



# **The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies: Summary report of key findings for WP3**

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# The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies: Summary report of key findings for WP3

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## *Abstract:*

This report summarizes the main results produced in Work package 3 on “The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies”. The general objective of the work package was to address the complex interplay between the new roles of women and men and the diversity of family life courses in contemporary Europe. Moreover, the research aimed to shed more light on the impact of different policy contexts on new constructions of gender in doing family. To achieve the general objective, four specific objectives were laid out: i) to study women’s new role and implications for family dynamics with respect of both women and men; ii) to study the gendered transition to parenthood; iii) to study new gender roles in doing families, and iv) to study coping strategies in family and work reconciliation under conditions of uncertainty and precariousness. In addition to present the main findings, we also discuss the data sources used in the research highlighting ways of improvements to further in-depth knowledge on gender and family developments. A detailed discussion of policy implications with regard to labour market policies, education and value setting ends the report.

*Keywords:* gender roles, educational pairing, doing gender, doing (step)family, transition to parenthood, reconciliation of work and family, parental leave use, economic uncertainty

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## **1. Introduction**

The major trends in family structures and their shifts across the industrialized world over the past decades are well known: fertility rates have declined below the level sufficient for the replacement of the population and childbearing occurs later and more often outside marriage. Marriage, too, is being postponed and is more often foregone, and couple relationships - both marital and non-marital ones - have become more fragile. These changes have led to increasingly complex family compositions and to a previously unprecedented diversity of family forms and relationships over the life course. The new family trends and patterns have been paralleled by changes in gender roles, especially an expansion of the female role as an economic provider for a family facilitated by women's higher educational attainment, and lately also transformation of men's role with more extensive involvement in family responsibilities, mainly care for children. In contemporary family scholarship there is an increasing awareness of gender and family changes being interconnected (Oláh et al. 2014).

To understand the everyday realities of modern societies we need to recognize that the family is a dynamic entity, characterized by growing complexity with respect to decision-making regarding transitions over the family life course and organization of family life. Indeed, the family can no longer be described simply as a set of well-defined roles; it is negotiated on a daily basis, constructed by interactions between partners at the micro-level (Morgan 2011), and influenced by macro structures of the political and economic spheres. Work and family lives are increasingly influencing each other as both women and men engage in earning as well as caring activities, often reinforced by increasing employment instability and precariousness. Gender relations and related values and attitudes have become more fluid, changing dynamically over the life course in the context of blurring boundaries of family and work life. Also, different policy settings affect new constructions of gender in doing family in various ways, impeding convergence to a singular pattern of family life courses across countries (Oláh et al. forthcoming).

In this report we summarize the main findings of Work package 3. First we address new gender roles for women and men alike, and their impact on the family, with special attention to the shifting gender imbalance in higher education. Next we focus on the gendered transition to and in doing parenthood. Thereafter we turn to coping strategies in family and work reconciliation under conditions of uncertainty and precariousness, followed by a discussion on data sources available for the analyses carried out in the work package. Finally we present the policy implications of our findings. The studies discussed integrate cross-

country comparative perspective with country-specific in-depth insights, relying on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. They provide empirical evidence for the broad variety of institutional, economic and cultural settings represented across European countries and regions.

## **2. New gender roles and their impact on the family**

### **2.1. Shifting gender imbalance in higher education and family dynamics**

#### ***2.1.1. Partnership formation***

In Europe, tertiary education has expanded rapidly since the 1960s and women have increasingly outperformed men. In the past, men were typically more highly educated than women, but from the 1970s the gender gap in higher education began to shrink and turned to the advantage of women in the mid-1990s. Thus there are more highly educated women than highly educated men entering today's marriage market (Grow and Van Bavel 2015), which is likely to affect the timing and likelihood of partnership formation in Europe. Moreover, to account for the increasing prevalence of non-marital cohabitation as well as a growing proportion of children born in consensual unions instead of marriage, the conventional concept of the "marriage market" should be extended to include this partnership type while also paying attention to a probable education-specific mating squeeze in union formation. In contrast to the traditional pattern of assortative mating, i.e. men marrying women who are at most as highly educated as themselves and women marrying men who are at least as highly educated as themselves, the shifting gender imbalance in education implies that highly educated women will find fewer eligible partners and increasingly suffer a mating squeeze. The new gender pattern in higher education would thus lead to a negative relationship between education and marriage entry for women and a positive relationship for men (Van Bavel 2012).

In the literature, there is no general agreement on how the marriage squeeze should be operationalized. In WP3, the sex ratio approach was followed to reconstruct time series of the education-specific mating squeeze for European countries (De Hauw et al. 2014). It was demonstrated that sex ratios are sensitive to the magnitude of age differences between male and female partners. It was also shown that computing sex ratios for five year age interval generates about the same results as ratios that encompass ten year age intervals. However,

measures based on *very* broad age ranges or crude sex ratios may not be able to detect a marriage squeeze and disregard the fact that marriage market conditions, including age preferences, differ for younger compared to older adults.

Analyses of data for 20 European countries from the third round of the European Social Survey (ESS3 - 2006) revealed substantial cross country heterogeneity in the timing of entry into first union at different levels of education. Descriptive results showed generally positive educational gradient of first union formation and marriage along with some postponement of union formation and substantial delay of first marriage across cohorts in most countries, and decline in the proportions of people who ever got married. More sophisticated models indicated higher age and lower probability of first union formation among highly educated women given an increase in their number relative to highly educated men. In contrast, the presence of a relatively high number of highly educated women in the mating market was associated with a lower age of first union formation for highly educated men, but also with a lower probability of first union formation (De Hauw et al. 2016). Results for the effect of own level of education on the likelihood rather than the timing of first union formation and first marriage corroborated earlier research findings by Dykstra and Poortman (2010) and Wiik and Dommermuth (2014). A positive educational gradient of the probability to ever form a union and to ever marry was shown for men, but an insignificant negative educational gradient of the probability to ever form a union and a significant negative educational gradient of the probability to ever marry for women. Educational attainment was positively associated with the age of entry into first union and first marriage for both men and women.

The findings in the deliverable report D3.3 (De Hauw et al. 2016) did not provide evidence for highly educated women suffering an education-specific mating squeeze. In an earlier paper, De Hauw, Grow and Van Bavel (2015) observed that as the gender imbalance in higher education turned to the advantage of women, highly educated women partner more often with less educated men, suggesting that on average, in Europe, highly educated women tend to adjust their union formation behaviour to the declining availability of highly educated men on the mating market (see also Esteve et al. 2012), and to modify their mating preferences. Furthermore, as to the timing and likelihood of union formation, mating market conditions set by the shifting gender imbalance in higher education may have relatively weak influence compared to other processes.

A research gap in the knowledge on male family dynamics was addressed in another deliverable report (Muresan and Oláh 2016a) focusing on men's first partnership patterns in

four Central-East European countries, a rather under-researched region in itself. Despite generally early marriages and high marriage rates in the region up until the mid-1990s (Oláh 2015), distinct country-specific patterns were found based on data of the Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS). From the early 1980s onwards the propensity to enter non-marital cohabitation was higher in Bulgaria compared to marriage formation not preceded by cohabitation. In Hungary a preference for direct marriage characterized the 1980s, but marriage propensity declined throughout the period, whereas the popularity of non-marital cohabitation increased. From the mid-1990s onwards, first partnerships have been more likely to be cohabiting relationships than direct marriages there. In Romania and Poland marriage remained the main type of first partnerships although its popularity declined in the 1990s. At the same time in Poland, the propensity to enter cohabitation as first union has been on the rise, and by the early 2000s, it has become slightly more common to choose cohabitation instead of direct marriage for a first co-residential union. In contrast in Romania, preference for cohabitation has increased only slightly by the early 2000s, and marriage remained the main form of first partnerships. The propensity to enter marriage varied much more by age than for cohabiting unions in three of the four countries with Bulgaria exhibiting larger variations for cohabiting relationships. The peak of first union formation for men has been at ages of late twenties, whereas for women at the early twenties as men are somewhat older at family formation than women.

There were gender differences also for effects of educational attainment. Men with higher education have been the most likely to marry in all four countries, with pronounced differences in Poland and Romania, but small differences in Hungary and especially in Bulgaria. For women in contrast, the results showed no educational variations to enter marriage in Romania, little differences between middle and highly educated women's marriage formation propensities in Bulgaria, the highest marriage propensity for the middle educated women in Poland compared to other levels of schooling, and a positive educational gradient for marriage in Hungary. The patterns were quite different for cohabiting relationships. In Romania and Bulgaria, the least educated men and women had the highest propensity to enter non-marital unions. In Hungary, the low- and the highly educated among both men and women were equally likely to form cohabiting relationship, while the middle educated had a lower propensity. Among Polish men a positive educational gradient was seen also for cohabitation, whereas among women the highly educated were only slightly less likely to enter cohabitation than the least educated, with the lowest propensity seen for the middle educated.

Based on the latter patterns, the declining trend of marriage formation for these Central-East European countries may be related to highly educated men being the most attractive at the marriage market, whereas among women positive educational gradient was noted only for Hungary. As women's educational attainment compared to their male counterparts increased across Europe from the early-/mid-1990s onwards, the gendered marriage pattern with respect to education may have contributed to declines in marriage formation also in the four countries studied due to gaps between increasing demand for highly educated male marriage partners and their supply. Given differences in the effects of educational attainment for cohabiting unions compared to marriages, the propensity to enter cohabitation has increased at the same time, resulting in non-marital unions replacing marriage as the main form of first partnerships in these countries except for Romania, but even there the propensity of marriage formation is only slightly higher than that of cohabitation by the early 2000s.

### ***2.1.2. Fertility***

Previous research has shown considerable variations in the relationship between educational attainment and fertility across Europe. Hence, the matter received attention also in the work package, given the expansion of post-secondary education as well as women's increasing educational advantage discussed above. Based on data from the 2005 and 2011 waves of the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) the association between women's and their partners' educational attainment and the transition to second child was studied for European regions and sub-regions (Klesment et al. 2014). This transition is perceived as the perhaps most important birth-order with respect to cross-national differences in fertility levels. As in recent decades a substantial share of the European population has become highly educated, especially among women in childbearing ages, it is essential for policy-making to gain a better understanding regarding the impact of education on fertility.

The comparative analysis revealed that the educational gradient varies from negative to positive across European regions, producing an overall U-shaped pattern, that is, both less educated and more highly educated women have a higher probability of second births than those with medium education (Klesment et al. 2014). As for regional patterns, Northern Europe exhibits a positive association between women's and their partners' education and second childbearing. Western Europe features a positive relationship for the male partners' education, but demonstrates a U-shaped pattern among women due to their educational attainment being inversely related to second births in German-speaking countries but highly-



educated women having elevated second-birth rates in the rest of the region. In Eastern Europe there is a negative educational gradient for second childbearing with respect to women, and in some sub-regions also for their male partners.

In Southern Europe the closer spacing of children among highly educated women produced first a positive educational gradient which turned negative at longer duration, and at ten years after a first birth the least educated women are the most likely to have a second child while highly educated women are the least likely. In Northern Europe no educational differences are found at longer duration, thus highly educated women wholly catch up their low- and medium-educated peers in the progression to second birth. Highly educated women catch up with middle-educated, but not the low educated women in Western Europe, not considering the German-speaking countries with negative educational gradient for women. The negative association between education and second births seen for women and their male partners applies in Eastern Europe for both shorter and longer duration.

In another study the observed variation in educational gradient for second childbearing was further investigated on EU-SILC data relying on the micro-economic approach, more specifically based on the mechanisms of opportunity costs shaped by the context (Puur et al. 2016). Three groups of context variables were examined providing insights into the potential importance of institutional arrangements for work-family compatibility, labour market and economic uncertainty, and gender equality. The work-family compatibility was measured by an index developed by Matysiak (2011). Formal childcare enrolment and female part-time employment rates proved to be positively associated with the transition to second births, in line with previous findings for Nordic countries, France, the Netherlands and Belgium. In Eastern and Southern Europe with their high work-family incompatibility, second-birth rates were low. With respect to uncertainties, both female and male unemployment rates feature a negative association with second births. Higher inflation suppresses second-birth rates, while higher consumer confidence index values are positively associated with the transition to the second child. Among the gender equality measures only gender norms showed significant association to second births. Support for more gender equal norms, seen as a manifestation of the latter stage of development towards gender equality in the society as well as in the family which also brings along the increase of fertility close to the replacement level (Goldscheider et al. 2015), was positively associated to second-birth rates. No effect was found for narrowing of gender gaps in education, employment and earnings, characterizing earlier stage of development with low fertility levels. Thus the study (Puur et al. 2016) demonstrated the importance of contextual features likely to be related to changes in the educational gradient of

second births, especially of arrangements that reduce the opportunity costs of childbearing for the highly educated. While not addressing causality issues, the results also suggest that shifts towards more egalitarian gender norms probably linked to more gender equal societal and family arrangements may be a precondition for fertility recovery.

