

# **Summary of Key Findings from WP 9: Policies and Diversity over the Life Course**

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with contributions by  
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*Abstract:*

This document summarizes the main findings from the research carried out in Workpackage 9, *Policies and Diversity over the Life Course*, within the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project. We present key results from our studies (1) on policies directed to young people at the transition to adulthood and self-sufficient living, (2) on preferences, usage, and consequences of parental-leave and fathers' leave policies on family dynamics; (3) on the legal family formats for same-sex and/or different-sex couples in European countries, (4) on the emergence of private markets and issues of migration and care, and (5) on European Union family-policy initiatives. In our summary, we focus on policy-relevant findings and in particular on those of broader implications for policies, policy directions, and policy design in Europe at large. In concluding we summarize some of the core policy implications of our studies.

*Keywords:* family policies, fertility, youth policies, European Union, same-sex families, migration, care

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**Contents**

- 1. Introduction..... 2**
- 2. Policies towards young people in the European Union: Diversity and perspectives ..... 2**
  - 2.1. Patterns of policies towards young adults .....3
- 3. Parental leave and gender equality: Preferences, usage, consequences..... 5**
  - 3.1. Parental leave preferences.....6
  - 3.2. Gender-egalitarian aspects of parental leave: Consequences of fathers' leave.....7
    - 3.2.1. *Fathers' leave, the gender division of care for sick children, and the gender pay gap*.....7
    - 3.2.2. *Fathers' leave and subsequent childbearing* .....8
    - 3.2.3. *Economic crisis and fathers' leave* .....9
    - 3.2.4. *Fathers' leave and union stability* .....9
    - 3.2.5. *Immigrant fathers and parental leave*..... 10
- 4. Laws and families: Same-sex families in context ..... 12**
- 5. Institutional configurations and the intersection of migration and care/domestic services .. 16**
- 6. Family policy initiatives in the European Union..... 18**
- 7. Policy implications ..... 20**
- References ..... 22**

## **1. Introduction**

The objective of this document is to present some key findings of research in Work Package 9 on policies and diversity over the life course, carried out in the *FamiliesAndSocieties* project. The main objective of the research areas in this work package has been to address un- or under-researched issues that are of major relevance for families in Europe, for European societies, and for policy development. The research topics in this work package spanned over the life course and across the diversity of families. They comprised: a comparison of policies at the entry into adulthood in Europe; the implications of parental leave and of fathers' leave for families, fertility, employment, and gender equality; a comparison of the legal family formats (marriage, registered partnership, cohabitation) available for same-sex and/or different-sex couples in European countries; a comparative analysis of the intersection of private markets for domestic work, of migration, and care; and the development of family-related initiatives of the European Union.

In this summary we present some selected findings from our research. We concentrate on key results that are policy-relevant for European families, European societies, stakeholders and policy makers at the European Union and at the national level. We conclude the summary with some core policy implications from our studies.

## **2. Policies towards young people in the European Union: Diversity and perspectives**

Young people face multiple challenges as they attempt to complete education, move from education to employment, become economically independent from their parents and start a family. If finishing education, getting a job, becoming financially self-sufficient, and forming a family are taken as the main criteria of entering adulthood, then young people nowadays become adults much later than in previous cohorts. Various factors are considered to be responsible for this trend. On the macro-level these factors include reduced economic opportunities, technological changes in the production process, flexibilization of employment, the spread of globalization, and the decline of unionization. On the individual level, core

factors are educational demands and increased employment risks. Dropping out of high school or lacking post-secondary or tertiary education sharply decreases the probability of earning a wage that is sufficient to sustain a family at an average level of living. For many young individuals, unemployment has become a substantial problem, especially among disadvantaged minorities. Furthermore, jobs in general have become less stable over time. Thus, many young people face multiple uncertainties about their long-term socioeconomic prospects. Consequently, a significant proportion of young people remain unable to support themselves, much less a family, before their mid to late 20s, and need to rely on their parents and/or the welfare state.

Moreover, the recent Great Recession hit young people particularly hard and, as the recovery has been without job growth in many countries, many young people have not seen their situation improving since. As a consequence, young people today struggle in the labour market in spite of being the most highly educated generation in history.

