

Cross-National Research Papers

Sixth Series:

Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic Challenges: Changing Family Structures, Policy and Practice

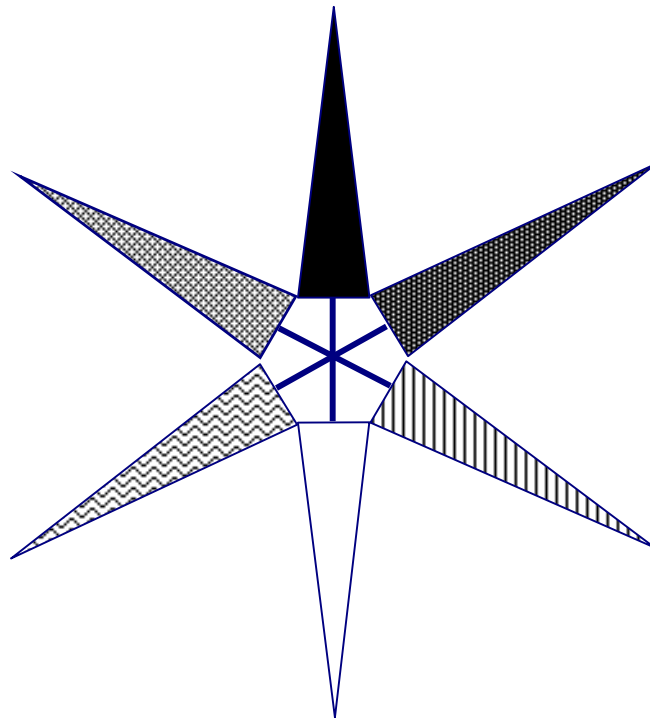
### **3. Comparing Family Policy Actors**

Edited by

**Louise Appleton**  
**Linda Hantrais**

Contributors

**Peter Ackers**  
**Louise Appleton**  
**Paul Byrne**



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## Cross-National Research Papers

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### **3. Comparing Family Policy Actors**

#### **Series Editor's Foreword**

The papers included in this sixth series of *Cross-National Research Papers* build on the contributions published in the fifth series. They develop with greater breadth and in greater depth work previously carried out on the relationship between socio-demographic trends and policy responses in Europe.

The materials from which the present papers are derived were compiled for a three-year research project funded by the European Commission under Framework Programme 5 (HPSE-CT-1999-00031). The research extended earlier work for the European Commission, Directorate General 5, Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, between 1997 and 1998.

The primary aim of the IPROSEC project, launched in 2000, was to inform policy by developing a greater understanding of socio-demographic change in selected European Union member and applicant states, the social and economic challenges such changes present, and the policy responses formulated by national governments and at European level. The research was particularly concerned with changing family structures and relationships. The project team undertook to observe and analyse the policy process, inputs, outcomes and impacts, with a view to assessing how policy learning occurs, and how, in turn, policy development influences socio-demographic change. The project was also designed to document the cross-national comparative research process, in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Cross-National Research Group, which was established in 1985 as an informal network of researchers interested in the theory, methodology, management and practice of cross-national research on topics in the social sciences.

The IPROSEC project brought together researchers from a range of disciplines, from EU member states (France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and candidate countries (Estonia, Hungary and Poland), representing different waves of EU membership and different welfare regimes. The papers in this sixth series track the development of the project and provide an appropriate means of disseminating comments on the operation of each stage of the research, while also reporting interim findings.

*Linda Hantrais*

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*Linda Hantrais, Project Co-ordinator  
European Research Centre, Loughborough University*

# 1. Elite Perceptions of Family Policy Networks

*Louise Appleton*

Socio-demographic change affecting family structures, the prevalence of family and child poverty, and changing employment patterns for men and, especially, women have encouraged governments to seek ways to respond to the new challenges that these trends pose. Consequently, family policy has become a growth area for social policy in many countries over the past few decades. Across Europe, however, responses have not been uniform. An important aim of the IPROSEC project was to analyse the family policy process in eight EU member states (France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK) and three candidate countries (Estonia, Hungary and Poland), by investigating the role of different policy actors and their contribution to the policy process. These countries were chosen to represent different waves of membership, socio-economic, cultural and political environments and stages of economic and welfare development, in an attempt to explain any patterning and clustering in terms of similarities and differences in policy processes. The project team were interested in how policy actors from the political, economic and civil society sectors create policy networks in the field of family policy, how they negotiate their respective roles, and what they contribute to the family policy process across different countries. The contributions to this issue of *Cross-National Research Papers* are the product of those investigations.

Although much has been written about national policy styles, the literature is limited by the fact that it does not explore the mechanisms by which policy decisions are made. Furthermore, the available literature typically discusses particular policy fields that are clearly defined, and the work of a particular government department. However, the policy field with which the IPROSEC project is concerned, that of family policy, is not a neatly definable policy area in most countries. For the purposes of the project, family policy is understood as a broad range of policies that have an impact on families, emanating from different government departments and interest groups. Rather than national policy styles, therefore, it was necessary to explore how the political, social and economic processes with a family impact operate through policy networks. According to David Marsh (1998), policy networks are agglomerations of policy actors from a variety of different sectors working together in a policy field. Networks can be characterized by tight policy communities, in which policy is constructed by public authorities with some input from non-governmental actors, but with little participation from others. Networks may also be loose connections, with policies as the product of a larger group of consultants contributing to different stages of the policy process.

In examining the family policy process in the 11 countries in the study, empirical work was conducted with three categories of policy actors: political, economic and civil society. David Billis and Howard Glennerster (1998) identify three distinct sectors (public, private, civil society), which differ according to the type of principal stakeholders, their formal organizational structure, the core financial resources and the type of workers they employ. The nature of the work that they do and the geographical scale at which it is done can also be added, as summarized in Table 1.1. The table shows that the public sector is driven largely by the median voter and the goal is to appeal to this market to secure

re-election. The structure is composed of a large bureaucracy organized into accountable managerial hierarchies, including those who control the agency, paid staff and users or clients. Funding is generated through taxes. A few volunteers contribute, and the type and scale of work are varied, but predominantly involve policy delivery to a mass market at national level and also some services at local level.

**Table 1.1 Sector characteristics**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Driver</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Core finance</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>Type and scale of work</b>
<b>Public</b>	Median voter and re-election	Bureaucratic	Taxes	Paid (some volunteers)	Policy, mass market, (some local) from a distance
<b>Private</b>	Shareholder and profits	Bureaucratic	Sales	Paid	Goods and services, mass and niche markets
<b>Civil Society</b>	Multiple stakeholders and social capital	Ambiguous	Taxes, charges, donations	Paid and volunteers	Specific policy and/or service, niche market, grass-roots delivery

*Source:* Based on Billis and Glennerster, 1998, p. 85.

The principal characteristics of the private sector include the predominance of profit motivation. The organizational structure is bureaucratic, similar to the public sector, and does not use volunteers. Its service delivery can be mass or niche markets, depending on the best conditions for ensuring profits to fund the organization and its staff.