Also men's lifetime fertility in different partnership types was addressed in the work package based on GGS-data, focusing on four Central-East European countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland) and two Nordic countries (Sweden and Norway) from the mid-1980s onwards (Muresan and Oláh 2016b). Not taking into account education it was shown that marital fertility exceeded fertility in consensual unions, seen as a commitment effect, in all the countries studied, except for Bulgaria and Romania where fertility differences by union type were negligible. As for educational attainment, it was found to have mixed effect on men's lifetime fertility, depending on country-specific situations in line with the results of the Klesment et al. (2014) study on second births discussed above. Persistent negative educational gradient was found for Romania and Bulgaria, with no tendency towards diminishing fertility differences between men with low and high levels of education (opportunity effect). In Hungary differences appear only after 1990, when the fertility of low-educated men increases while a decline is seen for men with medium education. In Poland the negative (opportunity) effect of education tends to disappear in the most recent years. By contrast, the Nordic countries display a positive effect of educational attainment on male fertility, possibly related to the higher income earned by the more educated, and/or to the more egalitarian gender norms being more prevalent among highly educated men and women alike and associated with higher fertility (Goldscheider et al. 2010; Goldscheider et al. 2015; Puur et al. 2016).

Considering partnership type and educational attainment together, a negative educational effect (opportunity cost) was expected on men's fertility and no effect of the type of union in East-European countries. For Nordic gender egalitarian societies with substantial institutional support for work-family reconciliation, mostly union type was expected to matter (commitment effect) with little if any impact of education. For both types of societies, the mechanisms of educational effects were expected to be driven mainly by the female partners' education (Muresan and Oláh 2016b). The results showed that in Sweden and Norway men's fertility depends less on their educational attainment than on the type of union they live in. Married men are more committed to fatherhood and have higher fertility than men in consensual unions, while the educational attainment effect is less clear, being positive in marriages but without any impact in cohabitation. In the more traditional East-European

societies, the effect of education on male fertility was found to be more straightforward, with negative impact on the ultimate fertility of partnered men, and more so in consensual unions than in marriages. For married men in Hungary a U-shaped educational effect was shown. Controlling for the female partners' education modified the pattern seen in marriages for East European countries only, where the effect of education on male fertility seem to be driven by the educational attainment of the wives, unlike in more egalitarian societies. Men's fertility in consensual unions does not seem to depend on the educational level of their partners in any of the studied countries. Thus the findings indicate that in former state-socialist countries the negative effect of education on male fertility is more influential than the effect of more committed partnership type, but is driven by the wives' educational attainment. In Scandinavia in contrast, the ultimate fertility of men depends mainly on their partnership patterns, and less on education (their own or that of the female partner).

## **2.2. New fathers and women as breadwinner**

As the new gender role of women is mainly related to their increasing contribution to the economic provision and decision making in the family that until quite recently belonged to the men's sphere while men's new gender role is defined by their involvement in household duties and care, consequently the mainstream research focuses on dual-earner families and redistribution of housework and care responsibilities between women and men. However, within this general approach two issues require more attention in research – women's breadwinning and active fatherhood (that is engaged, involved fatherhood).

Two factors seem to drive transformations towards the female breadwinner model - strengthening of women's labour market position by their investments in education and career development and the increasing number of couples with women having a higher educational level than their partners (i.e. hypogamous couples), observed in most European countries due to education imbalances by gender in the assortative mating process (Esteve et al. 2012; Grow and Van Bavel 2015; Klesment and Van Bavel 2015). Exceptions are found in Austria, Germany, Czech Republic and Romania. In consequence, women contribute to the household income substantially and become breadwinners. While this is true for most of Europe, in societies with a strong breadwinner system like Italy, Greece, Germany and Austria, men remain the breadwinners even when women are highly educated. Besides these exceptions nowadays women are increasingly likely to contribute by more than half to the family income and can be considered breadwinners. Breadwinner women are most common among the

childless. In Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovenia, more than 40% of childless women are main breadwinners, while they are least common among those with toddlers.

Although families where women are breadwinners are not very common yet in European countries, they might be an upcoming model in the future. Women gaining breadwinner position imposes changes in the traditional gender roles within the family. It might impact on the power relations in partnerships and might result in more gender equality in the long run. However, in the short run it is accompanied by inequalities in the distribution of housework and care by gender, seen in the rather limited changes in sharing unpaid work among women and men in most countries.

The idea of active parenting is receiving more and more attention by researchers on gender and family change (e.g. Hobson and Fahlén 2009; Oláh 2001; Smith Koslowski 2011) as well as those interested in family policy at both the national and European levels (e.g. Hobson 2002; Moss 2015; Ray et al. 2010). However, in contrast to the concept of female breadwinner referred to above, the active (involved) father counterpart is broader, hardly measurable, and includes subjective components. Active fatherhood can thus accommodate a wide range of paternal behaviour, including the pursuit of career-oriented, full-time employment - the modernized or family-centered breadwinner model (Lewis 2001). Importantly also, it is possible that an active father role is accompanied by all forms of motherhood, including that of a stay-at-home mum.

Researchers in the work package took a closer look at couples with breadwinning mothers and involved fathers in Hungary and Germany (Sailer et al. 2016). These in-depth qualitative studies aimed to shed light on non-traditional role arrangements by analyzing what these arrangements looked like; why and how they were chosen; and what effects they had on families' daily lives. Even when mothers were breadwinners there is an endurance of traditional gender roles and associated norms. It seemed that mothers and fathers had adopted certain aspects of the role traditionally ascribed to the other gender, resulting in an 'own role enrichment', i.e. a form of motherhood that is enhanced by employment, and a type of fatherhood with a relatively strong childcare component.

The role of female breadwinner implies not only counter-normative behaviour by the mother, but demands for such behaviour also by the father as he relinquishes the ideal of a male breadwinner. The arrangement seems to carry a significant risk of conflict among partners, but also shows the potential for more egalitarian partnerships in other aspects, such as the household labour division. The Hungarian study (Takács and Neményi 2016) showed that the female breadwinner had little impact on both partners' gender role identities if the

arrangement had been a positive choice and was supported by both partners. In many of these cases, egalitarian gender role identities and a strong career orientation by the women seemed to have preceded the choice of this role arrangement. It is worthwhile noting that several of the female breadwinners in this group had been in a previous marriage that had failed, sometimes because of the husband's rejection of the wife's career aspirations. The second (or third) partner was chosen not least because he supported the woman's professional ambitions.

Other important factors facilitated a harmonious family life in which both a mother and a father were content with their roles (Sailer et al. 2016): the male partners of the female breadwinners had often left a successful career behind them, so that their gender identity may have partly been grounded in achievements of the past. At the same time, the women still took a strong lead in managing their family's lives, which may have contributed to satisfying their own gender role identity. While these well educated women had made career choices that afforded a good income, their families had achieved a prosperous living standard. The families' comfortable financial set up seemed important, not least because domestic services could be bought in. It might compensate for the female breadwinner's absence and renders it less visible instead of demanding for more involvement of men into domestic chores.

Finally, it also seems likely that men's lower income is less of an issue in the context of overall high financial resources than in families which are vulnerable to poverty. If family income proves inadequate to meet the family's needs, expectations regarding men's performance as a provider may gain more salience in negotiating how necessary expenditures can be covered. Vice versa, women's substantial earnings in affluent families appear unlikely to afford them any special influence. Accordingly, a high overall income may provide a buffer against a dissonance between gender self-concepts and actual income arrangements, even where the male partner entertains a more traditional gender self-concept.

As said above, the active father concept is defined more broadly than women's breadwinning. Hence, there is more flexibility in realising diverse gender self-concepts in an active father family set-up than there is in female breadwinner constellations; more scope for negotiating gender roles; and less potential for conflict. It is thus not surprising that the active fathers participating in the qualitative research have tended to characterise the relationship with their partners as very harmonious.

Rational-pragmatic approaches to arranging parental roles dominated over idealistic-aspirational goals, although the latter could also be observed. This can be illustrated with reference to those fathers who had spent particularly long time periods at home with their children. For example, those men in the German study who had taken extended paternal leave

(up to 28 months, with one father having taken 16 and 12 months for each of his two children) had taken this decision to a significant extent for pragmatic-rational reasons (Jurczyk 2016). This included financial gains that could be made by granting the breadwinner role to the partner (such reasoning was seen also for Sweden for the division of parental leave among couples – see Evertsson et al. 2015); or disappointing personal experiences at work, especially with employers, who the interviewee sought to ‘pay back’ for perceived injustices by leaving their jobs for lengthy periods. At the same time, these fathers’ identities were still rooted in their labour market role, reflected in the references which they made to their hoped-for future careers.

In the Hungarian case, fathers who traded ‘cash for care’ i.e. who took parental leave as this made financial sense with better earning partners, also showed a predominantly rational motivation for their involved fathering (Takács and Neményi 2016). Emphasising the rational-pragmatic reasoning for active fatherhood is not to deny the importance of the value placed by all interviewees on a close relationship with their children due to close paternal involvement. In fact, fathers often emphasised the intrinsic value they saw in father-child activities – a common theme in the German and Hungarian study (Sailer et al. 2016), also mentioned in the interviews for the Swedish study (Evertsson et al. 2015). However, only in few cases would these aspirational values have been the main driver for a time commitment to childcare.

Such exceptional involvement of fathers was observed in the Hungarian research (Takács and Neményi 2016), where fathers had given up their jobs altogether, notably after they had achieved their career goals. This created space for other aims, some of which were clearly family related. In the German context, we may regard those fathers as the real vanguard of this new model of gender roles (Jurczyk 2016). They did not feel pushed from the labour market into the private sphere, but they decided to tackle a regressive workplace culture and negotiated working conditions with their employers, sometimes under difficult circumstances. These interviewees conveyed a great sense of satisfaction over their reduced or more flexible work commitments and increased availability for the family, officially approved by the employer. The primary driving factor here seemed to be aspirations to be an active father.

In terms of managing family life – an issue explored in the German context - fathers diverged from the traditional male role by performing any type of (stereotypically female) domestic tasks and by contributing to familial work to an extent that left very little time for self-care. However, the maternal carer – paternal breadwinner paradigm proved still very

strong, and arrangements diverting from it required special negotiations and were regarded as temporary only.

### **2.3. Women's new role and family dynamics**

As presented above, new roles of women, which both reflect and influence on their social and economic independence, affect family related behaviours: to start a family, to decide about children, but also to divorce. Becoming an economic provider is a fundamental constituent of women's new roles (Oláh et al. 2014). Hence, economic activity of women as well as labour market participation conditions (unemployment, job insecurity) might be seen as decisive factors for possible impacts of the new position of women on their family related behaviours. Our comparative research provides new findings on the interplay between women's employment and marriage stability, effects on fertility patterns of couples' socio-economic resources proxied by educational pairings, and impacts of economic uncertainty at the aggregate and individual levels on short-term childbearing intentions.