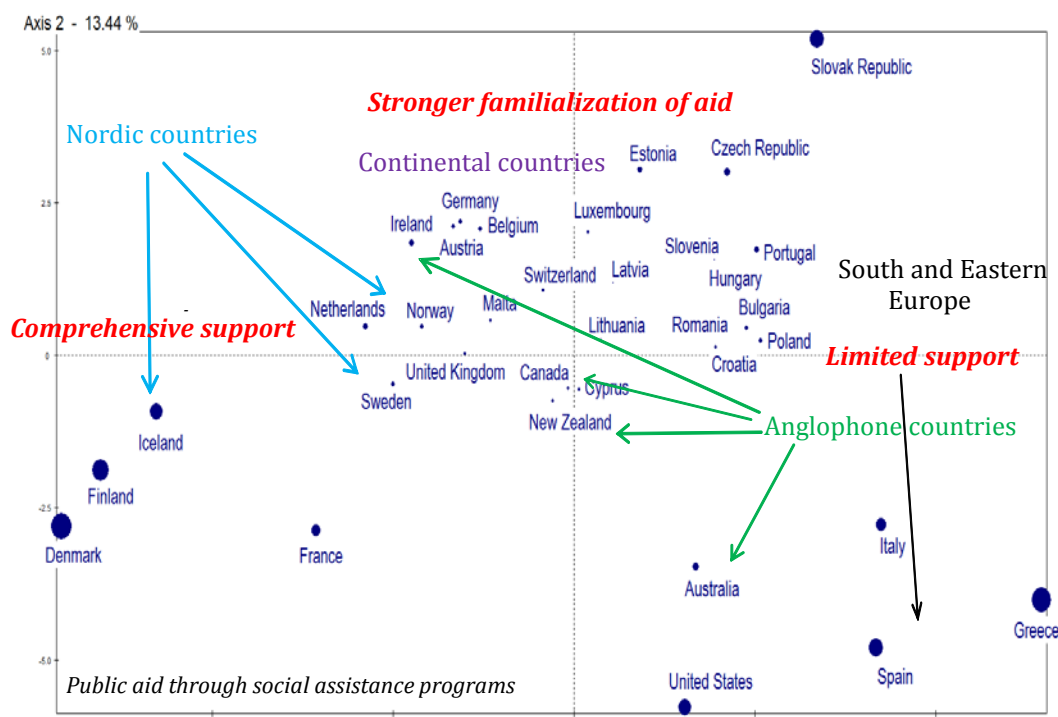
This situation has significant social, political, and economic consequences. In the absence of adequate public support, declining household incomes increase the risk of poverty. They may force young people and their families to cut down on essential expenditure on food, housing, and health care, thus damaging their well-being and health. How and to what extent countries help youths to enter into adult life and to achieve self-sufficiency is thus of key concern.

In our project on policies towards youth we examined how European countries are helping young adults to enter into adult life, i.e. to leave the parental home and to become economically self-sufficient. To do so, we examined which public support exists in European countries in core areas relevant for the transition to adulthood, namely education, housing, employment, and social and child benefits. Particular attention was paid to the existence or non-existence of support for the most vulnerable groups in the population

## **2.1. Patterns of policies towards young adults**

The results show that there exist different configurations of policies supporting young people's transition to adulthood and to self-sufficiency. The policy pattern only partly corresponds to the usual geographical divisions distinguishing social welfare regimes (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: OECD countries by type of policy supporting young adults**



Source: Thévenon 2015a

On average, we find more comprehensive support in the Nordic countries, limited support in the Anglophone countries and a strong familialization of support in the continental Western, Southern, and Eastern European countries. But there are remarkable exceptions. We observe considerable differences between the Nordic countries (Norway and Sweden vs. Denmark, Finland, and Iceland), as well as between some English-speaking (Australia, USA vs. Ireland, the UK, and Canada) and some Southern European countries (Portugal vs. Italy, Spain and Greece). France stands also out through its similarity to some Nordic countries and its difference with most continental European countries.

In some countries, notably Denmark and Finland, there is a combination of different forms of support for education, housing, job market access, social assistance, and family allowances. Investments in education and employment are accompanied by a diverse range of social support. These combinations come closest to a model of integrated support that enables young people to balance their transitions to employment, family formation, and the foundation of an independent household.. In the Nordic countries the transition to adulthood is approached in a

holistic manner, and policies take account of the multi-faceted aspect of the transitions (family, housing, education and professional life) to be made by young people.

In contrast, we observe a persistence of “familialization” of support, particularly in continental Western and Eastern European countries. In these countries, parents continue to benefit from family allowances or tax benefits for young adults. The support and its duration also differ depending on whether one is a student or not. Access to social support may come later in life because the family is seen as being the main provider for the needs of its members, including young adults. The configurations also differ in the extent to which social support targets the most vulnerable young adults. Social assistance in countries such as Ireland and the UK provides modest coverage for young adults but broader support for young people who left the education system without finding a job.

These variations in social support for young adults are key to understanding the differences in entry into adult life in advanced economies. They provide some clue for the diverse sets of behaviour regarding the order and the timing of the transitions observed across European countries. The complementarity of different forms of support in some Nordic countries helps to balance out the different types of transitions rather than separating them into well-ordered sequences. It reduces the dependence on parental support and facilitates the establishment of an independent household. It partly explains why young people in the Nordic countries leave their parental home at a relatively early age to set up their own household. The complementarity of supportive policies can also offer young adults a sense of stability and security as they look to their future, ensuring them support irrespective of their decisions regarding education, job market integration, and family life.

### **3. Parental leave and gender equality: Preferences, usage, consequences**

Parental- and care-leave policies are core social and family policies. They lie at the intersection of employment policies and care policies, and are thus essential for the reconciliation of work and care, for gender equality in the labor market and in the family, and for social equality among families and individuals (with or without children). Twenty years ago the Council Directive 96/34/EC set minimum standards of parental leave entitlements for parents in the European Union, by introducing three months of parental leave. The Council

Directive 2010/18/EU expanded parental leave for both parents to at least four months. To encourage a more equal sharing of parental leave among parents it proposes that at least one month should be non-transferable between the parents. Member states may provide parental leave entitlements beyond the rights established by the directives, and they may also set the conditions of leave taking. Most European countries had introduced parental leave schemes prior to the Council Directive 96/34/EC. Despite the transposition of the directives into national laws, parental leave regulations across Europe vary greatly, for example, with respect to the length of the leave, the income replacement during the leave, and the possibilities to share the leave between parents. In the FamiliesAndSocieties project we investigated parental leave issues which are of major relevance for gender equality and social equality as well as for policy formation in Europe. These issues concern the association between existing policies and preferences for parental leave in different European countries; the consequences of fathers' leave for the sharing of care for sick children, for further childbearing, and for union dissolution, and influence of the economic crisis on fathers' parental leave and fertility.