The civil society sector, by contrast, is driven by a variety of stakeholders, including staff, directors, funders, members, volunteers and past charismatic leaders, who are generally motivated by the cause of social betterment in whatever guise the principal stakeholders see fit.

The political actors interviewed in the IPROSEC project include politicians and civil servants from central and local government (see Annex 1). The economic actors covered employer representatives and trade unions. Civil society actors ranged from service providers, nonprofit organizations, research institutions and policy think tanks. The project refers to these actors as 'elites', in the sense of leaders or experts in the field of family policy. National teams in each of the 11 project countries conducted on average 12 interviews, and each interview lasted upwards of 30 minutes.

The project partners identified a list of themes, and they were used to develop an interview schedule to be applied in all countries. The interview schedule was

designed to examine the process whereby policy decisions are reached. Interviews were structured around the following issues:

- How different policy actors are engaging with issues concerning family change;
- Whether or not governments should and do intervene in response to changes in family structures;
- Whether issues concerning families are prioritized by different policy actors;
- How family policy is co-ordinated;
- Whether the source(s) of external influence emanate from a national or transnational level;
- How the impact of policy is monitored.

Responses to these questions provide an indication of how the relationship between policy actors operates in reaching policy decisions. Data were collected by national teams and written up as a report containing information on the three sectors. The reports were then compared cross nationally to provide the basis for the present collection of working papers.

The contributions to this issue of papers provide a cross-national comparison of the involvement of different policy actors in family policy. Political, economic and civil society actors are first examined separately. Each paper makes a comparison of the sector across the 11 countries, demonstrating the ways in which family policy is formulated and implemented according to the accounts given by different policy actors. The final paper shows how policy networks function in different national contexts.

The paper by Paul Byrne illustrates the roles played by various political actors, and their views on the family policy process. Byrne assesses the similarities and differences between and within nations regarding the contribution of political actors to family policy. While acknowledging that party politics has some impact on how policies develop, he probes more deeply to identify underlying causes for the trends that emerge in the policy-making process. Legitimacy of state intervention in family life and the focus of policies, he contends, help to explain cross-national variations in the roles of political actors across the EU and in Central and Eastern Europe.

Economic actors are the focus of Peter Ackers' paper, in which he assesses the contributions made by employers' representatives and trade unions to family policy in the project countries. Although the centre of economic activity in all cases is paid employment, and family life was considered everywhere by interviewees in this category as separate from business life, major differences are identified in employment attitudes and approaches to family policy across and within countries. Ackers argues that these trends can be explained by welfare policies, the perceived legitimacy of intervention in family life, changing family structures and gender roles, the historical context of the policy environment at the societal level, and employer relations at national and workplace levels. The result is a variety of roles for the economic sector in family policy fields across Europe.

The third empirical paper in the collection considers the role of the civil society sector in the family policy process. Starting from the premise that the sector is distinguishable as a separate sector, but intertwined with political and economic sectors in the policy process, Louise Appleton illustrates the varied roles occupied by the civil society sectors in family policy across the 11

IPROSEC countries. She contends that this variability is closely related to social perceptions of the legitimacy of policy intervention in family life, and the role of other sectors in family policy, either as a competitor or a complement to civil society organizations. Variations seem to be dependent on the extent to which the policy objectives of organizations match those of the ruling party, and on the role of civil society organizations as either lobbyists or specialists in policy implementation and service delivery.

By way of conclusion, the final paper considers the relationship between the three sectors in the area of family policy. While acknowledging the sub-national variations discussed in the empirical contributions, the paper identifies broad national trends, which fall into two categories. The first category consists of a policy network that is integrated, with close co-operation between policy actors. Within this category, however, only one country (France) is characterized by a policy network in which all sectors play roles that are indistinguishable from each other because the co-operation between policy actors is harmonized. Other countries in this category (Sweden, Ireland, Germany and the UK) exhibit policy networks in which different actors contribute to varying degrees to family policy. In some countries, political actors play a leading role, with some input from economic actors and a minor role for civil society. In others, the civil society sector is the most important actor, advising government on family policy issues. The second category consists of countries where the three sectors are perceived as separate entities (Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Spain and Greece), working towards distinct family policy agendas, with minimum co-operation and varying degrees of segregation. The paper concludes with an exploration of the reasons for the variations in the relationships within national family policy networks.

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## 2. Political Actors

*Paul Byrne*

The analysis of public policy from a cross-national comparative perspective has changed over the last decade, as scholars have moved away from the idea of 'national policy styles' and towards a sector-specific approach. Many students of public policy now accept the argument that different policy areas give rise to different sorts of networks, which are to a large extent independent of particular national political systems<sup>1</sup>. Some areas are characterized by tight policy communities; that is to say, policy is constructed by public authorities in conjunction with a few non-governmental actors, and it is rare for any other participants to be invited or allowed to contribute. Other areas see the emergence of much looser, more transitory networks; policy in these areas is the product of much wider consultation, and it is much easier for new participants to gain consultative status (normally because of particular expertise). Scholars may, and do, disagree about the impact of these different types of network, but most agree with the basic proposition that the sectoral context is a more important explanatory factor than the national context. For example, agriculture is seen as a policy area that will tend to have small, tight policy communities driving the policy agenda; technology policy will be heavily influenced by large multi-national companies; cultural policy will be influenced by a wide range of interests and actors which will fluctuate over time. The important point in this context is the basic assumption that different governments working within different political systems will, nevertheless, tend to adopt similar policy strategies. The outcomes may be different, but the nature and extent of participants in the policy process will be much the same.

Family policy in the 11 countries under scrutiny here, however, does not fit comfortably with this assumption. Wide variations are found within the IPROSEC study, both in terms of how family policy is made, who makes it, and what the orientation and object of the policy are. This is primarily because no consensus exists on where the boundaries of this policy area are drawn. For the political actors in some countries, family policy is conceptualized as a national interest issue, focusing on matters like the birthrate in the context of broader demographic changes. For others (the majority), family policy is driven largely by a gender equality agenda, particularly the rapid and widespread entry of mothers into the labour market, and associated work–life reconciliation issues. In some countries, the focus remains on traditional family forms, and particularly the parent–child dimension; in others, family policy incorporates lone parents and same-sex couples; in a minority of cases, care of older people is seen as a 'family' matter rather than an aspect of wider social policy. All the political actors in our study subscribe to a positive view of 'the family'; in no case do they argue that they would wish to see the break-up of the family as a basic societal unit. Where they differ, however, is in what is meant by 'the family', and what public authorities can and should do about the family.

Party politics obviously has some impact. As will be shown, discernible differences can be identified between left and right that permeate across the countries under study. Our contention is, however, that more important factors are at work, and that it is necessary to move beyond the stances of particular parties, and left/right configurations, and look at underlying causes. The

argument presented here is that the differences in approach and substance that are clearly evident across the project countries can be explained by two key factors, namely legitimacy and focus.