Results of the study on the impact of women's employment on marriage stability in four European countries: Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Poland (Vignoli et al. 2016) show diverse effects of women's role as economic provider on divorce. After controlling for selection and endogeneity mechanisms, women's employment increases marital disruption in Italy and Poland, countries with still relatively low levels of divorce but different developments of women's economic activity. In Poland the high economic activity of women along with the (full-time) dual earner family model was observed until 1989, while later the male breadwinner model gained importance and decline in women's labour force participation shifted it to medium levels by European standards. Italy belonged to countries with low female labour force participation and despite its increase still remains in that group (Matysiak 2011). What seems to matter currently is the prevailing strong traditional family norms and relatively weak state support for single mothers. The elevated divorce risks of employed women in Italy and Poland are thus in line with traditional microeconomic perspectives (the independence hypothesis) - women's employment status is hypothesized to destabilize marriage by overturning traditional marriage norms and by facilitating divorce in case of conflicts in the relationship, as employed women have greater economic independence and are better able to cope with family breakdown (see Hobson 1990; Kalmijn and Poortman 2006; Schoen et al. 2002). By contrast, in Hungary and Germany the impact of women's employment on divorce appears to be negligible. In both countries the incidence of divorce is

set at relatively high levels, which implies that the divorce process has become less selective for women, while women's economic activity patterns have developed differently. In Hungary like in Poland the (full-time) dual earner family model has been dominant for over 50 years. However, compared to Poland, Hungary currently shows low levels of women's economic activity, represents a more favorable setting for reconciling work and family, and places less economic pressure on women to be economically active after divorce because of the country's relatively generous state support for single mothers. In Germany, the country with medium level of women's economic activity and high female part-time employment, state support for single mothers is relatively high and reduces women's dependence on their labor market position after separation. Thus the results indicate that an improvement in women's socioeconomic status does not necessarily increase the risk of divorce given changes in gender roles (Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Sigle-Rushton 2010), and a woman's earnings can have a stabilizing effect on the family budget and hence the marriage (Cherlin 2000; Oppenheimer 1997; Stevenson and Wolfers 2007). Common unobserved antecedents that influence both women's employment and divorce risks induce selection and endogeneity mechanisms, and they may operate differently in different contexts. Also women's anticipatory employment adjustments appear to be country-specific.

The interplay between women's role as an economic provider and fertility used to be studied within the theoretical frame developed by Becker (1991) which is increasingly contested as women have been massively entering into the labour market and minimising the child-related career interruptions (Charles 2011) and even more recently have been outperforming men in participating in and completing higher education (Van Bavel 2012). These changes have contributed to increasingly better labour market positions of women and their better earnings prospects. Consequently, women have becoming better prepared to share with their male partner the responsibilities of economic provision for the family due to their improvements in educational attainment. Instead of the sex-role specialisation assumption of Becker's (1991) model, Oppenheimer's (1994) hypothesis on pooling resources is gaining relevance. It points out the benefits of collaboration among spouses/partners with respect to economic contributions to the family as by pooling resources couples can better adapt to new challenges in the labour market.

This perspective was applied in the study by Nitsche et al. (2015) to reveal how partners' educational attainment was related to couples' childbearing behaviours in several European countries, based on the longitudinal data from the EU-SILC for the years 2004-2013. 17 European countries were examined separately (findings presented in the Working



Paper). The results indicate that childbearing behaviours differ significantly depending on the education level of both partners in absolute terms as well as on her education relative to his (educational pairing). First, homogamous highly educated couples are most likely to postpone first births, but display quite high transition rates to the second and third child. The homogamous highly educated couples have higher transitions rates to the second and third child than the homogamous medium educated couples in nearly every country. They also often display significantly higher second and third birth transition rates than the traditional hypergamous couples and the hypogamous couples. It is notable that there is no country in which homogamous highly educated couples would have lower transition rates to second or third birth than any other educational pairings. Second, hypergamous couples in which a man is better educated than a woman were found to progress to the first child relatively early, but in none of the studied countries did they display higher second and third birth transition rates than homogamous highly educated couples.

These results provide empirical evidence for Oppenheimer's (1994, 1997) hypothesis on resource pooling: that in most of the countries homogamous highly educated couples have higher transition rates to second and third and higher order birth. Furthermore, no support is found for Becker's (1991) economic model of the family which presupposes hypergamous couples to have highest transition rates to higher-order births. These two findings are important since they point out that couples with good economic standing and economic security may increasingly have better conditions for childbearing than traditional couples with a man responsible for income provision and a woman for childbearing. It should be noted, however, that these findings refer mainly to couples with medium and highly educated partners.

In addition, these findings underscore the relevance of investigating couples' childbearing behaviours with respect to economic resources of both partners and not only in absolute terms but also in interaction. This observation is important since most of the studies on the fertility-education relationship conducted so far concentrated on investigating the association between her education and fertility, some looked into the relationship between both partners' education and childbearing in absolute terms, but the effects of relative education of partners on fertility behaviours have been far more rarely addressed (for few exceptions see Corijn et al. 1996; Dribe and Stanfors 2010; Wirth 2007).

### **3. Gendered transition to and in doing parenthood**

#### **3.1. Becoming parents: gendered practices at the transition to parenthood**

The transition to parenthood goes hand in hand with a re-traditionalization of family roles (Craig and Mullan 2011; Dribe and Stanfors 2009; Kotila et al. 2013). Although this process is well known, we hardly know what happens within the process. This knowledge gap was addressed by a study in Austria (Rieder et al. 2016) which employed a qualitative longitudinal design and analysed how participation of both partners within couples changed during pregnancy to six months after the childbirth. In addition, based on data from two waves of the GGS (2008/09 and 2012/13), couples who had and those who did not have a first child during the inter-survey period of four years were matched and their outcomes were compared.

Overall, the quantitative, GGS-based part of the Austrian study confirmed previous knowledge that this transition goes along with an increase in inequality between parents and childless couples and between mothers and fathers with respect to a number of areas. In terms of earnings, gender inequality rises among parents but not among their childless counterparts. The transition to parenthood often involves the pooling of income in a shared account by which the increasingly unequal distribution of earnings seems to be compensated for. Additionally, the weakening financial position of parents (relative to their childless peers), their higher expenses and the more unequal distribution of earnings have apparently led to a higher level of conflict about monetary issues.

Correspondingly, childless couples and fathers(-to-be) keep up their working hours across both waves (with a slight increase observed among childless women), whereas mothers reduce their weekly working hours to about one third of the prior level. In contrast to fathers who decided by themselves about the time they spend on paid work, mothers' decision-making process is different: one third of them report that the decision on their working hours had been taken jointly with their partner and two-thirds have made the decision by themselves.

The dynamics in the distribution of housework are stronger for parents(-to-be). The share of couples in which women perform most of the housework increases to 67 per cent at wave 2, whereas the amount of egalitarian couples has almost halved from 58 per cent to 30 per cent. 60 per cent of couples who distributed housework in an egalitarian way in the first wave shift to a more traditional division. In conclusion, the transition to parenthood usually leads to a much greater specialisation of roles even in those couples that had been the most egalitarian.

However, regarding parental care, the qualitative part of the Austrian study showed that a child's birth was but one among many turning points that led to changes in the distribution of care work. By looking closer at the dynamics and fluidity of the transition process, the researchers examined two main areas: first, the connection between care arrangements and parental gender relations in doing care work across the transition to parenthood, and second, the practices that enable parents to share care work more equally. Heretofore, parental involvement in care work was construed across the transition to parenthood as gender-neutral, i.e. mothering and fathering are both based on the same definition of identifying and fulfilling needs. Parental involvement in care work was understood comprising two integral components. First, identifying needs encompasses perceiving, thinking about and determining needs. Second, fulfilling needs refers to action taken with respect to the identified needs through concrete hands-on activities. The concept of needs was based on previous conceptualisations (Doucet, 2009, 2015; Palkovitz, 1997) and distinguishes between different kinds of (pre-)pregnancy- or child-related needs, e.g. emotional, physical or practical needs of the child. This allowed to understand the gendered dimensions of parental care and to grasp different gender relations between parents. The everyday pre- and postnatal parenting practices are interrelated as the specific ways each parent is involved in care work need to be seen in relation to the partner's contribution to this work. This makes clear that within a parental couple, a mother's involvement entails a father's involvement as a crucial defining part and vice versa, with different manifestations and different consequences.

The Austrian study identified six different types of interrelated parenting practices that reflect different manifestations of parents' relationality in doing care work: (1) *equal caring*, (2) *key caring – helping*, (3) *main caring – co-recognising*, (4) *managing – conducting*, (5) *exclusive caring – absent*, and (6) *absent*. The developed typology embraces the specific ways in which parents – in relation to their respective partners – are involved in care work by identifying and fulfilling needs and extends our knowledge of numerous connections between and influences of a mother's and a father's parenting by characterising and defining the diverse shapes and manifestations of one parent's involvement in relation to the other parent's involvement over time. The different types unfold the variety of gender relations when doing care work, including relations that are characterised by inequality (represented by the type of *exclusive caring–absent*), dichotomy (*managing–conducting*), ambiguity (*main caring–co-recognising* and *key caring–helping*) and equality (*equal caring* and being *absent*). Thus, these types exhibit a complex continuum of parental gender relations that includes more than the mere polarity of equality and inequality.

The interviewed parents experienced several changes in their involvement in care work, linked to specific points in time. A turning point in parental involvement occurred when parents' specific pattern of interrelated parenting practices and thus parents' interrelation in doing care work changed, before and during pregnancy as well as in the postnatal period. For example, this could have been the case when couples decided to begin preparing for pregnancy, got the first ultrasound image, discussed about mother's maternity protection leave uptake or father's return to work after a holiday. On all these occasions, a move towards more or less participation of the partners could have been taken. Thus, the in-depth analysis revealed that the child's birth was but one among many turning points that influenced gender relations. Correspondingly, one cannot speak of *the* transition to parenthood when focusing on parental involvement in care work during this period; rather, there are *several* transitions taking place within the *transition process*, and turning points are a crucial and defining part of parents' involvement in care work at the transition to parenthood.

### **3.2. Gendered use of parental leave**

In the work package three studies were concerned with the gendered transition to parenthood, all addressing also the gendered use of parental leave. The Swiss study (Valarino 2014) focused on the implementation of paternity leave at the company level in the context of no statutory leave being available for men upon fatherhood. Viewing the predominance of gendered family organization as the result of multilevel social mechanisms (Risman 2004, 2011), the study addressed whether the introduction of leave policies for fathers at the workplace level can challenge gendered representations and practices of parenthood. Interviews with fathers and managers at a specific public employer indicated that men's leave patterns are the result of individual preferences and couple-level negotiations, but also of workplace influences depending on seniority and size of working environment. Moreover, the study pointed to informal norms about what is considered "legitimate use" of leave for fathers. Managers were shown to have a mediating role in men's leave uptake and to have significant leeway to support or pressure their staff. Fathers were also found to anticipate work demands and to self-regulate regarding their pattern of leave uptake. In any case, the implementation of paternity leave contributed to make fatherhood more visible in the workplace.

In the family, the mother remained the main parent responsible for the child while fathers were temporary and secondary helpers in childcare and household tasks (Valarino

2014). In families with more than one child, men systematically used their leave to care for the elder children, engaging in typically masculine forms of parenting practices such as outdoors activities and games. The latter may be considered as a challenge to the male-breadwinner father, even though men's leave use in general seems to reproduce gendered parental roles and gender specialization in the family (Ranson 2001). At the individual level, paternity leave use modified to a certain extent men's identities as fathers, strengthening their sense of competence and appropriation of fatherhood, and their feeling as part of the family. However the few gender equality effects observed were subtle and entwined with persisting differentiations between motherhood and fatherhood, underpinned by gendered norms and unequal labour market opportunities for men and women, and substantial differences in the leave entitlements for fathers and mothers. Hence leave policies continue to define motherhood and fatherhood in gendered ways in Switzerland.

As an apparent contrast to the Swiss context in which fathers lack statutory leave entitlement upon a birth of a child, the transition to parenthood and parents' leave use were investigated also for Sweden, where gender equality has been the main principle in the labor market, the family and the society for many decades, and earmarked leave policies promoted involved fatherhood (Oláh and Bernhardt 2008). Analysis of quantitative data from the Swedish Young Adult Panel Study (YAPS) showed most equal division of parental leave for couples who wanted to share the leave with each other and where the man's will to stay home determined how leave was divided (Evertsson et al. 2015). The most unequal division was found for couples where the mother wanted to stay home for a long period, where the father did not want to stay at home, where work-related reasons for the father determined the division of leave and where the family economy was the most important reason for the division of leave. As for satisfaction with the division of childcare, little variation was seen for fathers, but mothers' satisfaction seemed to be positively related to the length of leave used by the father, as well as the mothers' paid work hours, the latter increasing fathers' childcare input.