### **3.1. Parental leave preferences**

The diversity of parental leaves in Europe raises the question about which leave policies people would prefer to have. We analyzed preferences regarding the length of parental leave, the division of leave between the parents, and the financing of the leave in four countries with different parental-leave regimes: Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA using data from the 2012 ISSP (International Social Survey Programme). The results show that policy preferences are strongly shaped by the policies existing in the country. To say it simply, people prefer the leave policies that they are accustomed to. Despite the fact that people's policy preferences are largely in line with the existing leave policies, people's personal demands for parental leave, their attitudes towards gender equality and towards the financial responsibility of the state for parental leave also influence preferences. Individuals most likely to benefit from parental leaves, such as women, parents, or young adults, are more supportive of long leaves and partly also of state financing. Preferences for the gender division of leave vary by gender, age, and education. The study underlines how much policies matter in shaping people's family-policy preferences. The results also indicate that reforms may change preferences, in our case, preferences for parental leave arrangements, for the gender division of parental leave, and for the financing of the leave.



### **3.2. Gender-egalitarian aspects of parental leave: Consequences of fathers' leave**

Policies that promote a gender egalitarian participation in employment and care have gained in importance since the 1990s. The Nordic countries were among the first in Europe to implement parental leave policies that aim at a gender equal division of childcare and economic responsibility. We therefore concentrated on the Nordic countries, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland, in order to analyze the uptake of leave and the consequences of leave policies for gender equality, childbearing, union stability, and economic security. We focused on fathers' leave, because, first, this leave is increasingly seen as a vital policy to promote greater gender equality in care and employment (see Council Directive 2010/18/EU), and, secondly, there is little knowledge about its consequences for families and gender equality over time. The findings from the Nordic may thus offer valuable insights for policy reforms in other countries. For our analyses we used register data from the respective countries. The data cover the entire population over the past decades, and we harmonized the data to guarantee maximal comparability.

#### ***3.2.1. Fathers' leave, the gender division of care for sick children, and the gender pay gap***

Previous studies have shown that the introduction of fathers' leave increases fathers' uptake of parental leave. Duvander and Johansson (2016) examined whether fathers' parental leave and the length of the leave also influence fathers' subsequent engagement in the care for sick children. We focused on Sweden which introduced one month of "fathers' leave" in 1995 and two months in 2002, and which offers 120 days of temporary leave per child and per year at almost 80% income replacement to take care of sick children. The analysis shows that the first reform, that is the introduction of fathers' leave, led to a more equal sharing of the care for sick children. The extension of the fathers' leave to two months had no effect on the subsequent gender division in the care of sick children (Duvander and Johansson 2016).

The political promotion of fathers' engagement in childrearing is tied to the expectation that it will ease mother's participation in the labor market and reduce the gender wage gaps. We explored whether this holds, and we analyzed women's income development prior and after the introduction of the (one-month) fathers' leave in Sweden in 1995 and its extension to two months in 2002. We could not discern any detectable effect of either reform. However, a more detailed analysis showed that the extension of fathers' leave to two months had a favorable influence on the income development of low income mothers with one child. This may result

from an increased labor supply rather than from higher salaries (Duvander and Johansson 2016).

### ***3.2.2. Fathers' leave and subsequent childbearing***

Theoretical assumptions on the link between gender equality and fertility propose that if men engage more in childrearing, couples will be more inclined to have (a)nother child and fertility rates will increase. However, the effect may depend on the duration of the engagement and on which child is considered. To assess this from a policy perspective, we analyzed whether the childbearing effects differ depending on whether the father takes “only” the legally reserved fathers’ leave or more than the reserved fathers’ leave. We thus aimed to distinguish between the “policy effect” and the “gender-egalitarian” effect of fathers’ engagement in early child rearing on subsequent childbearing. We used register data from Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Duvander et al. (2016) compared second and third birth intensities of couples in which the father took no parental leave, only the legally reserved month(s) of fathers’ leave or more than the legally reserved fathers’ month(s). Since Norway, Sweden, and Iceland introduced, extended, or amended their fathers’ leave and its duration at different times, the “legally reserved fathers’ leave” in our study also varies between countries and across our 20-year observation period. This approach and method allowed us to more accurately assess the relationship between policy-induced behavior, gender-egalitarian behavior and subsequent childbearing.

Our results show that if the father takes parental leave with the first child, couples in all countries are more inclined to have a second child. This is irrespective of whether the father takes only the legally reserved fathers’ leave or more than the reserved quota. More gender-egalitarian behavior does not necessarily have a stronger impact on second birth intensities. Contrary to the results for the first child, father’s uptake of parental leave with the second child does not increase, but lowers the couple’s intensity to have a third child. The negative association is stronger if the father takes only the reserved fathers’ leave. We conclude that the father’s active engagement in childrearing with the first child eases the couple’s decision to have a second child. Since having two children is the norm in the Nordic countries, fathers’ leave taking with the second child does not have the same consequences as with the first child. However, further studies on Iceland show that the introduction of a father’s leave policy

may have contributed to maintaining the two-child norm and the comparatively high fertility levels in the Nordic countries (see, e.g., Jónsson 2016).