Legitimacy is an important factor, because fundamental differences were revealed by the empirical work in the role public authorities should play in relation to family issues. In some societies, the influence of the feminist argument that 'the private is political' is clear; almost all areas of family life are seen as legitimate concerns for the state. In others, the traditional paternalistic family form is more widely accepted, and governments are correspondingly more reluctant to intervene unless it is to reinforce this traditional view. Overlaying this, in some cases, are fundamental changes in political culture. Approximately half of the countries in this study have undergone major political transitions over the past 20 years, from authoritarian regimes of the left and right to liberal democracy. In these countries, the role of the state, to what extent it should intervene and where remain contentious issues, as citizens resist what is seen as a return to an overly directive state. External influences are also an important factor in this context, especially the European Union, seen as a relevant and legitimate actor by some, but not by others.

Focus is a key factor because different countries have different conceptualizations about what is actually meant by the term 'family'. For policy makers in some countries, family policy is concentrated almost exclusively upon the nuclear family, and especially mothers and children. For others, family policy encompasses the extended family and non-traditional family forms. For some, the family is seen as a policy area that should be explicitly and directly addressed. For others, it is essentially an adjunct to other policy areas like employment and education, a factor that has to be taken into account, but only in the context of other, higher priority objectives.

In short, family policy is in a state of flux across the countries in the study. It is, therefore, impossible to make valid generalizations about this policy sector in the way that one can about many other policy areas. Policy on agriculture, health, education, employment, for example, does to a large extent fit the sector-specific model of policy formulation and implementation; family policy to date remains largely nation-specific. As economic harmonization within the European context continues, signs can be discerned that the European Union is introducing a common agenda in some areas of family policy. All the countries under study here have varying degrees of concern about the ability of the state to continue widespread welfare provision for their citizens, and most are now looking to the family to assume part of the burden. In some instances, this represents continuity, while in others it represents a break with the past. Beyond that, however, national political cultures, systems and histories remain vital factors in comprehending the contemporary state of family policy, as can be demonstrated by examining the two key explanatory variables in more detail.

### **Legitimacy of family policy**

Some countries have gone so far as to codify their responsibility for family matters. The intervention of the state in family life in France, Germany, Greece and Spain is laid down by the respective constitutions (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996; Appleton and Hantrais, 2000). In France the preamble of the Constitution of 1946 (reiterated in the Constitution of 1958) underlines the role of the state in

guaranteeing gender equality and providing the necessary conditions for the development of the individual and the family. Although significant differences are found between left and right as to what should be done, with the right, particularly the extreme right, emphasizing the importance of traditional family forms and the birthrate, and the left focusing on the gender equality dimension, the desirability and necessity of state intervention are hardly disputed across party lines. Some similarities exist in this respect with Germany. Article 6 of the Basic Law lays upon the state a duty to support the institutions of the traditional family and marriage, which is reflected in the delineation of a Ministry for Families, Older People, Women and Young people. For those on the right, this encapsulates the appropriate role for the state. Those on the left, like their counterparts in France, are more concerned with all family forms and gender equality. The situation is complicated by Germany's federal system, in that the principle of subsidiarity produces a strict division of competences between the national level (legal and financial framework), regions (complementary programmes) and the municipal level (responsible for much of the actual policy implementation), as for example for childcare (Scheiwe, 2000). Nevertheless, a clear consensus exists across the ideological divide that the family is firmly within the public domain. All the political actors interviewed for this study confirmed that they conceptualized family policy as a public duty, not a personal matter.

Although significant differences are found in policy direction and strategy, the context in Spain is analogous to Germany. Article 39 of the Constitution again lays on the state the obligation to protect the family in general, and children independently of filiation. Competences are divided between the national level, and the regions, in the form of Autonomous Communities. In practice, considerable regional variations exist. For example, Catalonia, Valencia, and the Basque Country have developed their own family policies, whereas other Communities have not. Nevertheless, as with Germany, the general consensus among policy actors from both left and right is that government can and should intervene, and all the political actors interviewed distanced themselves from the view that family matters should be conceptualized as private or an individual's responsibility, subject to the proviso that state intervention did not mean a return to the Franco regime, where family policy was used to reinforce paternalism in Spanish society. Finally, Greece also codifies protection of the family in its Constitution; unlike Germany or parts of Spain. However, no institutionalized responsibility exists for family policy, and policy actors report a corresponding lack of co-ordination at both national and local level. Despite such implementation gaps, all policy makers interviewed shared the view of their French, German and Spanish counterparts that the state should develop and operationalize family policy.

Elsewhere, the legitimacy of state intervention is often less clearly defined. In some cases, agreement exists on the desirability of state intervention, but the level of government that is best suited to the job is contested. In others, policy actors are clear on whether family policy is a national, regional or local responsibility, but not on what should be done. Italy is a good example of the former, largely the result of a diverse political culture (particularly between north and south, urban and rural). As with Germany, the preference is for action at the regional or local level. Interviews with policy actors revealed a widespread feeling that the regions, provinces and municipalities are better able to respond

to the needs of families and, therefore, have more legitimacy to intervene, which has led to national legislation that establishes the role of some regions and municipalities in implementing aspects of family policy. One example is Law 53 on the obligations of regions and municipalities to establish plans to regulate time organization: 'Piani Regolatori dei Tempi'. Another example is Lombardia, which, as a region with a high proportion of older people (27%), has experimented with a system of allowances for families caring for older relatives.

The UK, on the other hand, is a good example of the lack of agreement over the desirability of state intervention. Despite recent constitutional changes giving more power to Scotland and Wales, such debates over the most appropriate level of government are largely absent in the case of the UK. The uncertainty is more a case of a system coming to terms with intervention into what had previously been seen as a private area. As British governments over the past 20 years have moved further away from the continental European model of welfare provision, and towards an American model of private sector provision, so political actors have come to realize the importance of facilitating stable family life, if only to reduce the burden on the state of both welfare provision and the social and economic costs of family breakdown. Ireland also falls into the second camp. As a relatively small country, power rests effectively with the national rather than regional or local government. However, the force and direction of such national policy is, as in the UK, undergoing significant change. Whilst the UK is coming to terms with the idea of intervention as a means to reduce the burden of taxation, Irish governments are moving away from a preoccupation with traditional family forms, and (not least because of EU influence) towards an agenda that is more concerned with issues of gender inequality. As might be expected, such shifts in policy orientation have caused political disagreements, with opposition coming from the left in the UK, who are suspicious of any move away from a universalistic welfare state, and from the right in Ireland, who remain strongly attached to the paradigm of the traditional family. In both countries, a significant division still exists over the legitimacy of state intervention.