Qualitative interviews of Swedish couples provided further insights, indicating that ideals of equal parenting, engaged fatherhood and gender equality can lead a couple to an equal division of the leave (Evertsson et al. 2015). In some couples who stressed the importance of gender-equal ideals, other ideals and norms around motherhood and fatherhood counteracted an equal sharing of the leave, not because they were hard to break, but because the parents did not want to break them. These couples, too, presented their leave division as "rather equal" which highlights the strength of the equality discourse in Sweden. With respect

to the economic argument governing more traditional leave division between the parents, the interviews revealed that both couples in which the woman earned more as well as couples with the man as the main earner used that justification but adjusting the argument to their own circumstances. It was also shown that sharing parental leave may further an understanding between the parents. When both parents have experienced full-time care and being a working parent, they can better communicate problems and difficulties with each other and also approach the challenges of combining work and parenthood in a similar way. Also children benefit, as having two parents to turn to when feeling sad or hurt gives them comfort and facilitates for them to develop a long-term relationship with both parents.

Austria, notwithstanding a parental leave system that scores low on the Gender Equality Index (Ray et al., 2010), represented a case between the two extremes, that is not providing any statutory leave for fathers (the Swiss case) and strongly promoting engaged fatherhood and gender equality (the Swedish case). The Austrian study (Rieder et al. 2016) showed that parental care is a process of parents moving back and forth on a continuum of gender relations comprising equality, dichotomy, ambiguity and inequality. The qualitative data revealed that parental care at the transition to parenthood is characterized by different interrelated parenting practices. Numerous changes in parents' involvement in care work can be observed, leading to an oscillation between more or less participation and engagement of the parents. Such changes occur at specific points in time. Accordingly, parents experience several 'turning points' in their interrelated parenting practices across the transition. Turning points that lead to fathers being present at home and thus available for the child (e.g. fathers taking a 'daddy month') have an inherent potential to increase paternal involvement and, by this means, to contribute to a more gender egalitarian distribution of care work.

Whether a certain structure such as parental leave fosters or impedes gender equality is contingent upon several processes, e.g. dealing with expectations of gendered practices, negotiating employment, managing income loss, or feeding practices. As described in the study (Rieder et al. 2016), specific situated practices within these processes opened or closed spaces for a more equal arrangement of care work during parental leave. When parents arranged care work rather equally during parental leave, they were part of situated practices where working hours were flexible, where mothers had a positive and fathers a negative attitude towards employment, where economic security was provided through means other than income, where information on sharing care work was available and where the child was exclusively or additionally bottle-fed. When parents arranged care work rather unequally during parental leave, they were part of situated practices where working hours were rigid,

where fathers had a close connection to employment, where economic security was provided only through employment, where parents had additional high costs, where information on sharing care work was limited and where breastfeeding was the only source of food for the child. The question if a certain structure such as parental leave fosters or impedes equality between parents thus cannot be answered without taking numerous other processes into focus. Gender equality is not the effect of single matters. Rather, above described processes need to be seen as interlinked and entangled with each other, and all have to come into focus: the different ways of entanglements contribute to more or less equality in the distribution of care work between parents.

### **3.3. The caring father: fathers' time use with children**

Time spent by fathers with children, in particular time spent alone with children as well as time allocated to childcare, might be used to describe how involved fathers perform their role. Since fathers' family engagement differs across European countries and over time, cross-country comparisons of fathers' time use over time can provide empirical evidence of this on-going evolution of fathers' role – from a breadwinner towards a dual role of an earner-child carer, that is, towards reconciling economic provision with childcare responsibilities by fathers. Empirical studies carried out in the Work package meet this demand and provide results which remarkably enrich our knowledge on how this dimension of the gender revolution looks like in Europe.

The study by Tanturri et al. (2016) investigates fathers' involvement in parenting tasks in France, Italy, Sweden and the UK, that is, in countries which differ greatly by gender regimes, family policies, and workplace culture. The data on men with at least one co-residing child aged 0-14 come from the Time Use Survey (TUS) conducted at the two time points (2008-2010 for France and Italy, and 2000-2001 for Sweden and the UK). The results illustrate how much the context matters. Irrespective of the time indicators used, such as the total time with children, the total time spent alone with children, time spent in childcare activities alone and with a partner (all considered in both weekdays and weekends), the highest values are observed for Sweden. Moreover, the time allocation across different activities suggests that Swedish fathers spend the most time in childcare activities both alone and with a partner on weekday and weekends alike. These two indicators illustrate the main difference between Sweden and the other countries, which all show a similar quantum of time allocated to childcare as well as relatively low proportions of time spent for care with a

partner and alone. Fathers in Sweden display also the highest volume of time spent alone with children. The three indicators (time in childcare activities both alone and with a partner, and time spent alone with children) characterise involved fathering at best and illustrate how far Sweden has advanced also in respect of active fatherhood compared to the other countries.

In contrast, the pattern of fathers' time allocation in Italy reveals that childcare activities and activities carried out by the father alone with children are a marginal component of the total time of fathers. They devote their time with children mostly to less demanding activities, that is, non-childcare activities carried out together with the mother. What makes a difference between the UK and France versus Italy is not the time fathers spent in childcare activities but their greater commitment to non-childcare activities carried out alone with children. Interestingly, France is more similar to Italy in terms of nearly all time indicators for fathers' involvement than to the UK. The relatively low commitment of fathers in France might be affected by substantial public childcare provision. However, French fathers allocate relatively more time in care without a presence of a partner.

Patterns of fathers' time allocation to children on weekdays and weekends differ mainly due to fathers' greater involvement in non-childcare activities during the weekends, particularly those performed together with a partner. This is less pronounced in the time patterns of Swedish fathers what again confirms their further progress in the transition to the child carer role compared to other countries in the study.

Focusing at individual factors that possibly influence fathers' capability to stay with and care for children has produced findings which highlight the importance of the context on one hand, and the relevance of father's work arrangements, the partner's working schedule and the age and number of children on the other hand. In general, individual characteristics seem less important for the time spent with children by Swedish fathers. This finding is in line with the reasoning that in a country where changes in gender roles have advanced further and family-work reconciliation policies are substantial, fathers are used to contribute to childrearing activities, and their own or family characteristics matter less. As regards particular factors, fathers' working time is crucial for their time spent with children during the weekdays. Mothers' employment increases fathers' engagement, especially the time spent alone with children on weekdays. The age of the youngest child is a good predictor for fathers' care time in all countries while the number of children matters for the total time and time spent alone with children.

The findings presented above refer to the TUS data coming from the two time points – the beginning of the previous decade (Sweden, the UK) and its end (Italy, France). As



involved parenting has been progressing in Sweden, one can expect even greater difference between Sweden versus France and Italy using more recent data for Sweden. As regards the UK, the new time-use data collected in 2014-15 (Fisher et al. 2015) have created an opportunity to evaluate how fathers' involvement evolved over the years 2000 – 2015. Although the data are not yet in the public domain, it was possible to analyze a preliminary version of the data (Henz 2017). The analysis of fathers with at least one child aged 14 years or younger reveals two main changes in fathers' time with children. First, fathers have spent more time in childcare activities without the partner. Second, they have allocated less time in non-care activities together with their partners. The total time spent by fathers with their children has declined between 2000 and 2015 both on weekdays and weekends, but this decline is not significant statistically. However, when comparing the 2015 figures for the UK with those for Italy, Sweden and France discussed by Tanturri et al. (2016), the shift of the UK towards the lower-involved countries is visible. These findings might indicate that parenting values would drive observed changes in fathers' time with children. Also the similarity of changes on weekdays and weekend days seem to support this suggestion. In addition, more detailed insight into the data based on model estimates shows that the relationship between father's involvement on weekdays and their partners working full-time has strengthened significantly. In 2000 fathers with part-time working partners have been more involved as compared to fathers with partners working full-time while in 2015 they have shown lower engagement in bringing up their children. This is an interesting change because mothers' behaviour in terms of working mostly part-time has not changed much between the surveys (Henz 2017). In addition, the relationship between fathers' time alone with children on weekdays and mothers having a university degree has become positive. In 2015 there is also a positive association between mothers having a university degree and fathers' total time with children on weekends and with fathers' childcare time on weekdays but the changes compared to 2000 are not statistically significant.

The relatively stronger educational gradients of father's involvement on weekends, both with regard to own and partner's education, suggest that children in the UK grow up in unequal family environments characterized not only in financial and material terms but also by differences in fathering. Children of well-educated parents do not just profit from material resources but also from more time spent with fathers compared to children from less educated backgrounds.

This progress in fathers' involvement into childcare needs to be seen in the context of the policy measures implemented in the period considered (two weeks of paid paternity leave

in 2003, additional paternity leave for up to 26 weeks in 2011, the right of parents with young children to request flexible working since 2003, entitlement to free part-time early childcare education places for all 4-year olds since 2004, extended to 3-year olds in 2005). One should remember however that the expected positive effects of these policy changes might have been mitigated by the economic crisis of 2008 that arguably has reduced men's willingness or scope to prioritize their involvement in childcare.

Country-specific quantitative studies on the division of childcare between partners supplement the findings presented above. For first-time parents in Sweden, based on data from YAPS (Evertsson et al. 2015) it has been found that the length of fathers' parental leave is significantly and positively related to their share of childcare. In addition, fathers are more engaged in childcare when the woman's income is higher and the longer her paid work hours are. The transition to parenthood in Austria imposes women to take over the largest part of childcare, while playing is the activity that parents most often share equally (Rieder et al. 2016). As their child grows, parents balance childcare tasks more evenly.

The qualitative study for Switzerland (Valarino 2014) confirms that availability of paternity and parental leaves is crucial for fathers' involvement in childcare. Fathers who benefited from a one-month paid paternity leave implemented in a public administration organization in 2010 emphasized how useful was the leave for developing their practical competences in childcare. Nevertheless, most fathers have reported that the mother remained the primary caregiver during the first few months, particularly because of breastfeeding. Hence the majority of childcare time was spent together with a partner. There is a clear difference in the types of childcare activities performed between first-time and second- or third-time fathers. Most second- and third-time fathers have reported their involvement in care for elder children during their paternity leave, often doing outdoor activities. The qualitative study in Austria (Rieder et al. 2016) provided a similar conclusion on the crucial role of leave for fathers' childcare involvement, showing that paternal involvement is linked to use of the 'daddy month' or parental leave.

### **3.4. Doing stepfamilies and the implications for children**

The work package has also contributed to research on stepfamilies, an important topic given the increasing prevalence of this family type in Europe. Stepfamilies are also an excellent case for studying the doing of the family as well as shifting gender roles. The qualitative part of the study (Schier et al. 2016) examined how stepfamily life is "done" in a German context: how

they negotiated family responsibilities as well as (extended) family relationships; and how they organised and lived everyday family life. Mothers', stepfathers' and children's perspectives, as well as step-grandparents' viewpoints were elicited. The aim was to get a deeper understanding of what 'doing family' involves in the context of complex post-separation multi-local structures, and to gather information on everyday practices and processes which are not measured in quantitative analyses. In addition, the qualitative approach was supplemented by quantitative analyses of data from a DJI-Survey entitled 'Growing up in Germany' (AID:A 2009).

Composing a stepfamily means creating new practices in forming the family. Each member of a stepfamily – the child, the stepfather as well as the mother - has to face complex and different challenges. However, the stepfamilies studied had hardly ever explicitly discussed issues surrounding the roles and expectations of stepfathers, mothers and children or step-grandparents. This applied although family members seemed to be aware of the salience of these issues, and saw their potential for conflict. Rather, these issues cropped up, and needed to be addressed on an ad hoc basis, which could result in less satisfying outcomes for a family member. Despite these occasional conflicts associated with role uncertainty, multiple transitions and complex requirements of adjustment for all family members, the families included in the study mostly succeeded in creating and maintaining solid family relationships within the stepfamily and the extended family network.