### ***3.2.3. Economic crisis and fathers' leave***

Although all studies show that the Nordic parental-leave schemes with their gender-egalitarian orientation are positively related to childbearing, we caution against overrating the impact of parental leave on fertility. Economic development, in particular an economic crisis, may dampen the effect of parental leave on fertility. In a study on Iceland, Jónsson (2016) analyzed the relationship between policy reform, fertility, and economic crisis. He showed that the reform of parental leave in Iceland – leading to the most gender-equal parental leave worldwide – stabilized fertility rates in Iceland. But the economic crisis of 2009 reversed this trend. Concurrently, the average number of parental leave days taken by fathers decreased substantially.

Together with the study on the association between childbearing and father's leave (see above) these results provide deeper insight about the relationship between gender equality, fathers' leave, and economics: Although fathers' leave taking has become a norm in the Nordic countries, his leave taking is still subject to “breadwinner sensitivity” (Jónsson 2016) and to broader economic development. Policies that exclusively go in the direction of facilitating father's leave but neglect the part of economic parenting may prove to be insufficient, both for the gender egalitarian sharing of care and for fertility.

### ***3.2.4. Fathers' leave and union stability***

We also investigated whether father's uptake of parental leave contributes to the stability of the partnership. Considerations of union stability have not guided the implementation of parental leaves in Europe, but recent research has shown that couples who divide household work more equally among them are more satisfied with their relationship and less likely to separate. Lappegård et al. (2016) concentrate on father's uptake of parental leave after the birth of the first child in Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, and look at couples' separation risks in subsequent years. We find that if the father takes parental leave – up to the legally reserved quota or more than the quota – , couples in all countries are less likely to separate. Although the results of our studies may not be interpreted as causal effects of fathers' parental leave on

fertility and union stability, they support assumptions that gender inequality within the family may increasingly strain the relationship between partners and lead to lower fertility and higher separation risks.

### ***3.2.5. Immigrant fathers and parental leave***

The family policies of the Nordic countries aim to promote social equality and gender equality in order to contribute to establishing an inclusive society. One of the indicators of success or failure to reach these aims is whether immigrants make use of family-policy option to the same extent as non-immigrants do. Immigrant father's uptake of parental leave is a particularly well suited issue to assess the integrative aspects of family policies, because it unites aspects of gender equality and of social equality (with social equality here referring to differentials between immigrants and natives). Tervola et al. (2016) studied the uptake of parental leave by immigrant and native-born fathers in Sweden and Finland between 1999 and 2009. During these years, both countries offered "daddy days" which could be taken simultaneously with the mother during the first few weeks/months after the birth of the child. Both countries also offered parental leave for fathers, but unlike the daddy-days, these policies differed between the two countries. Sweden puts store on the "father's quota", that is, on reserving part of the parental leave for one parent, while Finland relied on a "bonus system" that is, giving fathers two extra weeks of leave if they took some parental leave.

Immigrant fathers use daddy days as well as (other) parental leave days less often than native-born fathers do. The uptake of leave by immigrant fathers increases with the duration of their stay in the country. This is mainly attributable to their integration into the labor market integration and their increasing wages. There is no difference in the rate of lower usage of daddy days between immigrant fathers in Sweden and in Finland, but huge differences in the rate of lower usage of parental leave between immigrant fathers in Sweden and in Finland.

These findings underline the significant role that policies, their aim, and their design may play in promoting gender and social equality and in creating an inclusive society. Although further analyses need to examine the links between policy design and usage in more detail, our analysis suggests that in addition to the level of benefit paid during parental leave "fathers' quota" may have a greater integrative effect than gender-neutral parental-leave regulations. Legal quotas provide a stronger protection of parental right to use the leave than optional systems do, and they ease negotiations with the employer and with the partner.

As our results suggest a quota system may thus not only be more effective in promoting gender equality in the family, that is, in reducing differences in child caring between women and men, but also more effective in promoting social equality, that is, in reducing the differences between immigrants and natives in family behavior. Second, our findings indicate the need to pay greater attention to the economic integration of immigrants. Although it is difficult to completely disentangle economic and cultural factors, our results suggest that the increase in father's use of parental leave with the time of stay in the country is largely related to their increased economic well-being and less to cultural adaptation. Being employed and having a high wage clearly increases immigrant fathers' leave taking. This stresses the role that the economic situation of fathers (and mothers) plays in achieving gender and social equality in the family and in society.

#### **4. Laws and families: Same-sex families in context**

The recognition of diversity of families includes the recognition of same-sex families. These are often not specifically addressed in research on families. In the FamiliesAndSocieties projects we devoted specific attention to the recognition of same-sex families in statistical sources, in society, and in laws.

Research on same-sex families, in particular comparative research between heterosexual and same-sex families, has been hampered by difficulties to identify and to enumerate same-sex couples in statistical sources (Cortina and Festy 2014). One reason is the small size of the group, in absolute and in relative terms compared to opposite-sex couples. Only sources with very large samples can be used, such as large-scale surveys, population censuses, and register data. However, due to their large sample size, such sources do not always use questions or categories which are fine-grained enough to identify same-sex couples unequivocally. Another issue is the miscoding of sex in data processing and data collection. Underreporting of same-sex relationships either due to ambiguous formulations of the questions or due to the reluctance of the respondents to disclose such a relationship may also lead to an underestimation of same-sex couples. These issues do not only hamper enumeration and research of same-sex relationships at the national level, but they also hamper comparability of data across countries. There is a great diversity in census questionnaires and in data collection so that reliable estimations and comparisons across countries are almost impossible. From a policy and research perspective it would be necessary to put more store on collecting reliable and comparable information on same-sex families, in particular in large-scale international surveys (Cortina and Festy 2014).