The ex-Communist countries in the study share a degree of hostility towards the idea of state intervention in family policy, because it is equated with the old regimes. In the initial period after the break-up of the Soviet Union, general agreement emerged that one aspect of the transition to liberal democracy was that family policy was a matter for private concern rather than for public intervention. Over the past five years, however, some differentiation has taken place. Among the three countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the project, the legitimacy of state intervention is lowest in Estonia, despite a latent consensus among political actors concerning the family model that should be supported. The lack of legitimacy stems from the view that issues relating to private life are not a matter of state concern. In practice, however, national policy is careful not to promote alternatives to legal marriage. In Hungary, by contrast, most policy actors advance a more positive view of the legitimacy of state intervention, although the reality of the situation remains unclear. On the one hand, it has been acknowledged that the government have a moral responsibility to promote the stability and security of families by means of financial support, thus creating the necessary conditions for freedom of choice of family forms. On the other hand, this has not been confirmed by the 'National Family Policy Plan 2000', which suggested that the government should not

interfere in family life. The situation in Poland is also far from clear, although in this case disagreement maps more clearly onto the party political system. Those on the right of the spectrum, in conjunction with the Catholic Church, argue that the family should remain an autonomous unit. The role of the state is to support and facilitate the development of the traditional family. Those who fall outside the remit of the traditional nuclear family may deserve help and support but, as one policy actor put it, *'the centre of attention will always be the family, based on durable marriage, and aimed at bringing up children'*. Those on the left would prefer to see more attention given to less conventional family forms, and to issues of gender equality rather than fertility within traditional families. Having said this, in Poland, as in Estonia, general agreement is found that much of the official support for state intervention is little more than posturing, as it is rarely accompanied by adequate resourcing. Across the Central and East European countries in our study, the priority is still economic development.

Sweden is something of a unique case in this context. More than any other country in the study, Sweden has a long-established tradition of using state intervention to engineer gender equality stretching back some 50 years (Bergqvist and Jungar, 2000). For this reason, family policy has not been addressed directly to date, but rather indirectly, through public policy on taxation, childcare and so on. As is the case with the UK, however, important changes have taken place over the past decade, as both countries have developed a serious degree of concern over the financing of welfare. Although some of the cut-backs in Swedish welfare provision imposed in the 1990s have since been reversed, others, such as charges for childcare, have been retained. Swedish governments over the last 40 years have also had something of a preoccupation with the falling birthrate, generally agreed to be a function of the high level of female integration into the workforce. As one policy actor put it, *'women are needed in the labour market at the same time as they are expected to have more children.'* Despite this, none of the parties advances the idea of direct governmental intervention, whether in terms of favouring one family form over another, or in terms of a pro-natalist policy.

Overlaying national norms and perceptions is the EU dimension. Interesting differences can be found in the perceptions of political actors as to the role and influence of the EU. Among member states, interviewees in France, Germany and Greece were convinced of both the influence and the beneficial character of EU directives in shaping national policies. French and Irish political actors drew attention to equality policy in particular, arguing that this had been very influential in taking forward the individualization of social rights. Some political actors made the point that their policies were actually in advance of those advocated by the EU: the Swedish model of parental leave, for example, or childcare provision in Hungary. Others (Spain and Italy) were happy to acknowledge EU influence, and even leadership, in the area of work-life balance, but otherwise did not see the EU as having any real competence in other areas of family life. The candidate countries are in a very different position, in that EU policy has to be taken into account in the process of adjustment of national law to EU requirements. In Estonia, a broad consensus exists on the impact of EU legislation on the issue of reconciliation of family and work, even if the interpretation of this legislation is still narrow. In Poland and Hungary, views differ between left and right as to the role that the EU should play in family policy. Whereas the right stress sovereignty and thus the ability to

generate nation-specific models of family policy, the left welcome EU influence on issues relating to equal opportunities. Interestingly, many political actors cited other countries rather than the EU as relevant exemplars. Spanish actors cited French policies and practice, Italians cited France and Germany, Ireland tends to follow UK practice, the UK looks to the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

### **Focus of family policy**

Most policy actors across the study believe it is legitimate for the state to intervene in at least some aspects of family life. What this consensus masks, however, is that different actors have very different conceptions of just what is meant by 'family life', and whether or not intervention should be overt and direct, or more indirect.

France stands out among our sample as the only instance of a wholly explicit approach to family policy. Most French governments over the past 50 years have appointed a minister with responsibility for the family, but just as important has been the establishment of specialized institutions that focus on the family: the Union nationale des associations familiales (UNAF), Caisse nationale des allocations familiales (CNAF), Institut national d'études démographiques, Haut conseil de la population et de la famille. For many years, population decline was seen as a prime concern, and French policy was underpinned by a pro-natalist, pro-traditional family stance. A clear ideological division exists between the right, advancing the idea of larger, traditional families, and the left, pursuing a more individualistic agenda, influenced by feminism. Over the past decade, however, the emphasis has moved away from demographic decline, and towards families experiencing economic hardship, not least because of the social problems such economic inequalities produce. The Jospin government, for example, prioritized targeting of benefits towards families most in need. As is largely the norm throughout this study, the right has opposed this approach, favouring universalistic benefits rather than targeting. For the right, targeting is seen as dragging family policy into the realm of social policy, which they argue is an undesirable dilution of state encouragement of traditional family forms. Although the rights of people living in alternative family forms have been recognized in law, family form remains an issue of contention between left and right. Clear evidence of the far right's preference for traditional family forms can be seen in Le Pen's rhetoric in the first round of the presidential elections in 2002.

In most of the other countries under study, the approach to family policy is better categorized as indirect and, more often than not, piecemeal rather than holistic. The UK is a good example of this, despite some high-profile changes in recent years. The family in British politics has always been conceptualized in narrow terms, focusing on parents and children. Care of older people is seen as a component of social security and health provision and, at least until recently, gender equality was conceived almost entirely in terms of employment. As elsewhere, a long-standing ideological divide exists, with the right advocating traditional family forms, and the left emphasizing individual rights and choice. The past decade, however, has seen significant change, both in terms of ideology and public administration. Ideologically, the Labour party, under the leadership of Tony Blair, has positioned itself clearly in the middle of the political

spectrum. In terms of family policy, this has led to an interesting mix of old Labour and new Labour ideas. The traditional left approach can still be seen in Labour's strong focus on the issue of child poverty: Labour have introduced a wide range of new benefits and tax credits designed to address the problem, and concentrated them into the geographical areas with most need. The same approach is apparent in the recognition of alternative family forms. Labour have introduced the civil registration of relationships for cohabiting or same-sex couples. At the same time, the new Labour approach can be seen in an unprecedented stress upon the benefits of the traditional family, albeit with two working parents. Among all the countries in the study, the UK (along with Germany) has most clearly articulated its concerns about the future financing of welfare. Its response has been to prioritize employment, whilst exhorting its electorate to face up to the fact that they will no longer be able to rely on the state for anything other than the most basic support in the future. Hence, for example, the introduction of personal stakeholder pensions, to supplement the state pension in future. One consequence of this move to self-reliance has been improved childcare facilities and new legislation on parental leave and better maternity/paternity provisions. Labour want women to work, not just because of their long-standing ideological predisposition towards feminist ideas, but also because this maximizes household income. The family is important to Labour in other ways as well. One of the notable features of the new thinking is a high regard for the traditional family form. Marriage is now clearly advanced as the government's preferred environment for raising children, not on moral or religious grounds, but because families are seen as 'important building blocks in strong communities'. In other words, Labour stress what they see as the responsibilities as well as the rights of parents. In a society in which the government claim that 40% of street crime, 35% of car thefts, 25% of burglaries and 20% of criminal damage are caused by 10–16 year olds, the government are making very explicit their expectation that families will play their part in ensuring socially acceptable behaviour. In April 2002, for example, Blair proposed that the government should withhold part of benefit payments to parents of persistent truants. As might be expected in an adversarial system like Britain's, those on the right have been thrown into some confusion by Labour's move into their territory of the traditional family. The contemporary Conservative party contains both fierce advocates of traditional family forms, and those who argue for a new tolerance for alternative forms.