Several other key issues have been identified as important in relation to how stepfamily members come to 'make' their everyday life and relationships. First, doing stepfamily turned out to be a complex moral and relational process often negotiated beyond different family households and deeply shaped in various ways by gendered as well as biological patterns of caring for children. Second, various practices that serve to create and strengthen familial relationships during the process of becoming a stepfamily were reconstructed. At the beginning of forming a stepfamily, the mothers introduced the stepfather to the children respecting their perceived emotions and also further on they carefully managed the relationships to make it possible for family members to grow closer together; to create feelings of solidarity and affection; to control, regulate and initiate contact and joint activities between the members as well as to alleviate, reduce, and/or prevent interpersonal tensions. Hence mothers play a pivotal role in successful stepfamily functioning. Contrary to widespread assumptions, the findings also indicate that in some cases also stepfathers play an important role in supporting the children's relationships with their biological fathers. Moreover, the research highlighted important time-spatial as well as symbolic practices of

family-building and bonding. Different practices of separating and bringing together “old” and “new” familial actors across space and time, as well as the spatial practice of “nest-building”, i.e. transforming a residence into a home and involving the children in this process, appeared beside well-known bonding practices, such as marrying or deciding to have a child together, particularly relevant for doing stepfamily.

A special problem for stepfamilies is defining and setting boundaries to the families of origin. These boundaries are fluid and depend very much on the relation of the former partners as well as the country-specific legislation concerning dual residence possibilities, multi-local way of temporarily living at both parents’ homes, financial linkages, and contacts between the adults. Practices of connecting as well as separating the different family domains were shown to be part of a process: practices can change according to a situation, for example, depending on the quality of relationships at a particular point in time. Even when contacts between the two biological parents or between the children and their non-resident biological parent had entirely ceased to exist, and when financial arrangements were made by a third party (for example, the youth welfare office), there was still the need to establish practices of boundary management. Procedures had to be found for questions, such as how a situation of ‘no contact’ should be dealt with, or how accidental contacts should be addressed when there is a coincidental encounter.

Nowadays the family is multigenerational, which has impact on stepfamilies as well. Step-grandparenting is part of a complex web of negotiated family relationships in post-separation stepfamily contexts, within which both biological grandchildren, step-grandchildren and their biological and stepparents may impact on the attitudes and practices of (step-)grandparents. Step-grandparents showed much interest in ‘being there’ for their biological as well as their step-grandchildren. Step-grandparents monitored the relationship with the step-grandchild; they carefully tried to compensate for what they perceived to be adverse effects of divorce or separation for the step-grandchildren; and they wanted to ensure that they treated both their biological and their step-grandchildren equally. In contrast to the stepfathers, step-grandmothers in the study never seemed to call their role as such into question – nor did other family members challenge the legitimacy of their close involvement with the step-grandchildren. Rather, step-grandparents had often assumed a very active grandparenting role, sometimes significantly supporting a families’ everyday life.

The stepfamilies investigated were held together by the same substance which holds nuclear families together: the quality of the relationships between family members. Of course, ‘stepfamilies’ exhibit some unique characteristics. However, the labels of ‘stepfamily’, ‘step-

(grand)parent' or 'stepchild' stigmatize these families which in traditional environment may be considered as inferior to biological nuclear families.

The quantitative study on stepfamily life aimed to identify family factors that influence child well-being in this family structure. Although family structure is regularly included as a factor in studies on child well-being, the differentiation among diverse family constellations often remains very rough. Accordingly, the complexity of stepfamilies which include stepchildren as well as joint children is very often neglected. So far, available findings suggested disadvantages of complex stepfamilies, even for joint biological children, but empirical evidence is scarce. Using data of the AID:A Survey (2009), children from diverse family types were compared, including nuclear families, single parent families, families with stepchildren only, on the one hand, and families with stepchildren and partners' joint children (half siblings), on the other. The results showed that child well-being was significantly linked to family structure even when controlling for background factors, particularly parental education. Well-being was lower for children growing up in a complex stepfamily, i.e. with half siblings, as compared to children in nuclear families, in line with other studies that take into account sibling constellations along with family structure (Apel and Kaukinen 2008; Brown et al. 2015; Halpern-Meehin and Tach 2008). Furthermore, the chances of positive well-being were lower for children residing in a single-parent-household. Interestingly, only this latter effect could fully be accounted for by the mediators considered whereas some disadvantages of complex stepfamilies remained unexplained. In general, neither income poverty nor the quality of children's relationship with their mother mediated effects of family structure, while features of the more global family climate explained the larger share of disadvantages among children from separated families.

The latter finding supports the need to go beyond dyadic family relationships and take the larger family system into account. Children's perception of family climate is likely to capture the overall picture of how family members relate to each other, including children's experiences in sibling relationships, their perception of how residential parents manage to cooperate and resolve conflict, and how each parent relates to the different children living in the family. The findings of reduced cohesion and elevated conflict among complex stepfamilies are well in line with the assumption that family complexity is facilitative of unequal treatment of children which, in turn, is likely to undermine family cohesion and trigger conflict.

At the same time, we have to keep in mind that separated families provide less clear boundaries than nuclear families do. In multi-local family settings involving a non-residential

parent, children's perception of family climate may not only reflect the quality of relationships within the household they reside in, but also children's relationship with the non-residential parent, as well as cooperation and conflict among the separated biological parents. This latter feature may be particularly salient for children in single-parent families as suggested by impairments of family climate despite the high quality of mother-child relationships found in single-mother families. In principle, problems with the non-residential parent could also account for some of the disadvantages in family climate reported by children in stepfamilies. In this respect, it is of particular interest that stepchildren in simple stepfamilies (not involving half-siblings) did not report significantly reduced cohesion or higher conflict when compared to children in nuclear families whereas those in complex stepfamilies did. This finding may be seen as additional evidence pointing to the salience of family complexity in stepfamilies.

Hence, the findings suggest that children's well-being is most closely linked to a high quality of family relationships, manifested in high family cohesion, a low level of conflict within the family, and a positive mother-child relationship characterized by emotional warmth and child-centered communication. Overall, these findings are in line with other studies showing that within-family processes are more important for children's and adolescents' development than the family type and structure (e.g., Borrine et al. 1991; Phillips 2012). Taking family complexity into account seems fruitful. Complex stepfamilies are still a rather neglected family constellation, yet it would seem that children living in this family structure are particularly vulnerable. Thus further research is needed to examine this family structure in more detail.

## **4. Coping strategies in family and work reconciliation under conditions of uncertainty and precariousness**

### **4.1. Economic uncertainty and childbearing intentions**

Two deliverable reports addressed in the work package the impact of economic uncertainty on short-term childbearing intentions, seen as quite reliable predictors for fertility development (Morgan and Rackin 2010; Schoen et al. 1999). Conditions for labour-force participation, especially unemployment and job insecurity, can limit both women's and men's abilities to contribute to the family income, which reduce family economic resources and consequently

might constrain childbearing intentions. Hence, the issue is important for policy-making especially in light of the most recent economic crisis of 2008 and the aftermath.

Drawing on the Swiss Household Panel (waves 2002-2011), the first study examined in what way job stability and prestige are associated with the intention to have a child among childless men and women as well as one-child parents in the low fertility context of Switzerland, and the moderation by gender-role attitudes (Hanappi et al. 2014). Both gender and parity differences were found. It was shown that women with perceived job instability were less likely to intend to have a first child. For men, the association was similar but insignificant. However, a positive direct effect of job prestige on men's first-birth intentions was found, probably reflecting greater resources available with higher-status jobs. Interacting job prestige with gender role attitude showed a negative significant effect to intend fatherhood, thereby reflecting the tension between gains and strains job prestige introduces to family life (Marshall and Barnett 1993).

For one-child parents, job stability per se had little impact (Hanappi et al. 2014). But interacting job instability with gender role attitude showed a strong joint effect on fertility intentions of fathers who worry that a child suffers with a working mother. These men are most likely to invest in paid labor, whilst at the same time not compromising their family plans. For women, motherhood seemed to set off negative effects of job instability on fertility intentions, suggesting that the decision to have additional children is driven by other factors outside of a woman's employment situation (see e.g. Brewster & Rindfuss 2000). Coefficients for job prestige showed positive effects for fathers similarly to the model for childless men. Interaction with gender role attitude revealed that fathers with prestige jobs disapproving maternal employment are less likely to intend an additional child. For mothers, no significant relationship between intentions to have subsequent children and job prestige, instability, and gender attitude was found.

Comparative analyses provided further empirical evidence of interdependencies between economic uncertainty and short-term childbearing intentions (Fahlén and Oláh 2015). Using data from the European Social Survey (2004/05 and 2010/11), women and men without children and with one child were studied in ten countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) representing five welfare state regimes. The results indicated that societal level economic uncertainty, in terms of unemployment and employment protection, affected fertility intentions. The proportion of persons intending to have a child within three years decreased in countries with higher unemployment rate, but less so for childless women and one-child mothers than for childless man and one-child fathers. Short-term childbearing intentions

decreased also where employment protection weakened, especially among one-child mothers and childless men.

Perceived economic uncertainty defined at the individual level in terms of job insecurity and income security, matters for childbearing intentions as well, but there are variations by gender, age, parenthood status and institutional context (Fahlén and Oláh 2015). In general, job insecurity has a negative impact on becoming a mother in the near future, especially for women below age 30, except for childless women in the Nordic countries, and on mother's intentions to have a second child. However, there is no uniform reaction to increased uncertainty imposed by the economic crisis. Only in Spain and the Central-East European countries intentions of young childless women with insecure employment are lower in 2011 compared with 2004. Mothers' intentions to extend their families are lower only in Germany and the Netherlands, and at ages 30 and above lower intentions are seen also in the Nordic countries and Spain in 2011. Men's intentions for first and second child are generally lower in the aftermath of the economic crisis than earlier, but secure employment enhances fatherhood intentions especially in 2011 independently of welfare regime type.

Perceived income security seems to be less important for parenthood plans for men in their late thirties in both 2004 and 2011 and for women in early thirties in 2011, in all countries studied. At younger ages, constrained income situation appears to impede first-birth plans for men in all welfare regime types both years, and for women in 2004, except for Spain. Regarding second-birth plans, comfortable income situation seems to be a precondition for women to intend to have a first child in younger ages, independently of welfare regime type in both 2004 and 2011, and for men in 2011. Good income has some importance at higher ages as well, for women only in 2011 and for men both in 2004 and 2011.

The findings of these studies highlight the continued importance of men's labour market position for first- as well as second-birth intentions in general. Job stability and income situation matter for women intending to have a first child, especially at younger ages. Mothers' further childbearing intentions are influenced by economic uncertainty in certain policy settings. The Swiss study (Hanappi et al. 2014) also pointed to the importance of gender role attitudes shaping perceptions of uncertainty consequences when coping strategies of work and family reconciliation are formed.



## **4.2. Economic uncertainty and childbearing**

Another study explored changes in employment uncertainty, and implications for the formation of fertility intentions and their realization among working couples living in Switzerland (Hanappi et al. forthcoming). Differences of these associations by education if any were also analyzed. The results highlighted the importance of employment uncertainty on both childbearing intentions and their realization, but only among highly-educated individuals, and particularly women. Thus the opportunity costs of childbearing and the efforts related to responsibly caring for a child are likely to play a major role in this relationship. For the medium- and low-educated, the realization of fertility intentions seems to be hampered mainly by existing material constraints.

In the work package there were also plans to address the effect of couple's labour market situation and earnings on childbearing in five European countries based on EU-SILC data, as one aspect influencing coping strategies under uncertainty. However, due to data limitations that study was not possible to carry out. Instead, the impact of educational pairings on couples' childbearing behavior was analyzed (Nitsche et al. 2015), and discussed in details in Section 2.3 but the links to economic uncertainty were not addressed there. Indeed, couples' educational attainment also may have implications for how they cope with labour market uncertainties. The finding of the study that couples with medium education and those with only one highly-educated partner have highest first-birth rates at ages below 30, whereas the propensity to become a parent among highly educated homogamous couples is highest at later ages (30 and above) suggests that couples with two highly educated partners delay parenthood until both partners are likely to have a stable labour market position. Given that both of them stay in education longer, they are also at a more mature age when have established themselves at the labour market. Thus the delay of first birth is their strategy to meet economic uncertainty. Other couples with only one or no highly educated partner may have realized that postponing parenthood would not improve their joint ability as a couple to cope with economic uncertainty hence they enter parenthood at younger ages. In such couples schooling was completed at younger ages with earlier subsequent labour market establishment for at least one of the partners, making an earlier first birth feasible. These results are in line with the Fahlén and Oláh (2015) study pointing to the importance of having a stable labour market position for women and men alike when planning to become a parent.