Due to the lack of surveys that include sufficiently large and reliable information on same-sex couples, research on same-sex families is mostly qualitative. In the FamiliesAndSocieties project we conducted semi-structured interviews with lesbian and gay individuals and couples in four European countries with different legal histories and legal status of same-sex couples, ranging from no legal recognition to extended legal protection: France, Iceland, Italy, and Spain. The interviews covered different areas of the life course and of a person's experiences, such as coming out, homophobia, coupling, and parenting, in order to explore how the presence or absence of laws in each country impact their intimate lives. Despite the fact that the legal differences in the four countries and although the adopted laws may reflect

heteronormative ideals that do not cover all issues of LGBT lives, all respondents stressed the importance of laws and in particular of equal marriage and legal parenting devices. The interviewees emphasized that being legally recognized as equals provides protection, opens up access to material benefits, reduces economic, social, and personal vulnerability, and has a positive effect on public perception of homosexuals. Same-sex parenting is still an issue in all countries, both from a legal and a practical perspective. This does not only concern becoming a parent as same-sex couple, but also the legal recognition of multi-parent families. Overall, the interviewed lesbian and gay persons regard the approval of equal marriage and the legal recognition of parenting as key features to promote social change and to grant full social citizenship rights of LGBT couples (Digoix et al. 2016).

Legal recognition of same-sex families varies still greatly across Europe (Waldijk 2014a; 2014b; 2015). The extent of the legal gap to different-sex families also varies because non-marital different-sex unions may be differently recognized in different countries. To provide a systematic overview of legal aspects of same-sex and different-sex families and to provide a source for policy makers to compare developments in the legal status of same-sex and different-sex couples, *FamiliesAndSocieties* has established a database (the *LawsAndFamilies Database*, Waldijk et al. (eds.) 2017). The database is the result of a survey among selected legal experts in 21 European countries. The survey covers the formalization of couple relationships (as marriage, registered partnership, or cohabitation), and legal issues regarding income, troubles, parenting, immigration, splitting up, and death. It systematically compares legal regulations for different-sex and/or same-sex couples (Waldijk et al. 2016). There is a clear and rapid trend among the majority of European countries to offer same-sex couples the opportunity to formalize their relationship as marriage and/or as registered partnership. Of the 19 member states of the European Union covered in the database, only three (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania) do not explicitly legally recognize same-sex unions (data for 2015/2016, see Table 1). The majority of countries offers registered partnership (mostly only to same-sex couples), and a slightly different majority offers some kind of legal recognition of cohabitation. The overall trend is towards greater equality for the increasing diversity of families (Waldijk (ed.) 2017. Table 1 gives an overview of the situation in the 23 jurisdictions represented in the database (i.e. 21 countries, with the UK being covered for each of its three components) for the most recent year available (see *LawsAndFamilies Database*).

Table 1: Answers to question 1.1 of the LawsAndFamilies questionnaire, for the most recent year for which experts have answered this question.

Question 1.1 – Which of the three legal family formats mentioned here are available to different-sex and/or same-sex couples?							
Jurisdiction	Year	Marriage		Registered partnership		Cohabitation	
		diff.-sex	same-sex	diff.-sex	same-sex	diff.-sex	same-sex
Austria	2016	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belgium	2015	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	2015	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No, but
Czech Republic	2015	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Finland	2015	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes, but	Yes, but
France	2015	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	2015	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greece	2016	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No, but	No, but
Hungary	2015	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iceland	2015	Yes	Yes	No	No, but	Yes	Yes
Ireland	2016	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Italy	2016	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malta	2015	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Netherlands	2015	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norway	2015	Yes	Yes	No	No, but	Yes	Yes
Poland	2015	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Portugal	2015	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Romania	2015	Yes	No	No	No	No, but	No
Slovenia	2015	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes, but	No, but
Sweden	2015	Yes	Yes	No	No, but	Yes	Yes
England&Wales	2016	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, but	Yes, but
Northern Ireland	2016	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes, but	Yes, but
Scotland	2016	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, but	Yes, but