In organizational terms, Labour have attempted to introduce some co-ordination into family policy. A new Family Policy Unit has been created within the Home Office, and a new Cabinet Committee of senior ministers meets on a regular basis to try to ensure that Labour are pursuing what they call a 'joined-up' approach to family policy. Having said that, few commentators are convinced. It is still accepted by most of the political actors interviewed that most policy work is carried out in individual departments, with little effective co-ordination or overall strategic direction. For example, much of the government efforts towards young people still come from the Department for Education; issues relating to work–life balance fall within the realm of the Department for Trade and Industry, care of older people is a matter for the Departments of Social Security and Pensions, and so on.

Although working within a qualitatively different political system and culture, many similarities can be found between the UK and Ireland. To date,

the role of government has been relatively limited, part of the reason being that Ireland still has a relatively young society, so elder care has yet to emerge as serious issue. Although the Irish constitution gives the state the role of protecting families, the opinion of political actors interviewed is that in reality families themselves have primary responsibility for their members, and the state's role is limited to intervention only when families cannot meet that responsibility. As one might expect in a society in which the Catholic Church has always played a strong role, the traditional family is still seen as cornerstone of Irish society, and it is worth noting that Ireland was the last country in the EU to legalize divorce. A good example of the Irish approach can be seen in the attempt to place income taxation upon an individual rather than head-of-household basis, which was resisted and ultimately defeated, largely on the grounds that such a change would threaten the established relationships within traditional families. Some issues have simply been too contentious for any government to take a clear lead. Abortion is an obvious example, with no less than four referenda to date failing to produce any clear resolution. Irish governments have been happier to work in areas where they can seek to engineer consensus. As in the UK, this has led to a concentration upon the economic sphere, and especially employment. Employers and trade unions are seen as having a key role in negotiating new family-friendly practices. Also like the UK, most of those interviewed acknowledged that family policy could be more coherent. Although the country has a Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, other departments like Justice, Trade and Employment, Finance and Education are all identified as key players, but with little co-ordination between them.

Italy is another society in which the influence of the Catholic Church is clear, and some parallels can be drawn with Ireland, but only in part of the country. As in many other policy areas, family policy shows Italy to be at the interface of northern and southern European traditions; and, in the context of national legislation that delegates responsibility for family matters to the regions, provinces and municipalities, this split can be observed in practice. In northern regions, much attention has been given to issues of work–life balance; in the south, heavy reliance is still found on the traditional extended family, and the family continues to be conceptualized as a virtually exclusive female domain. Throughout Italy, family policy does not have a long history of legitimacy as a policy domain; family policy is not easily identifiable and does not have a high profile in party manifestoes. Only the centre-right parties make explicit reference to families, in the sense of advocating traditional family forms. The Lega Nord are a good example, arguing that the family is the central core of society. As with Le Pen in France, this line of argument has wider connotations. The Lega Nord advance the traditional family model as a sign of continuity with the past, and contrast it with the new models of family that they argue are associated with immigrants. Such notions have yet to be reflected in public policy, but where policy has been initiated, it is generally considered to have had little real impact. General agreement was found among interviewees that much more effort was needed to join up different policy areas that have a bearing on the family. Economic and social issues still tend to be treated separately, with economic issues taking the priority. This is seen as particularly necessary, given the pressures felt in the area of work–life balance. Domestic tasks have become more complex, as children are staying at home longer (30 is typical), the

number of dependent older people is increasing, and women who work are remaining in employment longer. Traditionally, female employment has been relatively low in Italy. However, the trend for younger women to be better educated and qualified than their male counterparts, and intent upon pursuing careers, is set to compound the problem.

The Church is an important actor in Poland as well. Almost all the political actors interviewed acknowledged the very real influence exercised by the Catholic Church, particularly on the right of the political spectrum, but also for family policy as a whole, with the Church advancing a traditional family model as the paradigm. At the time of the interviews, the right enjoyed a majority in the coalition government. One of their initiatives was the creation of Family Committees in the Polish Parliament. Critics from the left, however, claimed that the influence of the committees was negligible, since very limited resources were available to support family-friendly initiatives. *'It does nothing but send desiderata to the government, and remind it of some issues'*, as one actor from the left put it. Similar criticisms have been levelled at the Department of Family Issues (located within the Office of the Prime Minister). The programme of the Pro-Family Policy of the State (1999) has likewise been criticized as little more than posturing, because it lacked adequate resourcing. Having said that, other initiatives included extended maternity leave, a family bonus and higher childcare subsidy for the third and any subsequent children, all of which might be construed as pro-natalist and traditional family form policies. On the other hand, government also introduced separation as an alternative to divorce. Those on the right would like to see financial help available for mothers who choose to stay at home undertaking childcare, rather than working. The left sees this as just another example of paternalistic attitudes, claiming that: *'It's not possible to go into a family and tell it to do something or order it not to do something. This is an absurd approach pursued in the Communist period.'*

Paternalism is very much a live issue in Estonia, where few women are involved in policy making, and the composition of the political elite reflects a generally traditionalist view of gender roles. At the time of the interviews, no clear definition of discrimination existed, regarding equal opportunities, and party programmes had not set clear goals in this area. However, an equal opportunities act was in the process of formulation. Left and right do not differ significantly on family policy, and both share the view that some issues remain in the private sphere and are not a matter for the state. For example, no official data are collected on domestic violence, since the issue is simply not on the government's agenda. The traditional family has become much more important in the post-Soviet era, although a significant decline has occurred in the birthrate, and also in what were previously very high female employment rates as families have been forced to become self-reliant. As in the case of the left in Poland, the government are reluctant to be seen as too directive, but as one political actor put it, *'choices are up to the individual, but national policy should be sufficiently clever not to promote alternatives to marriage'*. Work-life balance has recently emerged onto the policy agenda, but women generally lack the organized political influence to push this very far, and employers have largely been resistant to date. One area that does mark Estonia out, however, is the salience of care of older people in family policy. Pensioners are a relatively well organized lobby, and consequently population ageing is a major focus.

