was clearly demonstrated by our questionnaires and is directly related to an issue of practical relevance: if policy measures should help parents, their acceptance of them is crucial. At least to some extent, this point is also related to dominant gender role attitudes, corresponding expectations and policy fit. But it goes beyond this argument. Cause even if a policy measure is in line with prevailing gender arrangements it does not necessarily have to be accepted and used by parents. As already mentioned, monitoring would be helpful. In addition, newly introduced policies should be explained to the public and promoted as it might be that not all parents are aware of its benefits. There is, finally, another option that deserves to get some recognitions as well. Often experience gained in small-scale regional policy projects can be used to identify best practices. If such projects are accompanied and evaluated scientifically, they can be interpreted as sort of “natural experiments” and produce evidence to inform or inspire a large scale implementation of successful projects.

⁶⁹ More gender equity means allowing women to stand on their own feet (to be independent from family members and public welfare) and giving them the chance to pursue a professional career.

Workplace-related policies: In our survey, (large) families expressed a need for flexible work schedules and childcare opportunities at the workplace. Raising the awareness of employers that it is worthwhile investing in their employees' wellbeing and supporting them in their parental roles was among the top three most important policy measures with experts as well as families. Already participants of the focus groups emphasised that employers' attitudes towards parents influence the situation of families to a great degree. Are parents able to occasionally leave work earlier to be there for their children? Is it possible to use new technologies to increase job flexibility and, for instance, allow for home office hours? These and other related questions refer to the culture of work that may be decisive for the future well-being of families with children. If employers are not attentive to parental duties, future economic development might even increase pressure to the families. In such a case, psychological vulnerability will likely rise, thereby only shifting the problem of vulnerability from economic to other aspects of life. A family-friendly working environment and an organisational culture that is responsive to the needs of families are a necessity for sustainable improvements. Finally, raising the awareness for vulnerable families, vulnerable children and the problem of vulnerability transfers across generations is needed not only with respect to employers but to society at large. How colleagues, neighbours, relatives and others react and behave matters, too. No policy measure will be enough by itself if employers and the society as a whole do not recognise and acknowledge the needs of (vulnerable) families with children.

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Appendix

Table A.2.1: Main results of expert consultations

Findings	Scenarios	Policy Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ important to say something about the possible reasons for differences between the answers of experts and families ▪ mention in the discussion again that differences between results of the family questionnaire and the expert questionnaire might also be due to the sample composition (influence of regional context: culture and policy) ▪ results on large families in southern Europe are highly relevant because they are very often vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ explain why changes in education are not explicitly perceived as a driver although aspects of education are discussed as policy measures relevant to stop vulnerability reproduction ▪ emphasize that fit between policies and gender roles is also an issue of change (cultural change/ changes in gender roles) ▪ make clear that different views regarding gender roles do exist in the present because this is a prerequisite for the thought experiment (in fact there is large heterogeneity across Europe) ▪ improve conclusion section, revise implications following from the comparison of the scenarios ▪ different views on future developments may also be due to different expectations regarding regional developments (heterogeneity within Europe) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ important to emphasize the relevance of all aspects of education that were mentioned in focus group discussions ▪ add that parents and experts have different views due to the aims resulting from a more general (often long-term) perspective vs. a pragmatic perspective that is oriented towards the fulfilment of daily needs (often visible in childcare institutions and schools in discussions between pedagogues and parents) ▪ policies have to be promoted and the logic and aims should be explained to the general public (to raise acceptance) ▪ develop more concrete ideas about monitoring and mainstreaming (maybe in a follow-up project) ▪ compare conclusions and policy implications with those of other studies: the relevance of several conclusions of other research is confirmed while at the same time new aspects are added

Table A.6.1: Policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability (experts)

Policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability within families	Central western Europe		German-speaking part of Europe		Western Europe		Northern Europe		Southern Europe		Eastern Europe		Europe (total)	
	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)
1. direct financial transfers to families in needs	3.63	(1.69)	3.78	(1.47)	4.27	(1.56)	4.10	(1.09)	4.40	(1.45)	4.18	(1.44)	4.03	(1.48)
2. lower prices of food and other products of day-to-day importance	2.97	(1.45)	3.13	(1.44)	3.27	(1.27)	3.00	(1.30)	3.88	(1.52)	3.75	(1.58)	3.38	(1.48)
3. providing information, counselling and coaching for families (parents and kids)	3.77	(1.55)	4.50	(1.38)	3.82	(1.25)	3.52	(1.17)	4.10	(1.46)	4.32	(1.12)	4.10	(1.39)
4. providing flexible, affordable childcare options for preschool children (age 0–5)	4.47	(1.50)	5.17	(1.20)	4.73	(1.27)	5.05	(1.07)	4.85	(1.14)	4.75	(1.32)	4.87	(1.26)
5. supporting mothers who want to leave the labour market to take care of their children	3.50	(2.03)	2.93	(2.18)	4.36	(2.25)	1.52	(1.69)	4.13	(1.76)	3.57	(1.50)	3.34	(2.04)
6. organising assistance for children with special needs (e.g. migrant students with language deficits, disabled children)	4.53	(1.04)	5.04	(1.01)	4.73	(1.19)	4.48	(1.12)	4.98	(1.05)	4.32	(1.09)	4.74	(1.09)
7. investing in preventative actions with regard to problems with alcohol, drugs or violence	4.07	(1.08)	4.15	(1.41)	3.73	(1.56)	4.05	(1.24)	4.08	(1.25)	4.46	(1.48)	4.14	(1.31)
8. providing education for all children already at an early age (age 3–5)	4.43	(1.59)	4.48	(1.55)	4.55	(1.04)	4.10	(1.61)	4.38	(1.46)	4.21	(1.73)	4.36	(1.54)
9. organising education and mentoring for children after school and during holidays	4.07	(1.08)	4.30	(1.40)	3.64	(1.50)	4.14	(1.24)	3.98	(1.56)	3.82	(1.44)	4.05	(1.38)
10. making employers aware that it makes sense to care for the work–life balance of their employees	4.63	(1.43)	4.91	(1.28)	3.82	(2.27)	4.38	(1.20)	4.58	(1.58)	4.64	(1.13)	4.63	(1.42)
N	30		46		11		21		40		28		175	

Note: The original scale ranges from 0 “counter-productive” to 6 “indispensable”. Shown are means (*m*) and standard deviations (*sd*).

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.

Table A.6.2: Policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability (families)

Policy measures to stop the reproduction of vulnerability within families	Central western Europe		German-speaking part of Europe		Western Europe		Northern Europe		Southern Europe		Eastern Europe		Europe (total)	
	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)	<i>m</i>	(<i>sd</i>)
1. direct financial transfers to families in needs	3.84	(1.76)	4.17	(1.81)	4.67	(1.21)	3.14	(1.95)	4.51	(1.65)	3.63	(1.95)	4.38	(1.72)
2. lower prices of food and other products of day-to-day importance	3.16	(1.82)	3.86	(1.91)	5.17	(1.17)	3.14	(1.95)	4.87	(1.39)	4.30	(1.84)	4.58	(1.63)
3. providing information, counselling and coaching for families (parents and kids)	4.28	(1.49)	4.57	(1.61)	5.60	(.84)	4.71	(1.80)	4.67	(1.46)	4.32	(1.64)	4.63	(1.51)
4. providing flexible, affordable childcare options for preschool children (age 0–5)	4.16	(1.42)	3.90	(1.93)	5.17	(1.17)	4.43	(2.07)	4.98	(1.32)	4.19	(1.87)	4.69	(1.57)
5. supporting mothers who want to leave the labour market to take care of their children	5.41	(1.10)	4.88	(1.65)	5.83	(.41)	4.43	(2.07)	5.26	(1.26)	5.32	(1.27)	5.18	(1.36)
6. organising assistance for children with special needs (e.g. migrant students with language deficits, disabled children)	4.75	(1.39)	4.67	(1.53)	5.00	(1.55)	5.14	(.90)	5.22	(1.18)	4.63	(1.58)	5.06	(1.31)
7. investing in preventative actions with regard to problems with alcohol, drugs or violence	4.66	(1.36)	4.42	(1.71)	4.83	(2.40)	5.00	(1.15)	4.94	(1.28)	4.87	(1.21)	4.82	(1.40)
8. providing education for all children already at an early age (age 3–5)	3.41	(2.00)	2.96	(2.14)	3.50	(2.07)	3.14	(2.04)	4.75	(1.54)	3.65	(1.93)	4.26	(1.88)
9. organising education and mentoring for children after school and during holidays	3.28	(1.80)	3.38	(1.96)	3.83	(1.72)	3.57	(1.62)	4.29	(1.62)	3.81	(1.70)	4.04	(1.75)
10. making employers aware that it makes sense to care for the work–life balance of their employees	5.28	(1.05)	4.96	(1.54)	4.67	(1.86)	4.43	(1.72)	5.43	(.99)	5.13	(1.07)	5.30	(1.16)
N	32		290		6		7		945		63		1,343	

Note: The original scale ranges from 0 “will not be important at all” to 6 “will be very important for families”. Shown are means (*m*) and standard deviations (*sd*).
Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations.