Source: LawsAndFamilies Database

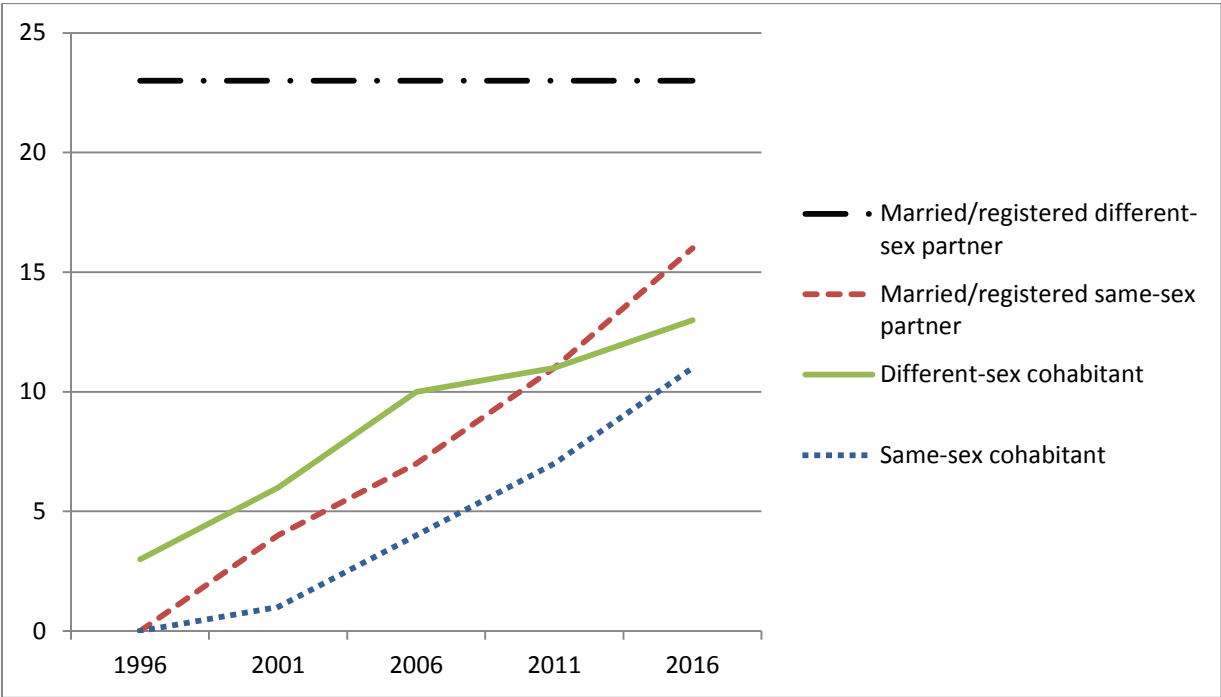
<b>Yes</b>	Yes, this is so in the law of this country/jurisdiction, although possibly with a qualifying period of 24 months or less.
<b>Yes, but</b>	Yes, but with exceptions or restrictions, for example a qualifying period of 25 months or more, or only in most parts of the country/jurisdiction, or this is mostly a “dead letter”.
<b>No, but</b>	No, but it may be so exceptionally, or in a very limited way, or in a few parts of the country/jurisdiction, or indirectly, or by using a different legal instrument, or legislation says no while some courts might say yes.
<b>No</b>	No, this is not so in the law of this country/jurisdiction.



Where marriage is available to same-sex couples (10 out of 23 jurisdictions), the legal consequences of such marriages are the same or almost the same as for different-sex marriages. The exceptions are mostly aspects of parenting, but for example sometimes also include survivor’s pensions. Same-sex marriages (and registered partnerships) that are legal in one country may not always be recognized in other countries. Registered partnership often has most of the legal consequences that are attached to marriage; again the most common exceptions concern parenting, but may also concern inheritance, property, pensions, care leaves, income tax, surnames or other issues (Waaldijk (ed.) 2017).

The trend towards recognizing informal cohabitation is less uniform across Europe. In several countries the legal recognition of different-sex cohabitation covers more areas of law than the legal recognition of same-sex cohabitation (see Table 1 above), which is mostly contrary to fundamental principles of European law (Waaldijk 2014b; 2015). On the other hand, the *LawsAndFamilies Database* also shows that recently the trend towards recognising same-sex couples has been stronger than the trend towards recognising cohabiting couples. For example, the number of countries that allow same-sex partners to adopt a child is now larger than the number of countries that allow unmarried different-sex partners to do so (Figure 2; Nikolina 2017).

Figure 2. Number of jurisdictions\* for which the legal expert answered “Yes” or “Yes, but” to the question “When only one partner is the legal parent of a child, does the other partner then have the possibility of becoming the child’s second parent by way of adoption?”.



Source: *LawsAndFamilies Database*. \*Number of jurisdictions (23, see Table 1)

## **5. Institutional configurations and the intersection of migration and care/domestic services**

The aging of the population, the increase in women's labor force participation and in dual-earner couples, and the deficits in childcare and in elderly care have given rise to different forms of private markets of care and domestic services. To a large extent the services in these markets are carried out by (im)migrants, while those using these services are mostly native-born people. In the FamiliesAndSocieties project we examined how political and institutional settings shape the emergence and the organization of private markets in care/domestic services and which consequences different forms of markets have for (im)migrants offering/working in care/domestic services and for families in need of these services. We focused on Sweden and Spain, because these two countries have very different forms of service markets, different (im)migration policies, and different economic developments (Hobson et al. 2015a; Hobson et al. 2015b). We used a multi-tiered approach, looking at the institutional settings, the roles of stake-holders, and the experiences of migrant workers in the service sectors as well as of families using care/domestic services. We employed qualitative and quantitative methods, and we carried out our own (quantitative) survey to examine issues not covered in the existing surveys which we used. The core findings we present below come from our analyses of the interviews with stakeholders and migrants and the analyses of quantitative surveys.

There are fundamental differences in the private care markets between Sweden and Spain. Sweden has long had an institutionalized (state/community-based) care system. Private domestic/care services are mostly offered by (small) firms. The introduction of tax subsidies (known as RUT) paid to users of such services has increased the share of firms and of users dramatically. The private domestic/care market is nevertheless a relatively small sector of the economy. In Spain, domestic/care services constitute a much larger sector of the economy. The employer of the migrant care provider is mostly the individual household. The migrant is dependent on the good will of the household, in particular if the service is carried out as live-in care. This type of employment is virtually absent in Sweden. Undocumented work is also less common and tolerated in Sweden than in Spain.

These institutional differences have consequences for the migrant workers' work situation, their opportunities for education and up-/out-of-care mobility, and their family situation. In Spain, migrant care workers are mainly labor migrants who are unable to bring their families;

in Sweden they have the right to family unification and they mostly live with their families. Sweden also supports language courses, upgrade of skills, and further education. Upward occupational mobility is more common in Sweden than in Spain. This is due to the better institutional support and the socio-economic status of migrant care workers in Sweden, but also to their family situation. They are more likely to have the economic support of a partner and of a family network than migrant care workers in Spain (Hellgren 2015).