Hungary has also had to adapt in the post-Communist era, with many women losing employment and reverting to caring for children and elderly relatives. Attempts have been made to place care of older people more firmly in the family rather than state care. Grandparents can claim maternity leave instead of a parent, for example, and family members who care for elderly relatives qualify for a benefit analogous to childcare allowance. Political actors on the right, however, see this as dysfunctional, claiming that:

*If the state takes over family roles, by paying for what should be an obligation for the family, it is weakening solidarity and family bonding. The break-up of natural community formations cannot be in the interest of society.*

This is a reflection of what is a generally family-centric support system. The stated policy of the government is that no preferences are given for one family form rather than another. For example, childcare allowances for young children are available to either parent. In practice, however, significant benefits like housing support and tax allowances for parents are dependent upon claimants providing official evidence of the stability of the relationship: in effect, marriage. This is despite the fact that some 25% of children are born into unmarried cohabiting relationships. In a similar vein, cohabiting couples do not qualify for the tax concessions available to married couples; same-sex relationships are not acknowledged in a culture that is intolerant of homosexuality. Interestingly, Hungary appears at first sight to offer a clear example of a direct and immediate change in behaviour as a result of family policy. In the Bokros package of strict monetarist economic measures introduced in 1995, childcare allowances were significantly reduced; almost immediately, the birthrate fell and the abortion rate rose. The subsequent overhaul of family support from 1999 onwards, which included more support for those on maternity leave, and more funding to encourage employers to adopt family-friendly working practices, saw the birthrate rising again. From 2001 onwards, however, both the birthrate and number of marriages have fallen to an all-time low. A clear causal link between policy and behaviour cannot, therefore, be identified in this case.

Gender and intergenerational relationships have been slow to change in Greece; alternative family forms have taken considerably longer to develop than in most other European countries. Families have retained the main responsibility for their members, and are legally bound to support dependents; state intervention is confined to families in need, and pitched at such a low level that it continues to be seen as a last resort. No institutionalized central responsibility for family policy exists. Political actors interviewed were almost universally critical of what they saw as a lack of co-operation and co-ordination between the relevant ministries and local government bodies. Similarities can be found with Spain, where successive governments have been caught between the belief that they ought to be doing something about the birthrate and the belief that it is no longer appropriate to revert to traditional pro-natalism, although some actors see the increase in tax allowances for dependent children as effectively representing a return to a promotion of a higher birthrate.

The government in Spain are trying to adapt to changes in family forms, for example the personal tax allowance for a lone parent is almost as much as for a couple, and to tackle some specific issues through a series of plans on childcare, gerontology and equality. Another important concern is to reconcile employment with family life, which has led to new legislation on unpaid leave. Despite this, a significant measure of agreement was found among political

actors that the traditional family with the male as the principal provider remains the norm. This perception has been largely untouched by government policy, even though virtually all actors acknowledge the growing social challenges of a shortage of carers, an ageing population and a rise in divorce. The latter is particularly important in a system where alimony is paid only for children, and clear problems arise in enforcing even that. Care of older people has not been prioritized as a public problem to date, since, as in Greece, the extended family is assumed to shoulder this duty, but the wives, daughters and daughters-in-law are no longer as available as they were.

Germany is in a similar position to the UK. Family policy issues are now significantly higher up the policy agenda than they were, but this is not so much the result of an increased interest in the family *per se*; rather, it is a reflection of impending demographic shifts in the population and the associated changes in the balance between contributors to and beneficiaries of the social security system. No significant areas of disagreement are identified between the main parties on family policy, although clear differences are found in emphasis. The left argue in favour of targeting benefits, while recognizing all family forms, and they used their period in power to introduce a law that had long been under discussion legalizing same-sex marriages (*Lebenspartnerschaftsgesetzes*). The right prefer universal benefits, and the traditional family model. As in the UK, child poverty is identified as a clear priority. A high proportion of single parents are dependent on state benefits, and most actors interviewed acknowledged that a clear case could be made for more childcare provision in this context. Unusually among the countries in the study, the judiciary has played an important role in recent years: political actors across the spectrum acknowledged the impetus for greater commitment in the area of family policy resulting from Federal Constitutional Court judgements on matters like child benefit.

Sweden is something of an exception in this context. As already noted, in the Swedish model of social democracy, the emphasis is on the individual, so benefits are paid irrespective of living arrangements. Consequently, family policy is more a case of policy directed towards individuals in their roles as mothers, fathers and children, than any particular family form; alternative family forms are widely accepted. Work–life balance is seen as a very important issue. Sweden is the only country in this study to give serious consideration to male life–work balance, with relatively generous provision for paternity leave. A combination of factors, including a declining birthrate and women’s established position in the workforce, has led the government to encourage men to play as full a part in childcare as possible. Some political divisions are obvious in this respect. The left prefer to see policy facilitated through the existing scheme of parental insurance, statutory paternity and maternity leave, and the public provision of childcare. The right argue for more flexibility, in the form of parents being left to decide on which partner takes parental leave, and when, more private sector provision should be made for childcare and whether the financing of childcare should be through benefits and, particularly, tax credits. As in the case of the UK, the debate has occurred in a context of welfare spending cutbacks. Unlike the UK, Sweden has yet to adopt private sector provision with wholehearted enthusiasm.

### **Ideologies and policy styles**

As we have seen, motivations differ across our sample. For policy makers in some countries, political factors are pre-eminent, such as advocating certain family forms over others or addressing declining birthrates as an alternative to immigration. In other countries, economic factors take priority, such as maximizing the available workforce or moving the burden of financial support for the economically inactive away from the state and towards families and individuals. Within each country, the role of civil society organizations (particularly the Church) varies, and can result in parameters being set on acceptable state action. Diversity is the norm. Certain common strands can, however, be identified across most of the countries under study. Two such strands are important: competing ideologies and different national policy styles.

With regard to ideology, enough common ground exists across the 11 countries in terms of left and rightwing stances to identify a discernible difference that applies to most cases. Virtually all parties of the right advance the traditional family model as an exemplar, identifying it as essential for a stable society, particularly those in countries where the Catholic Church is an entrenched element in civil society. Similarly, virtually all parties of the right oppose targeting of benefits, preferring universalistic approaches. While reluctant to disagree in principle with the desirability of achieving a better work–life balance, few on the right would prioritize this, especially where it is seen as prejudicial to business competitiveness. Recognition of alternative family forms like same-sex couples is more complex, as it is heavily influenced by wider national attitudes towards sexual orientation. However, it is worth noting that, in societies where homosexuality is accepted, even parties of the right are now prepared to grant some degree of recognition to same-sex couples. In contrast, virtually all parties of the left prioritize issues of work–life balance, gender equality and, in some cases, even gender roles within the family. By contrast, the left generally prefer targeting of benefits, normally towards those seen as being most at risk or disadvantaged: single parents and especially children living in poverty. Leftwing parties are much more reluctant to offer the traditional family model as an exemplar; a growing trend, however, is for parties of the left to see the traditional family as a very useful way of transferring some of the existing welfare burden of the state back to individuals.