The Nitsche et al (2015) report showed highest second and third birth rates to couples in which both partners are highly educated compared to any other educational pairings (of

medium and high educational levels). This may suggest greater confidence to be able to cope with economic uncertainty among highly educated homogamous couples once they had their first child, as well as closer birth-spacing compared to other couples. Being able to rely on higher earnings and likely more stable labour market position of both highly educated partners in a couple can underpin such coping strategy. In contrast, couples with only one or no highly educated partners are more vulnerable to economic uncertainty after having a first child. Hence they may be more likely to postpone or even forego a second and/or third birth in their reconciliation of work and family demands. Such mechanisms at stake are suggested especially by lower second and third birth rates among couples with traditional educational pairing, that is highly educated man and less educated women, compared to homogamous highly educated couples. The man having most of the responsibility for the financial stability of the family given the less educated partner's greater labour market vulnerability may lead to a coping strategy that mainly aims at reducing risks even those brought along by extending the family and having a second or a third child. Such reasoning is in line also with the finding of the Swiss study (Hanappi et al. 2014) according to which fathers with higher prestige jobs who disapprove maternal employment are less likely to intend an additional child, if the couple's traditional educational pairing also is a sign for the man's traditional gender role attitudes.

## **5. Data resources for family and gender research**

Since the Work package research strategy combined a comparative perspective with country-specific studies and accounted for the context of processes under consideration, the empirical studies made use of different existing databases, both international and country-specific ones. In addition, new data were created by conducting new surveys, mostly qualitative ones. Moreover, attempts to use for demographic analyses of some existing international datasets, designed for other purposes (e.g. EU-SILC, LFS, TUS, ESS) were undertaken. They reflected our efforts to extend the empirical background for the micro-level research on families. However, serious limitations were encountered due to some deficiencies of these international data sources. Some of difficulties to find data appropriate for our analyses result directly from the fact that until now only few microdata sets have been designed in Europe to capture family related changes and organisation of family life along with the relevant labour market developments (labour force participation and wages) and education, taking into account gender roles in a longitudinal perspective. One could refer here to the country-specific studies

like the “British Household Panel Survey” (BHPS), conducted in 1991-2008, and the “Understanding Society”, which replaced the BHPS in 2009, the “German Socio-Economic Panel” (GSOEP), conducted since 1984, and the “Swiss Household Panel” (SHP), carried out since 1999. The Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), established as a panel survey in 2001, was carried out in 17 European countries. However, it provides data for at least two waves for selected group of countries only (12). In addition, the latter data source shows some shortcomings regarding income and the labour market information.

Therefore, our intentions to enrich empirical evidence on the new roles of men and women and their implications for families and societies in a comparative perspective had to be adjusted to the availability of the proper data. We strived, however, to provide empirical documentation of family developments in Europe and their diversity across gender, education, labour market status, strongly grounded in the institutional, economic and cultural contexts, especially in East-European societies, where these processes were still lacking adequate documentation. Moreover, to extend explanations for the new patterns of family-related behaviours qualitative surveys were carried out in some countries. Our comments on some data sources presented below aim to highlight their use in our studies, to point out some of their shortcomings and to suggest possible improvements. We focus on the international datasets used predominantly in comparative quantitative research, turning thereafter to country-specific data sources which include both qualitative and quantitative surveys.

The European Labour Force Survey (LFS) was used in the quantitative comparative study on education-specific mating squeeze and its recent trends (De Hauw et al. 2014). From 1998 only this database reports consistent information about the educational attainment of respondents as well as their union status which reduces the time span to be analyzed. Moreover, in the international LFS database the age of the respondents is published in five-year age groups instead of one-year ages despite the fact that such information are available in the country files but not released to researchers. This limitation has imposed some data adjustments for the analyses. In addition, if more detailed information about the origin of immigrants would be available, the LFS would allow to extend a study on the mating market taking into account also migrants’ endogamy and exogamy.

The European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) data was used to investigate the association between women’s educational attainment and second births and its interaction with the country-specific contextual variables that relate to work-family reconciliation, gender equality, and macro-economic conditions (Puur et al. 2016). To overcome data limitations on children (a lack of information on how many children the person

has ever had) the own-child method (OCM) was applied to the pooled data in that study. Direct cross-country comparisons were intended in another study on how partners' labour force participation and earnings affected partners' fertility behaviours (Nitsche et al. 2015). However, the data of the EU-SILC panel (four years) did not allow that, and couples' education and childbearing behaviours were analyzed instead. Since we need longitudinal data which would collect information on economic conditions and labour force participation of individuals together with detailed information on their family-related behaviours, the EU-SILC panel should be extended to longer time span. Moreover, the information on family-related choices should be also more detailed (how many children the person has ever had, the partnership history). Additional information on values and attitudes, division of household labour or health would further enrich our analyses.

The Time Use Survey (TUS) offers data which allow to investigate in detail how household duties and care obligations are distributed between women and men. However, this survey is carried out every ten years in EU countries limiting its utility greatly for tracing changes over time. Despite this shortcoming the TUS data showed their value in comparing fathers' involvement with children in different contexts in terms of gender regimes, family policies and workplace culture, i.e. France, Italy, Sweden and the UK (Tanturri et al. 2016). In that study also the longitudinal data from the European Value Study (EVS) on people's attitudes towards work and care was applied.

Another international dataset is constituted by the European Social Survey (ESS), carried out every two years. Its 2006 wave, which contained a module called 'the timing of life', was used in the study on the implications of the shifting gender balance in higher education for the timing and likelihood of first union formation (De Hauw et al. 2016). However, small sample size did not allow to distinguish between unmarried cohabitation and marriage. In the study on short-term childbearing intentions and economic uncertainty in 10 European countries representing five different welfare state regimes, data from the 2004/05 and 2010/11 ESS waves were applied (Fahlén and Oláh 2015).

The Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS) data made it possible to run analyses on first union formation and fertility in six European countries (Muresan and Oláh 2016a, 2016b), to look at women's employment and marital stability in four countries (Vignoli et al. 2016) and to study the transition to parenthood in Austria (Rieder et al. 2016). Such comparative longitudinal panel surveys are crucial for assessing the diversity of family trajectories in Europe and scrutinizing suitable family policies. Unfortunately not all

countries, which conducted the first GGS wave, managed to have a second one. In addition, for the Eastern European countries the GGS data are the only panel data on family change.

Country-specific studies prepared within the Work package refer either to specific qualitative or quantitative surveys as well as combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study on doing family in stepfamilies with a special focus on the wellbeing of stepchildren in Germany was based on the qualitative survey with stepfamilies (child-mother-father). These data were supplemented by five qualitative problem-centered interviews with step-grandmothers (Schier et al. 2016). In contrast, coping strategies under uncertain and precarious employment conditions in Switzerland (Hanappi et al. 2014) were studied on data from the Swiss Household Panel about fertility intentions of childless women and men and parents taking into account gender attitudes and work characteristics. The gendered transition to parenthood in Sweden (Evertsson et al. 2015) and Austria (Rieder et al. 2016) relied on the mixed methods, or to be more precise, multi-methods approach. The transition to parenthood in Sweden, defined in terms of parenting ideals and their realization, was studied based on a database which combined longitudinal, qualitative interviews with parents expecting and having their first child and data from the quantitative Swedish Young Adult Panel Study of respondents who made the transition to parenthood. Similarly, the gendered transition to parenthood in Austria was studied by combining longitudinal, qualitative interviews with parents expecting and having their first child and the quantitative GGS data of respondents who became parents. Mixed methods/multi methods approach requires an elaborate choice of methods, of combining the methods and of integrating the specific results of each subproject. In the Swiss project (Valarino 2014), for example, a case study conducted in a local public administration by interviewing fathers and managers, was complemented by analysing register data. This allowed for a more precise view of the specificities of the interviewees and a more enlightened interpretation of the results.

When it comes to longitudinal studies, qualitative approaches are suitable to examine and elucidate processes and changes over time in social contexts as temporality is thoroughly considered in the research design and change is brought into focus (Thomson et al. 2003). The emphasis on the meaning of change and how people interpret and react to developments (Hermanowicz 2013) provides an in-depth insight and understanding of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of changes and processes (Holland et al. 2006). Thus, qualitative longitudinal research is well-suited for studying family and life course, containing the formation of relationships and the impact of life events (like childbirth). These predispositions demand specific ways in sampling, interviewing and interpretation designs. Such a procedure is rather intensive in

personal costs, which is a challenge for the funding of projects. And these surveys are carried out in a few selected countries. What is missing in qualitative research, often also due to the researchers themselves, are elaborate archives of qualitative data, an issue, the European research funding has to address.

Summing up, to extend our knowledge on the new roles of men and women and their implications for families and societies by providing new empirical evidence either in a comparative perspective or for specific countries some data improvements are needed. Currently only few large datasets in Europe are suited for researching the complexity of families. To gain more insights into the daily family life of complex family structures, we need a large database not only for each individual country, but similar datasets for European countries, providing for comparative European analyses. Moreover, longitudinal studies would enhance the understanding of family formation and dissolution processes. A special focus on various family members (especially children) would be particularly helpful here. In addition, these processes have to be linked to the educational and labour market biographies along with some information on the economic situation and views on gender attitudes. Beside developing country-specific datasets in accordance with national needs and resources, more attention should be given to international data. Here, the GGS database seems to be a good starting point for further developments. As for the regular Eurostat surveys like LFS and EU-SILC, their modifications already suggested and being discussed would significantly increase their value for research on family change and gender and their implications for the society.

## **6. Policy implications**

### **6.1. Gender dimensions of labour market policies**

Gender roles have changed greatly in Europe over the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century (see Oláh et al. 2014, and forthcoming, for overview of relevant literature). While the normative expectation for adult women for some decades after the Second World War was to concentrate on child care and home-making and for adult men to be a steady breadwinner, this gender role specialization has been attenuating since then. To a larger or smaller extent, depending on country and region, the male breadwinner – female homemaker family model has given way to a dual earner family model (Esping-Andersen 2009), where both men and women contribute to the family budget (Klesment and Van Bavel 2015) and share child care and household duties (Fahlén 2015; Oláh et al. 2014). The changes

in gender roles in the public and private spheres are so important that they have been referred to as “the gender revolution” (Goldscheider et al. 2015).

While men and women can no longer be said to be living in “separate spheres”, the shift in gender roles has been asymmetric. Virtually everywhere, women have been catching up in the public sphere more than men have been doing so in the private sphere. Female labour market participation has been increasing much more than male participation in housework and child care (Oláh 2015). As a result of these uneven changes, women today are often to face “a double burden” or “a second shift”: after their paid work hours they are expected to take the main responsibilities at home too. This double burden is reflected in the family constellation labelled as the “dual earner-double burden of women” model (Fahlén 2015). The difficulties of work-family reconciliation experienced by women and the fact that women’s labour force participation is often still subordinated to their organizing and caretaking role in the family life are hindering the professional careers of many women (Oláh et al. 2014). Until men’s contribution to domestic tasks and care work can match that of women in paid work, that is until the dual earner - dual carer model is not achieved, the gender revolution remains incomplete (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Goldscheider et al. 2010).

Hence, labour market policies aimed at better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities are supportive for new gender roles and the progressing of the gender revolution. Among different policy measures, those strengthening women’s position as an economic provider and men’s role as a childcare giver seem to be of primary relevance. The empirical studies in the work package highlight the crucial role of two main measures: parental/paternity leaves and the working time and its flexibility. Entitlements to leave for care and the uptake are especially important for promoting caring fathers. The former refers to national regulations and employer-level entitlements if any. The latter is determined both by existing leave regulations, various labour market factors at the aggregate level (such as job instability, gender pay gap), and features at the company level (work organization, occupation, job prestige, managers’ attitude), as well as individual characteristics of partners and the couple’s family situation. It is worthwhile to note that increasing uptake of leaves by fathers contributes not only to enhancing their role as care givers but also strengthens mothers’ employment and their career prospects. The findings of both qualitative and quantitative analyses on different countries refer directly to some of these factors and extend our knowledge on what policy measures can improve reconciliation of family and work responsibilities for both women and men given their new gender roles in country-specific

contexts. In general, paid leave with individualized rights and flexible use seem to be recommended.