Despite institutional differences there are also many similarities between the two countries. This concerns the employment conditions and the well-being of migrants as well as the economic status of those who use private care/domestic services. In both countries, migrant care workers have precarious work situations with underemployment, low wages, and unpaid hours. Irregular (undocumented) work is more tolerated and also more common in Spain than in Sweden. As a consequence, undocumented workers were found to be much worse off in Sweden than Spain. The economic crisis in Spain has aggravated the living and working conditions for migrant care/domestic workers. Unemployment and underemployment increased severely, migrant workers' dependence on their household intensified, and working conditions deteriorated. Migrants had to stop or reduce sending remittances to their families in their countries of origin, although this has been a motivating factor for many migrants who worked in the care/domestic sector (Hellgren and Serrano 2015).

In both countries, the income level of the household is the crucial divide between users and non-users of the private care/domestic services, particularly in Spain, but also in Sweden, despite the tax subsidies. Private care/domestic services are mostly used by households of higher income level. These services offer women the possibility to pursue employment and have free time for family and friends, but the costs of the services leave these options only to women of the highest income quartiles. The most vulnerable and those with the most need, like single parents or low-income elderly (with lack of family support), can often not afford these services. In Sweden, the gap in capabilities between high- and low income households/women has increased with the tax subsidy. Our surveys revealed that the services bought did not increase the hours women spent in work, but improved their quality of life by reducing conflicts in the family and leaving more time for the family and for leisure. Most users would discontinue domestic/care services if the tax subsidy were not available any longer (Fahlén et al. 2015). This would cut employment possibilities for migrant/care workers. Nevertheless, the subsidy of private care/domestic through tax benefits to users and

thus the shift in redistribution of tax money to the most advantaged is an anomaly in the Swedish welfare context and challenges the Swedish model of equality.

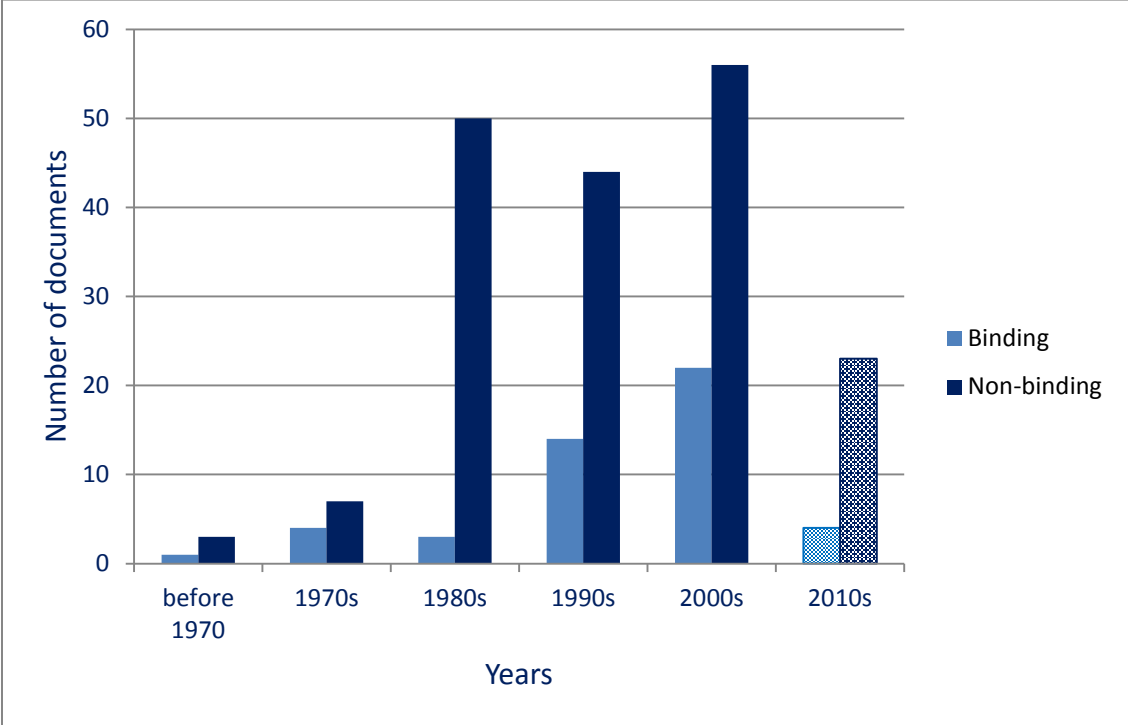
The expansion in private markets is part of a larger story connected to the lack of investment by the states to solve the growing care deficit and time deficit of families in European societies. The expansions in private markets reveal the reconfigurations in welfare regimes, particularly in the Nordic countries in which we are witnessing a recasting of state, market, and family relations with respect to state subsidies for private markets in care and home help services for the elderly. Private markets in care/domestic services make visible the inequalities among families' capabilities to access care, to achieve a work-life balance and quality of life, and to have decent and secure work. Given the expansion of private markets in the sector, advocated at the European level and by national governments, we need more comparative studies to fully understand the the larger implications of private markets.