In terms of national policy styles, one can discern many differences and a few similarities. One striking similarity across our whole sample is the perception political actors have of the inadequacy of co-ordination. Only in France is there a systematic effort made both to co-ordinate family policy and to evaluate its impact. The UK and Germany are making some effort to improve their co-ordination (with little sign of success to date), but political actors in other countries, while being aware of the problem, are pessimistic about the chances of much real improvement in the near future. Nor is this a problem only in federal systems, such as Germany, or in those systems where much policy work is devolved to regional and/or local authorities, such as Italy and Hungary. Even unitary systems like the UK, where central government are in a dominant position, experience difficulty in ensuring joined-up policy thinking. Another similarity is the perceived influence of the EU, albeit only in the area of work–life balance and gender equality, although it is interesting to note the frequency with which political actors also cited other individual countries as sources for policy learning. Beyond these factors, however, national (and, in some cases,

regional) factors come into play. Family policy is subject to exogenous forces deriving from national political cultures. Such forces differ widely across our study, whether it be the Church in societies like Italy and Poland advocating traditional family forms, or a longstanding ideological commitment to equality in a society like Sweden, emphasizing individual rights and gender equality, or a more pragmatic concern over the state's ability to raise sufficient taxation to finance a welfare system as in Germany and the UK. These forces set parameters for what can be done, and even what ought to be done. In political terms, family policy is not the driver; it is still driven by other motivations, whether they be primarily economic or nationalistic. What our study does show, however, is that a wide consensus exists among political actors that family policy can be an important instrument for achieving other policy objectives, be they in the realm of socially responsible behaviour or reducing the burden on state finances. Policy targeting families is set to become an increasingly important item on the policy agenda of all the countries under scrutiny here, as political actors struggle to improve social cohesion and inclusion in societies where governments and tax payers alike are increasingly reluctant to finance large welfare systems.

### Endnote

1. A good example of the contemporary network approach can be found in Marsh, (1998). A variant on this approach is provided by the concept of advocacy coalitions by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993). The network approach is now much more widely adopted by scholars than the national policy styles concept, a good example of which is Richardson (1982).

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### 3. Economic Policy Actors

*Peter Ackers*

Patterns of paid employment, on the one hand, and of family roles and responsibilities, on the other, are structurally connected, whether this is explicitly acknowledged by public policy and academic disciplines or not. In the case of economic and employment analysis it rarely is. Hence it still needs pointing out that the familiar norm of full-time, male, paid employment in advanced industrial societies has only been possible, historically and socially, because of women's roles in the family and *vice-versa*. Business and management disciplines, like Employment Relations and Organizational Behaviour, have been slow to recognize this 'hidden-from-view' social environment of the business organization (Ackers, 2002). Thus, Fiona Wilson (1999) notes the neglect of 'reproductive' and 'maintenance' labour in the study of work, arguing:

Women do the lion's share of domestic, household work even when husbands are retired or unemployed. Husband's household labour is 'remarkably unresponsive' to decreases in their overall working hours, to increases in their wives' working hours, and to the fact that their wife is a high earner. ... Little mention is made of this in books on work or organizational behaviour. The context in which work is defined as men's or women's work must be considered. The all-pervasive influence of culture and social structure on organizational behaviour needs to be explored. (Wilson, 1999, p. 1)

This paper tries to bridge the gap between Social Policy and Employment Relations, by analysing economic actors' perceptions of their role in family policies.

Economic and employment policy also adds another dimension to the discussion of family policy and draws in another category of policy actors. All 11 countries in this study are industrialized economies in which the rationalization of economic life has travelled some distance. The centre of formal economic activity in all these countries is paid employment, though the extent to which this is supplemented by small business activity or subsistence farming varies considerably. The elite interviews, about 50 in total, focused on employers' leaders and trade unions, so they tended to accentuate the emphasis on the most modern section of the economy: the relatively large-scale, bureaucratic business. In nearly all cases, the interviewees assumed that family life was something separate and distanced from business life. Companies employ individuals and pursue rational economic goals; they are not primarily community organizations. This said, major differences were found in employment policy attitudes and approaches, which interacted with contrasting family structures, gender roles and state welfare policies (Drew *et al.*, 1998).

#### **Defining family-friendly policies**

As Lisa Harker (1998, p.48) notes: 'Little consensus about the definition of "family-friendly" currently exists and establishing a working definition is difficult, particularly when a European perspective is taken'. For this reason, the terms, 'family-friendly' and 'work-life balance', are used here in a loose, common-sense way to describe any policies by employers, trade unions, works councils,

or the state that facilitate the 'reconciliation' (the EU's preferred term) of paid employment and life (European Commission, 2002, p. 11). Our focus on policy actors only gave a limited insight into the efficacy of many schemes at the ground level (something explored in the second stage of the research in interviews with families). This was particularly true of those schemes established by employers for their own, short-term labour market and operational benefits.

The terms 'family-friendly' and 'work-life balance' can be used in a second, narrower sense, however. In the UK, for instance, 'family-friendly' usually describes policies offered by employers in consultation or negotiation with employees or their representatives, usually at the firm or establishment level. Their voluntarist character contrasts with universal, statutory, rights-based state provision in countries such as France and Sweden. They may be an alternative, or addition, to state provision. Some employers like to describe almost any flexible, part-time or temporary working as 'family-friendly'. For this reason, such schemes are hard to measure quantitatively by survey methods.

To take one national example, the UK's 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) coupled flexible and family-friendly working arrangements, including flexitime, job sharing, parental leave, working at or from home and workplace nursery/childcare subsidy, thus excluding more ambiguous and much more common patterns of female part-time and temporary working (Cully *et al.*, 1998, pp. 20–1). Harker (1996, p. 48) provides a still more demanding definition of family-friendly, including: policies that (1) 'enable people to fulfil family as well as work demands'; based on (2) 'the promotion of gender equality and sharing of family responsibilities between men and women'; that are also (3) 'non-discriminatory, employee-friendly and accompanied by acceptable working conditions'; and genuinely 'balance the needs of the employees and the employer'. Lewis and Lewis (1998, pp. 4–6) develop the last point by stressing not just formal policies, but also an 'informal culture' that supports families of all shapes and sizes. As they point out, it is important to use the term with a critical eye to illustrate its inherent ambiguity and variable meaning across different European countries and workplaces. Some employers are happy to conflate family-friendly policies with flexible labour market policies, which, in the balance, may not be advantageous to working families.

Likewise, in the UK context, the broader term, work-life balance carries the same connotation of voluntary, company-level provision. In this case, all employees, including those without dependants, may benefit from opportunities for leisure, personal development or voluntary work, as opposed to excessive working hours and stress. This rationale is attractive to companies who fear a life-style choice backlash against privileges for parents and prefer to emphasize the management of diversity, whereby different groups of employees will interpret this in their own way, as nursery provision or sabbaticals for personal development. In this package, work-life balance is a policy for nurturing the human resource, which is likely to be more attractive for employers with scarce knowledge workers.

### **The salience of family issues in employment policies**

All countries' employment policies are at some point on a continuum that ran between two theoretical poles. At one theoretical extreme, family policy and employment policy are effectively merged because gender roles at home and work are symmetrical and both partners combine paid work and childcare/housework. As a result, work–life balance and family-friendly policies becomes a central focus. At the other theoretical pole, gender roles are so polarized, with men working for pay and women staying at home, that the question of work–family reconciliation hardly figures (Drew *et al.*, 1998; Drew and Emereck, 1998). Even where women are in paid employment, something close to this view may persist. One of the Polish employers expressed such conservative assumptions in the interviews:

*A woman is less courageous, more rarely than a man risks opening a business. ... Even today a woman is still bound to her home and gives priority to her home, home duties, children's upbringing. ... A man and a woman have been different and will always be different, which results in the fact that certain professions are typically predestined for men while others are for women.*

Overall, though, no country in this study was at either extreme, and considerable diversity was found within each country. For instance, large numbers of women work in all countries, even those where gender roles are most polarized. Moreover, a generalized impetus exists for work–life balance policies arising from women's growing presence in the labour force, demands for genuine (rather than formal) equal opportunities and labour shortages. However, three main patterns emerge: where employment and family policies are already intertwined and have strong legitimacy; where a clear policy agenda is emerging on work–life balance, especially for women; and where paid employment policy and family policy are still conceived largely as separate fields of policy activity.