The qualitative study on new gender roles in Hungary and Germany (Sailer et al. 2016) recommends parental leave schemes with some months explicitly allocated to the mother and the father, based on the ‘use it or lose it’ principle. Families in Hungary – a country currently without this provision – could clearly benefit from such policies. In Germany two ‘daddy months’ are available for fathers with a take-up rate of 32% at the national level. Another incentive for take-up of the non-transferable leave for fathers would be to offer additional months of paid parental leave (to be taken by either the mother or the father) contingent on the father taking his share.

The in-depth qualitative analysis for Austria (Rieder et al. 2016) indicates the gender pay gap as one of the main obstacles for de-gendering uptake of parental leave. It is economically rational for parents that the partner who earns more continues in paid work while the other one, usually the woman, takes parental leave. Therefore, diminishing the gender pay gap might increase fathers’ use of leaves. That recommendation goes in line with findings about the rational-pragmatic reasoning on active fatherhood also in the studies on Germany and Hungary (Sailer et al. 2016) and Sweden (Evertsson et al. 2015).

For parents’ decisions about parental leaves beside within-couple negotiations the workplace characteristics matter as well. The Swedish study (Evertsson et al. 2015) confirms what is known from earlier research that the father’s work conditions are more important for his leave length than the mother’s work conditions are for her leave length. It seems to be related not only to differences in the labour market positions between men and women but also to the perception of working mothers and fathers at workplace. The double role of mothers (the economic provider and the carer) is commonly acknowledged, while it is not the case for fathers. In fact, it has been found that management at work feels challenged by fathers taking leave, whereas the absence of women is of less concern (Rieder et al. 2016). Hence, beside leave schemes that facilitate fathers’ uptake more effort is needed to promote father-friendly employers, that is companies which account in their work organisation also for the double role of men. The case study about the employer-related leave in Switzerland (Valarino 2014) shows explicitly the mediating role of managers in enhancing/counteracting fathers’ leave uptake. Moreover, it highlights that possibilities to flexible use of leave are important for both fathers and managers, and the negotiations between employees and managers regarding preferences and constraints of leave uptake.



A challenge with employees being absent from their workplace for a certain time is their potential replacement, hence legal regulations on labour substitution in place are of importance for this issue. For instance, in Austria for most firms it would be easier to find replacement for a few months than for a few weeks (Rieder et al. 2016). Thus, longer parental leaves for fathers might be easier to handle than shorter leaves. Therefore, in highlighting the role of work management for enhancing the use of parental leave by fathers, this aspect of labour regulations cannot be neglected. Adequate information about parental leave schemes along with rules about labour replacement at the company level is needed for establishing an environment supportive for fathers' uptake of parental leave.

Working time and its flexibility can be considered as a labour policy measure of crucial relevance for balancing work and family demands given new gender roles. The Austrian qualitative study reveals that parents arrange childcare rather equally during parental leave when their working hours are flexible (Rieder et al. 2016). The 'family working time' scheme proposed by the German Ministry for Families, Seniors, Women and Youth, which recommends reduced working hours (30-32 hours/week) for mothers and fathers with care responsibilities, is considered also as a helpful measure to adjust working time to care demands, in particular by fathers since part-time employment is already broadly used by women. This is consistent with results of the comparative study on time use by Tanturri et al. (2016) which indicates fathers' working time being crucial for their time spent with children during weekdays. Their family engagement, especially the time spent alone with children on weekdays, increases when mothers are in employment and is also influenced by the mothers' working schedule. Moreover, Sailer et al. (2016) suggest that working time schemes can be instrumental in changing the workplace culture where rigid working conditions prevail, reflected in employers' expectations of their staff's round-the-clock availability and mobility and in reluctantly conceded home-office arrangements, which are often viewed with suspicion.

Reducing working hours by fathers with care responsibilities might be recommended as a policy measure to enhance active fatherhood and strengthen mothers' position in the labour market. As for now, balancing work and care demands by either withdrawing from the labour market or moving to part-time employment is practised predominantly by mothers, especially with children aged 0-3. The male breadwinner model and the modernised male breadwinner model seem to be the most widespread arrangements among families with children below age 3 (Rieder et al. 2016). In addition, mothers' labour market involvement appears to be a joint decision whereas fathers themselves decide on their (unchanged) working hours. Such

asymmetric decision-making about partners' labour market involvement might be changed if working hours are reduced for fathers with care duties.

## **6.2. Education, family and gender policy**

The substantial increase of women's engagement in higher education, which further strengthens their labour market role, constitutes a key factor in the evolvement of the new female gender role embracing earning as well as caring responsibilities (DiPrete and Buchmann 2006; Steiber et al. 2016). At the beginning of the twenty-first century women in Europe have higher enrolment rates in post-secondary and tertiary education and they graduate more successfully than men. This may have important implications also for family dynamics and for sharing unpaid family work between men and women, depending on the patterns of educational assortative mating, as addressed in the Work package.

First, if women seek to continue to marry up, that is to find a partner who is at least as highly educated as they are, the new female educational advantage can lead to the most educated women facing an education-specific mating squeeze as they outnumber highly educated men (Van Bavel 2012). However, the empirical evidence provided no support for this argument (De Hauw et al. 2016), rather indicating a new trend of educational hypogamy, that is women marrying "down" in terms of educational attainment, along with the dominant pattern of educational homogamy (De Hauw et al. 2015; see also Esteve et al. 2012; Grow and Van Bavel 2015). As pointed out, hypogamy may be a preferred alternative if the lower educational attainment and limited earnings potential of the male partner is counterbalanced by a more gender equal distribution of family responsibilities in terms of household work and childcare. Hence, new patterns of educational assortative mating may enhance gender equality in the family.

The shift in the gender imbalance in higher education to the advantage of women may also contribute to greater diversity of partnerships. As highlighted by Muresan and Oláh (2016a), gendered educational gradients for different partnership types may have contributed to the declining trend for marriages and increasing propensity for non-marital cohabitation as first partnership in Central-Eastern Europe in the 1990s and 2000s. Highly educated men being most likely to marry, but highly educated women less so while having a high propensity to enter consensual unions, the "surplus" of women with high education may have weakened the dominance of marriage as first partnership. As in the literature traditional gender roles are more often linked to marriages while consensual unions are seen as to provide more leeway

also in terms of the gender distribution of paid and unpaid work, greater diversity of partnership types may also contribute to an increase of gender equality levels in the society and in the family.

Second, inasmuch the new female educational advantage accelerates changes in gender roles, its impact on fertility is of special interest given growing concerns about ageing societies. Klesment et al. (2014) found regional specificities regarding the impact of women's and their partners' educational attainment on second-birth rates. Taking into account variations in birth-spacing patterns across educational levels, no differences were shown by women's education for second-birth rates in the Nordic countries, whereas negative female educational impact emerged for Southern Europe, German-speaking countries and for Central-Eastern Europe, the latter showing negative educational gradient also for men unlike the other regions. As higher levels of gender equality prevail in the Nordic countries, while traditional gender roles remained prominent in the CEE-region, Southern Europe and the German-speaking countries, the influence of gender relations on the educational gradient on fertility has been further investigated. Puur et al. (2016) looked at contextual factors of importance for gender equality, and showed that work-family reconciliation arrangements, economic uncertainty, and attitudes towards gender equality modulate the association between women's education and second birth rates. Studying the effect of education on men's lifetime fertility, Muresan and Oláh (2016b) found a positive gradient for the gender egalitarian Nordic countries, but a negative impact of male education for Central-Eastern Europe, the latter driven by the wives' education and likely linked to lower levels of gender equality in family life in this region.

Women's high education strengthens their labour market role which has become an inherent aspect of the new female gender identity, as seen in employment uncertainty affecting childbearing intentions and their realization especially among highly educated women in Switzerland (Hanappi et al. forthcoming), and homogamous highly educated couples delaying first birth the most compared to other educational pairings across Europe so also the female partner can start a career before entering parenthood (Nitsche et al. 2015). An emerging female breadwinner model is supported by women having higher educational attainment hence greater earning potential than their partners in increasing number of couples, and even in other couple constellations their educational investments strengthened women's labour market position (Klesment and Van Bavel 2015; Sailer et al. 2016). A more equal economic contribution to the family income in turn improves women's position in the family regarding couple negotiations on the division of housework and care responsibilities,

increasing the level of gender equality in family relationships. More educated women are also more likely to initiate and/or accept new ways of doing family, as their gender identity is less confined to the homemaker and childcarer role, hence they appreciate the male partner's involvement with the children and domestic tasks (see Evertsson et al. 2015; Sailer et al. 2016). Engaged fathers themselves are often more highly educated (Henz 2017; Tanturri et al. 2016), and less concerned about whether their involvement in the care of children is compatible with the male gender role. Thus the expansion of higher education in the past decades may have created conditions for gender equality increasingly aimed at in the evolution of gender relations and in future family life, necessary for the progress of the gender revolution.

### **6.3. Gender policy as value setting**

A key question for policy and practice recommendations is how we can promote processes of de-gendering social relations, i.e. how we can develop policy and practice which addresses the gender norms that prescribe 'appropriate' roles for males and females (see Sailer et al. 2016), advancing equality. Any policies and practices which promote increased paternal involvement in family life can be regarded as contributing to a cultural transformation, which in turn may encourage the adaptation of policies to the observed changes in cultural values. This Section offers some suggestions for driving values to de-genderize family life.

Public and private organisations should review their provisions designed for families and consider ways of addressing their formal as well as their de facto 'mothers only' provisions. Key questions to address here are what creative measures may draw more fathers with their children to public places and events, which are currently mainly used by mothers. How can the set-up of father groups be encouraged whose activities have strong public visibility? The answers to these questions are connected to cultural values in specific national contexts, e.g. regarding the perception and acceptance of different family forms. Therefore, not only legal norms or family policy have to be addressed, but also cultural values have to be taken in to account, as they are important for de-gendering social relations and fostering more equal gender relations between women and men, between mothers and fathers.

As the Austrian study has shown, practices are very much oriented on the possibilities offered (Rieder et al. 2016). For example, the naming of the childcare allowance in Austria seems at first glance – and is thus written in the law - as being a neutral labelling. However, naming the programmes '12+2', '15+3', '20+4' or '30+6' in an environment that regards

mothers as having the main responsibility for childcare suggests that mothers first take the twelve (or 15, 20 or 30) months of leave, while fathers take two (or three, four or six) months of leave afterwards. Some couples as well as their peers or colleagues in that study even took the name for a rule and missed information about alternative ways of sharing or dividing the parental leave. Thus, a rather participatory meant measure mirrors inequality.

This also refers to the representation of the role of men and women in public space. Changes such as adding baby change units in men's toilets or creating gender-free baby change units, promoting household utensils and baby products associated with men, ensuring that wording of bureaucratic forms and political programmes is addressed to women as well as men, are a few possibilities of making the public sensitive to gender-specific structures and, in further consequence, open to gender-free structures. In the same way, as mother and child programmes are announced, father and child programmes should also be established. While hardly only one of these measures will have causal effects on behaviour, thousand little steps avoiding gender-specific marks might make gender-equal practices more likely.

Quantitative analyses for Sweden (Evertsson et al. 201) have shown that the men who use the most parental leave are men who state that they want to stay at home for a long period and who want to share the leave with their partner. It seems as if those desires are strong enough, obstacles are overcome. The qualitative interviews indicate that ideals of equal parenting, engaged fatherhood and gender equality can lead a couple to an equal division of the leave. These parents want the same experience of and knowledge about the child and the fathers want to practice a "new fatherhood" by building a close relationship with the baby and by being an equally important parent as the mother. These couples view Swedish family policies and institutions as something that facilitates their relatively gender-equal lives. However, in some couples who stress the importance of gender-equal ideals, other ideals and norms around motherhood and fatherhood counteract an equal sharing of the leave, not because they are hard to break, but because the parents do not want to break them. These couples, too, presented their division of the leave as "rather equal" which highlights the strength of the equality discourse in Sweden. The father's parental leave length is a strong indicator of gender equality in the actual sharing of child care when both are back at work again. The study indicates that both mothers and fathers have a lot to gain from dividing the care work and paid work more gender equally when children are small, and children benefit as well. Having two parents to turn to when you are sad or hurt gives the child comfort and facilitates for them to develop a long-term relationship with both parents.