## **6. Family policy initiatives in the European Union**

During the past decades the scope of the political agenda of the European Union has broadened substantially. Its policy activities have expanded beyond the founding core to create a common market. The expansion was not only driven by the aim to further internal market efficiency and economic performance, but it was also driven by two addition factors. First, there has been an increasing awareness of how relevant non-economic aspects of the market, such as the health and social protection of workers, are for the creation and the growth of an internal market with free movement of workers, goods, and services. Second, there has been an increasing awareness that developments outside the market, such as demographic change or gender (in)equality in the family, may affect the enhancement of the market in the short- or long run. These developments have also opened up space for family-related issues to come onto the European Union's policy agenda. The expansion of European Union policy portfolio has also strengthened the normative power of the European Union beyond its power to set legally binding norms in areas defined by the Treaties and led to an increase in non-legal documents outlining, for example, common goals to be achieved or policy directions to be taken.

In the FamiliesAndSocieties project we looked at the policy initiatives taken by the European Union in family related issues. To provide a systematic overview we established a European Union database on family related issues that covers binding and non-binding documents. We focused on policy issues that cut across diverse aspects of family lives and lie at the intersection of employment, social affairs, gender equality, family development. The analysis of the initiatives over time showed that family related initiatives by the European Union have increased, both with respect to the number of initiatives taken as well as with respect to the topics covered (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Development of legally binding and legally non-binding family-policy and fertility-related (by decade)



Source: Neyer, Caporali and Sanchez Gassen 2014a

We find an increase in legally binding as well as legally non-binding initiatives. Family related initiatives also cumulate at specific times, mostly due to internal or external events or to policy activities in areas to which the respective family-related aspect belongs. Not surprising, family relevant issues in which the European Union has the authority to legislate or which have been aims of the European Union since its onset, such as employment related issues or gender equality, occur earlier and are more consistently on the agenda than more distant issues. Overall, our findings show that the framing and activity radius of the European

Union with regard to family related policies have expanded over the years and that moreover the European Union has addressed family issues far longer than commonly assumed (Neyer et al. 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2016)

## **7. Policy implications**

We base the policy implications of our study on our conviction that policies should acknowledge the diversity of families, that gender equality and social equality are fundamental principles of sustainable societies, and that economic, social, and legal security are crucial for families and individuals in Europe. Viewed from these perspectives, our studies show that state support – materially, institutionally, and legally – is needed to achieve self-sufficiency, gender equality, social equality, and well-being for all.

Our studies on youth and on care show that more direct support to *vulnerable groups* is needed. As for youth, the Nordic countries may serve as a role model as their policies are geared towards comprehensive support for youths to engage in extended education or to make up for missed education, to combine employment and studies, to leave the parental home and to establish their own household in their early 20s. Nonetheless, poverty rates are high among young individuals there, although only for a limited period of their lives. Elsewhere in the OECD, where youth are supported indirectly through their families, self-sufficiency may be even harder to achieve. Greater self-sufficiency can be achieved through policies that prevent early school leaving by promoting a wider and better combination of work experience during studies, and through welfare policies that support youths directly (social assistance, housing, and education subsidies) and aim to increase their personal income. Providing youths who lack education or employment with a second chance to obtain qualifications later in life is also a key measure for societies to be more inclusive.

Our study on *migration and care* furthermore suggests that, similar to youth, we need comprehensive policy packages to assist people and families with care needs. The growing sector of private care markets indicate that (completely) familialized forms of care, that is care provided by exclusively women in the family and the family network, come increasingly under pressure and are difficult to maintain in the long run. This calls for more attention to be directed to the implications of these growing private markets for employment, employment conditions, workers' rights, and social security; for the provision, access, and usage of private

market provided care/domestic services; for (in)equality among families, across gender and across classes; and for migrants' opportunities of integration. Since the private market for household and care services is growing fast, more attention should also be paid to the implications for equality among European societies, for employment and labor market restructuring, for the organization and financing of welfare, and for stakeholders, unions, and collective partners.

Our research on the legal family formats available to *same-sex and/or different-sex families*, as well as our research on *parental/fathers' leave policies*, underlines that policies matter. They shape individual's and family's lives, gender and social relationships; they grant equality (or establish inequality); they provide security (or pose insecurity); they are an instrument to eliminate discrimination (or to increase discrimination), and they shape people's preferences and opinion. Our results on the implications of *fathers' leave policies* suggest that explicit policies (legal rights and quotas) may be more effective in promoting gender equality and social equality than "soft" (optional or individual contractual) forms of policies. In line with the principles of gender equality and social equality and supported by our findings, quotas to promote gender equality should be equal and policies should be constructed so that a gender-equal access and usage is facilitated. The findings on *preferences for parental leave* caution against the temptation to model family policies after people's preferences, since this may lead to stagnation rather than to development. Yet reversing these findings, the results indicate that policy reforms may change preferences. The results thus emphasize that the content of a policy reform may be essential not only for shaping gender, social, and family relationships, but also for changing people's views, their acceptance of policies, their preferences, and norms. The findings on *legal family formats* underline the importance for national and European lawmakers and officials to reform any existing laws that (without convincing justification) still exclude same-sex and/or unmarried partners. The findings stress the need to include a wider variety of families when introducing any new laws, and also to recognise more fully foreign legal family formats for same-sex or unmarried couples that have become available in other countries.

Finally, our results on youth policies at the *transition to adulthood*, on the situation of *same-sex couples*, of *migrant care workers* and of *care buyers*, and on the usage and consequences of *fathers' leave* among different social groups and in case of economic crisis, show that recognition and economic security are preconditions for self-sufficient living, for equality, and for social integration.

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