Table A.9.1: Employment characteristics of the compared parents

in %	Germany	Portugal	Spain	Total
<i>Employment status</i>				
self-employed	12	15	12	14
employed	49	72	58	62
helping family member in family business	3	1	2	2
unemployed	2	3	9	5
homemaker	24	5	13	12
in education or training	2	< 1	1	1
in military or social service	-	1	1	1
retired	3	2	1	2
parental leave	4	-	< 1	1
unclear	1	< 1	3	1
<i>Employment intensity</i>				
full time (32 hours a week or more)	26	69	45	51
part time (more than 8 but less 32)	19	2	9	9
minimally employed (8 or less hours a week)	2	1	2	1
employed but weekly working hours unknown	16	17	16	17
neither employed nor self-employed	35	11	25	21
unclear	1	< 1	3	1
<i>Employment of partner</i>				
full time (32 hours a week or more)	56	80	61	68
part time (more than 8 but less 32)	15	4	6	7
minimally employed (8 or less hours a week)	3	3	1	2
neither employed nor self-employed	16	9	18	14
other (incl. no partner or missing information)	11	5	14	9
<i>Employment status of couples</i>				
both fulltime	5	55	27	34
1 fulltime, 1 part-time	22	7	11	12
1 fulltime or both part-time	41	16	25	25
employed but weekly working hours unknown	16	17	16	17
other (incl. no partner, not employed)	16	5	20	12
N (100%)	276	499	366	1,141

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations.

Table A.9.2: Worries about the future of one's own children

Country of residence:	Reference: Germany			Reference: Portugal			Reference: Spain		
	b	(se)	p	b	(se)	p	b	(se)	p
Germany (0/1)	.00			-1.77	(.12)	***	-2.89	(.13)	***
Portugal (0/1)	1.77	(.12)	***	.00			-1.12	(.11)	***
Spain (0/1)	2.89	(.13)	***	1.12	(.11)	***	.00		
R ² _{adj.}	.31			.31			.31		

Note: The scale of the mean-index measuring *worries about the future of own children* ranges from 1 "no worries" to 7 "many worries". Shown are both unstandardised regression coefficients (b) and standard errors (se). Positive coefficients indicate more worries, negative coefficients indicate less worries. For instance, b=1.77 shows that on average parents in Portugal have more worries than those in Germany while b=-1.12 indicates that on average parents in Portugal have less worries than their counterparts in Spain. A constant was also included in all regressions (not shown in the table). [†] p < .1; * p < 0.05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N = 1,099).

Table A.9.3: Worries about the future of one's own children

Covariates	Model 1				Model 2			
	b	(se)	p	beta	b	(se)	p	beta
Country of residence: Germany	.00				.00			
Portugal (0/1)	1.68	(.12)	***	.43	1.61	(.12)	***	.42
Spain (0/1)	2.80	(.13)	***	.68	2.68	(.13)	***	.65
Gender: male	.00				.00			
female (0/1)	-.13	(.10)		-.03	-.14	(.10)		-.03
Partnership:								
no partner or not living together	.00				.00			
partner lives in same household (0/1)	-.42	(.20)	*	-.05	-.40	(.20)	*	-.05
Shortage of time:								
not enough time for children (1-7)	.10	(.03)	***	.08	.10	(.03)	***	.08
Financial situation:								
problems to make ends meet (1-6)	.11	(.04)	**	.08	.08	(.04)	*	.05
Opinions and attitudes:								
government should take more responsibility (1-5)					.17	(.04)	***	.12
important to hold on to tradition (1-5)					.11	(.03)	***	.08
R ² _{adj.}	.33				.35			

Note: The scale of the mean-index measuring *worries about the future of one's own children* ranges from 1 "no worries" to 7 "many worries". Shown are both unstandardised and standardised regression coefficients (b and beta, respectively) and standard errors (se). Positive coefficients indicate more worries, negative coefficients indicate less worries. For instance, b=.11 indicates that the more problems parents have to make ends meet, the more worries they perceive. A constant was also included in all regressions (not shown in the table). [†] p < .1; * p < 0.05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N = 1,099).