The Swiss report showed that through the implementation of a one-month paid paternity leave in one particular public administration new norms were set about fathers' legitimate absences and fatherhood was made more visible in the work place (Valarino 2014). As the company offers opportunities to its male employees to spend more time with their children, the leave entitlement for fathers guarantees time off work with less pressure from colleagues or supervisors. Some fathers reported that the existence of paternity leave influenced the social norms regarding fatherhood in the workplace and improved the status of fathers. Paternity leave was said to influence the expectations of colleagues and supervisors who now had to officially count with one-month absences of employees and who had become more tolerant in that respect. Like motherhood, fatherhood was now associated with a corresponding absence from work. Therefore, policy interventions need to be aimed at different kinds of private and public companies and businesses and need to promote more equal gender relations on different institutional levels.

As to policy implications arising from the study on stepfamilies (Schier et al. 2016), a key concern to be addressed relates to the lack of social norms that can guide the roles and behaviours of stepfamilies – an issue which has also become increasingly relevant for other contemporary family forms. Accordingly, consultative and legal guidance is required, especially for unmarried stepfamilies as well as for multi-local living constellations (Löhnig 2015; Navarro 2013). In addition, if the commitments of stepparents were to be recognized in law, the corresponding sets of rights and obligations would also resolve ambiguities and thus support phases of adjustment following transitions. The position of stepparents in the family proves to be particularly fragile, not least because the role is hardly secured by law. The way in which this role can be adopted is therefore highly dependent on individual negotiation processes and the support and mediation of the children's biological parents. While this leaves much flexibility for adaptations and rearrangements in family practice, it provides little guidance for distributing and sharing parental responsibilities in complex multi-parent family constellations. A legal system which grants parental responsibility to more than two people (as is the case in England and Australia; see Schwenzer 2007) would offer the opportunity to clarify and consolidate legally and symbolically the role of a stepparent, and to create more behavioural security for all those involved. It would also represent a sign of recognition for the efforts which stepparents as social parents undertake in rearing and caring for children.

Furthermore special attention should be paid to complex stepfamilies after the birth of a joint child, offering support services that are able to meet the special demands of these family types. To this end, inquiries into knowledge, competencies, and family ideologies of

professional services in family counselling and education might be a first step to shed light on the needs for further professional training and the development of psycho-educational or counselling services. In general, it should be ensured that all types of significant relationships which may exist in a child's life in post-separation re-partnered families are taken into account. There is also a profound need to adjust legal rulings to the growing number of children with a multi-local conduct of life, following their parents' separation or divorce. This applies not only to family law and social legislation, but also e.g. to registration laws in a certain country.

Finally, assumptions about stepfamilies have to be reconsidered. Since stepism – like racism, heterosexism, and sexism – involves prejudice and discrimination, it is important to promote political measures and provisions which increase awareness in this area and aim to reduce stepism. The avoidance of terms with negative connotations as well as the introduction of appropriate terms for types of family relationships for which there exist no labels until now may help to reduce negative attitudes and expectations. Policies should be examined for possible biases in favour of uni-local nuclear families as well as biologically based relationships, because biased policies put a strain on multi-locally living stepchildren and their families and send implicit messages about the 'ideal' family and those not measuring up to this ideal. The fundamental problem is the moral normative of the nuclear family at least in some countries (Zartler 2014). Thus, policy measures tend to react on different family forms. Taking the point of view of children might be a shift in the perspective and would put family forms secondary to the primacy of the well-being of children.

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## **Appendix: List of deliverables and publications**

### ***D3.1 State-of-the-art report: The new roles of men and women***

*Partner in Charge: Stockholm University*

#### Output:

Oláh, Livia Sz.; Richter, Rudolf, and Irena E. Kotowska (2014). “State-of-the art report: The new roles of men and women and implications for families and societies“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 11(2014).

### ***D3.2 Methodological report: measurement of education specific mating squeeze***

*Partner in Charge: University of Leuven*

#### Output:

De Hauw, Yolien; Piazza, Francesca, and Jan Van Bavel (2014). “Methodological report: measurement of education-specific mating squeeze“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 16(2014).

### ***D3.3 Reports on women’s new role and implications for family dynamics***

*Partner in Charge: University of Leuven*

#### Output:

Klesment, Martin and Jan Van Bavel (2015). “The reversal of the gender gap in education and female breadwinners in Europe“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 26(2015).

Vignoli, Daniele; Matysiak, Anna; Styr, Marta, and Valentina Tocchioni (2016). “The Impact of Women’s Employment on Divorce: Real Effect, Selection, or Anticipation?“ FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 59(2016).

#### Peer-reviewed article:

Klesment, Martin; Puur, Allan; Rahnu, Leen, and Luule Sakkeus (2014). “Varying association between education and second births in Europe: Comparative analysis based on the EU-SILC data“. *Demographic Research, Volume 31, Article 27: 813-860.* <http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol31/27/>.

### ***D3.4 Report on women’s new role and its implication for men***

*Partner in Charge: Babeş-Bolyai University*

#### Output:

Oláh, Livia Sz. (2015). “Changing families in the European Union: trends and policy implications“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 44(2015).

### ***D3.5 Report on fathers' parental leave use and employers' reaction in Switzerland***

*Partner in Charge: Univerity of Lausanne*

#### Peer-reviewed article:

Valarino, Isabel and Jacques-Antoine Gauthier (2015). "Paternity Leave Implementation in Switzerland: A Challenge to Gendered Representations and Practices of Fatherhood?" *Community, Work and Family*, 19(1), 1-20.  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2015.1023263>

### ***D3.6 Report on the gendered transition to parenthood in Sweden***

*Partner in Charge: Stockholm University*

#### Output:

Evertsson, Marie; Boye, Katarina, and Jeylan Erman (2015). "Fathers on call - A study on the sharing of care work among parents in Sweden: A mixed methods approach". FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 27(2015).

### ***D3.7 Report on the gendered transition to parenthood in Austria***

*Partner in Charge: University of Vienna*

#### Peer-reviewed articles:

Schadler, Cornelia; Schmidt, Eva-Maria; Rieder, Irene; Zartler, Ulrike, and Rudolf Richter (2016). "Key practices of equality within long parental leaves". Accepted. *Journal of European Social Policy*.

Schmidt, Eva-Maria and Irene Rieder (2016). "Alles eine Frage des Geldes? Elterliche Legitimierungsmuster bei der Organisation und Verwirklichung der Karenzzeit" [All About the Money? Parents' Justification Patterns Behind their Parental Leave Arrangements]. *SWS-Rundschau*, 4/2016.

Steiber, Nadia; Berghammer, Caroline, and Barbara Haas (2016). "Contextualizing the education effect on women's employment: A cross-national comparative analysis". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(1): 246-261

Schmidt, Eva-Maria; Rieder, Irene; Zartler, Ulrike; Schadler, Cornelia, and Rudolf Richter (2015). "Parental Constructions of Masculinity at the Transition to Parenthood: The Division of Parental Leave among Austrian Couples". *International Review of Sociology* 25 (3): 373-386. DOI: 10.1080/03906701.2015.1078532.

#### Submitted:

Rieder, Irene; Schmidt, Eva-Maria; Zartler, Ulrike; Schadler, Cornelia, and Rudolf Richter (2016). "Turning Points in the Transition to Parenthood: Implications for Father Involvement and Opportunities for Gender Equality".

Schmidt, Eva-Maria (2016). "Breadwinning as Care? The meaning of paid work in mothers' and fathers' constructions of parenting".

Vogl, Susanne; Zartler, Ulrike; Schmidt, Eva-Maria, and Irene Rieder (2016). "Developing an Analytical Framework for Multiple Perspective, Qualitative Longitudinal Interviews (MPQLI)".

Rieder, Irene; Schmidt, Eva-Maria, and Ulrike Zartler (2016). "Interrelated Parenting Practices: Conceptual Foundations of Involvement in Care Work at the Transition to Parenthood."

### ***D3.8 Reports on new gender roles and implications for family life in Germany and Hungary***

*Partner in Charge: German Youth Institute*

#### Peer-reviewed articles

Jentsch, Birgit and Michaela Schier (2016). "Zwischen Rebellion, Pragmatismus und Sicherheit" [Between rebellion, pragmatism and security]. *DJI Impulse*, 1/2016: 18-20.

Neményi, Mária and Takács, Judit (2016). "Main Breadwinner Women in Hungary and Their Work-family Balance Related Coping Strategies". *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 2(3): 97-117.

#### Submitted:

Sailer, Julia; Jurczyk, Karin and Michaela Schier (2017). "Female breadwinner families in Germany: new gender roles?"

### ***D3.9 Report on doing stepfamily***

*Partner in Charge: German Youth Institute*

#### Submitted:

Jentsch, Birgit and Michaela Schier (2016). "Doing family in the age of involved fatherhood: fathers' accounts of everyday life in a Western German context".

### ***D3.10 Reports on fathers' time with children, trends and determinants in France, Italy, Sweden and the UK***

*Partner in Charge: University of Padova*

#### Output:

Fahlén, Susanne (2015). "Gender equality within dual-earner and dual-career couples across different policy regimes and norm systems in Europe". *FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 48(2015)*.

#### Peer-reviewed article:

Fahlén, Susanne (2016). "Equality at home – A question of career? Housework, norms, and policies in a European comparative perspective". *Demographic Research*, Volume 35, Article 48, pages 1411-1440. <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol35/48/>

#### Book chapter:

Ruspini, Elisabetta and Maria Letizia Tanturri (2015). "Father involvement with young children in contemporary Italy", chapter 3 in *Father Involvement In The Early Years: An international comparison of policy and practice*, edited by Marina A. Adler and Karl Lenz. Policy Press. ISBN: 9781447318996.

Submitted:

Mullen, Killian and Ursula Henz (2016). “What makes the difference for father involvement with children in the UK – education or occupation?”

Tanturri, Maria Letizia; Donno, Annalisa; Fahlén, Susanne; Henz, Ursula; Pailhé, Ariane, and Anne Solaz (2016). “Father’s time with children at the crossroads of the gender revolution: a comparative analysis in France, Italy, Sweden and the UK“.

***D3.11 Report on coping strategies under uncertain, precarious employment conditions in Switzerland***

*Partner in Charge: University of Lausanne*

Output:

Hanappi, Doris; Ryser, Valérie-Anne and Laura Bernardi (2014). “Coping strategies under uncertain, precarious employment conditions in Switzerland“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 12(2014).

Peer-reviewed articles

Hanappi, Doris; Ryser, Valérie-Anne, and Laura Bernardi (2016). “The Role of Attitudes towards Maternal Employment in the Relationship between Job Quality and Fertility Intentions”. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 6 (1): 192–219.

Hanappi, Doris; Bernardi, Laura; Ryser, Valérie-Anne, and J.-M. Le Goff (forthcoming). “Changes in Employment Uncertainty and the Fertility Intention-Realization Link: An analysis based on the Swiss Household Panel“. *European Journal of Population*.

***D3.12 Report on the impact of economic uncertainty on childbearing intentions in Europe***

*Partner in Charge: Stockholm University*

Output:

Fahlén, Susanne and Livia Sz. Oláh (2015). “The impact of economic uncertainty on childbearing intentions in Europe“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 36(2015).

Submitted:

Fahlén, Susanne and Livia Sz. Oláh (2016). “The impact of economic uncertainty on childbearing intentions in Europe“.

***D3.13 Report on partners’ labour market situation and earnings on childbearing in five European countries***

*Partner in Charge: Warsaw School of Economics*

Output:

Nitsche, Natalie; Matysiak, Anna; Van Bavel, Jan, and Daniele Vignoli (2015). “Partners’ Educational Pairings and Fertility across Europe“. FamiliesAndSocieties Working Paper 38(2015).