Table A.9.4: Worries about the future of one's own children by country

Country of residence:	(1) Germany	(2) Portugal	(3) Spain	Chi ² tests:		
Covariates	<i>b</i> (se) <i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (se) <i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (se) <i>p</i>	1 vs. 3	1 vs. 2	2 vs. 3
Gender: male	.00	.00	.00			
female (0/1)	-.04 (.19)	-.01 (.16)	-.46 (.15) **	2.88 [†]	.02	3.98*
Partnership:						
no partner or not living together	.00	.00	.00			
partner lives in same household (0/1)	-.58 (.27) *	-.41 (.33)	-.20 (.30)	.92	.17	.22
Shortage of time:						
not enough time for children (1-7)	.19 (.07) **	.10 (.05) [†]	.05 (.05)	3.28 [†]	1.39	.50
Financial situation:						
problems to make ends meet (1-6)	.11 (.07) [†]	.04 (.07)	.09 (.06)	.07	.59	.29
Opinions and attitudes:						
government should take more responsibility (1-5)	.09 (.06)	.25 (.07) ***	.13 (.08) [†]	.15	2.94 [†]	1.38
important to hold on to tradition (1-5)	.03 (.05)	.08 (.06)	.19 (.05) ***	4.48*	.25	1.97
R ² _{adj.}	.09	.04	.08	13.68*	6.50	7.83

Note: The scale of the mean-index measuring *worries about the future of one's own children* ranges from 1 "no worries" to 7 "many worries". Shown are both unstandardised and standardised regression coefficients (*b*) and standard errors (*se*). Positive coefficients indicate more worries, negative coefficients indicate less worries. For instance, *b*=19 in Portugal indicates that the more parents think that it is important to hold on tradition, the more worries they perceive. A constant was also included in all regressions (not shown in the table). [†] *p* < .1; * *p* < 0.05; ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Family Survey, authors' own computations (N_{Germany}=268; N_{Portugal}=478, N_{Spain}=353).

Table A.10.1: Possible determinants of estimations of effects of present and current refugee flows upon future vulnerability of families with children

Models analysing the estimated effect of refugee flows on future vulnerability:	M0	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Covariates	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Mean (constant)	.54 (.06)***	.64 (.15)***	.60 (.16)***	.57 (.18)**	.68 (.28)*	.58 (.30) [†]
Region: German speaking Europe		.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
central Europe		-.14 (.20)	-.13 (.20)	-.15 (.20)	-.17 (.19)	-.18 (.19)
western Europe		-.06 (.23)	-.04 (.23)	.00 (.23)	-.04 (.24)	-.09 (.23)
northern Europe		.15 (.21)	.16 (.21)	.19 (.22)	.20 (.22)	.24 (.20)
southern Europe		-.12 (.19)	-.13 (.19)	-.09 (.19)	-.11 (.19)	-.13 (.18)
eastern Europe		-.34 (.20) [†]	-.34 (.20) [†]	-.32 (.20)	-.35 (.20) [†]	-.25 (.20)
Expert: practitioner			.00	.00	.00	.00
scientist (0/1)			.07 (.12)	.09 (.12)	.14 (.14)	.21 (.14)
Period: 2015-2020				.00	.00	.00
2020-2050 (0/1)				-.22 (.06)***	-.22 (.06)***	-.14 (.06)*
Dimension: economic vulnerability				.00	.00	.00
psychological vulnerability				.15 (.13)	.12 (.13)	.00 (.14)
social vulnerability				.21 (.13) [†]	.21 (.13) [†]	.18 (.12)
Opinions and attitudes:						
government should take more responsibility (agreement: 1 to 7)					.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)
important to hold on to tradition (agreement: 1 to 7)					-.05 (.04)	-.04 (.04)
General assessment of future vulnerability development (-3 to 3)						.26 (.07)***
Gender: male						.00
female (0/1)						-.29 (.13)*
R ² _{adj.}	.00	2.47	2.63	5.12	6.27	14.63

Note: For these models, ratings referring to different dimensions of vulnerability and different periods of time (2015-2020 and 2020-2050) were combined. The total number of ratings amounts to 406. Standard errors were adjusted for the fact that some of the ratings are not independent from each other (i.e. the 406 ratings come from 176 experts). The scale of the dependent variables indicates what experts think about how the share of vulnerable families will develop due to current and future flows of refugees. It ranges from -3 (strong decrease) to + 3 (strong increase). A constant was included in all regressions: The positive values between .54 and .68 indicate that expert ratings are slightly positive (i.e. experts on average expect a small increase of vulnerability due to current and future refugee flows). Shown are unstandardised regression coefficients (b) and standard errors (se). For instance, b=-.34 in model M1 indicates that experts for eastern Europe see a lower increase of vulnerability of families with children due to refugee flows than experts for German speaking countries do. On the other hand, b=.21 in model M3 means that experts perceive social vulnerability to increase more than economic vulnerability due to current and future refugee flows. [†] p < .1; * p < 0.05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Source: *FamiliesAndSocieties* Expert Survey, authors' own computations.