#### INTEGRATED FAMILY AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Some countries already have an established, closely integrated family and employment policy, most notably France and Sweden (Fagnani, 1998; Hirdman, 1998). A broad consensus was found among French economic actors in favour of government intervention in family matters, irrespective of party politics. The everyday lives of families and their wellbeing are legitimate topics for political and public discussion and intervention. In France, family policy is financed by social insurance contributions from employers and wage earners, through the Caisse nationale des allocations familiales (CNAF, National Family Allowance Fund). Economic actors are, thereby, directly involved in the organization of support for families and are treated as partners in family policy. They are implicated in policy decisions due to their participation in management committees of the family allowance funds, together with civil society actors. While state provision (public nurseries and tax allowances for childcare) underpins the work–life balance of working women, the tacit assumption remains that men will make a minor contribution to childcare and housework.

Equality policy was also institutionalized under the Socialist government in power until 2002 through the establishment of a junior ministry for Women's Rights and Equality, as a forum for partnership. Representatives of trade unions, employers, the ministry and civil service come together to discuss relevant issues. A meeting in 2001, for example, looked at the impact of public

policy on the household distribution of labour. Studies were commissioned of the impact of family responsibilities on women's paid work, women and trade unions and their position on *comités d'entreprise*. The latter are unique, works council-type institutions that carry employment/family regulation down to workplace level. Although business enterprises do still exercise initiative through autonomous human resources policies, whether paternalist or negotiated with unions, governments tend to shape innovative policies in this area.

In Sweden, the architecture of the welfare state is more individualist, with more emphasis on gender equality in the home, such that 'family' policy centres on work-family reconciliation for women and (more hypothetically) men. Differences between economic actors are linked to political policy differences, though these exist within a broad welfarist consensus. The traditional division is between the socialist and non-socialist block in Swedish politics. The political right and the Swedish Employers' Federation (SAF) would prefer greater freedom of choice for parents and alternative ways of organizing childcare and support for families with children; while the political left and most trade unions support the public provision of childcare and the existing form of parental insurance. The non-socialist parties formulated a common platform in the spring of 2000 on family policy issues. Instead of the introduction of a maximum rate for childcare, they would prefer a cash benefit, a tax deduction for children, greater freedom in establishing private day-care centres and more measures targetted at specific groups. All Swedish economic actors, nonetheless, underlined the importance of workers being able to support themselves on incomes from work (women as well as men), as this is the basis for social benefits, and few benefits are means-tested. Childcare must be available if women are going to work; men work anyway.

#### EMERGING FAMILY AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany, have an emerging family and employment policy. While employment policy has been predicated on a male breadwinner model, the sheer expansion of the female workforce has moved work-life balance issues onto the political agenda.

Until recently, British family policy was both implicit and fragmented, while employment policy during the 1980s and 1990s was highly voluntarist and focused on deregulation. This said, equal opportunities are well entrenched as legislation and personnel practice, including statutory maternity rights. But most work-life balance policies, involving flexible working time, parental leave and childcare, have occurred at the initiative and discretion of the individual employers. While professional women have benefited most from formal company policies, the huge expansion of part-time work has reflected individual and household strategies to balance work and childrearing. In the late 1990s, the British government became more pro-active in this field. The main focus of interest in attempts by the New Labour government has been to develop joined-up-thinking on policies affecting the family in different fields. In particular, family-friendly employment policies have been advocated, and the 2001 Green Paper on Parental Leave was the focus for a vigorous public policy debate. Most economic actors recognized that the family-friendly issue has become much more central, especially since 1997. They put this down to the growing feminization of the workforce (and the consequent political appeal of family

policies), labour shortages, concerns over stress and the UK long-hours culture, and the influence of EU and Labour policies, especially on parental leave.

In Germany, the state welfare foundations of family policy are much more robust, though it makes similar assumptions about the asymmetrical family division of labour. The generous German pension system centres on male breadwinners. Through the mechanism of *Ehegattensplitting* (married individuals pay tax on half of joint income), the family policy of the Federal Republic of Germany primarily supported the institution of marriage, usually consisting of a sole male breadwinner with a wife who did not work, regardless of the number of children in the family. The welfare system supports women who leave paid work to bring up their children, less so those who try to combine work and family. Women's employment rate is relatively low, while reconciliation policies are still poorly developed and continue to be viewed as a woman's issue. In Germany, all actors (political, economic and civil society) considered family policy as a key issue for ensuring financial support to care for and educate children. Policy also makes it easier for both parents (especially mothers) to combine job opportunities and housework by offering places in kindergartens and schools, including afternoon hours. Both employers' associations and trade unions are urging the government to create better job opportunities for women as mothers through more public childcare, more financial support for children's education and increased part-time work and greater flexibility. As in the UK, the new driving force is individual arrangements between employers and employees, rather than more state regulation. The trend is towards an increase in the number of companies offering flexible working arrangements.

In Ireland too, the family became an increasingly important factor in employment policy and practices in the 1990s, almost entirely due to the unprecedented economic boom and labour shortages. As a result, awareness has grown of the need to balance work and family as a way of increasing female labour market participation, and this has begun to be extended to the position of men.

#### EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY POLICY AS SEPARATE GENDERED SPHERES

Although all 11 countries are moving towards family-friendly employment policies, many of them still conceive of employment and family policy as separate gendered spheres. Here, the family (women) was often seen as supporting employment, rather than as being in a reciprocal relationship to it, which was broadly the picture in all of the southern and east European countries.

In Greece, the family is not yet an important factor in employment policy, but it may be considered as a self-supporting institution that is a substitute for labour market policies and institutions (see also Papadopoulos, 1998). In the words of one Greek trade union leader:

*Family has never been an important factor in employment policy...[although] there are family problems that could have been tackled seriously by labour market policy, like health and social security. Family planning can be easily reversed due to heavy economic responsibilities. There is no appropriate policy giving emphasis to quality of life.*

In other words, the family, with little state or employer support is expected to provide social cohesion for the economic and social system, with the attendant danger that *'the administration is overestimating the possibilities and abilities of the Greek family'*. Outside family commitments, particularly in the case of working mothers, seemed to be a growing concern for both employers and trade unions as more women enter the labour market. The existing social and gender division of labour prevents people from profiting from both family and citizens' rights policies, resulting in tensions. Though Greek family policy has been weak, traditional and implicit, some economic actors have begun to expand its definition to include the reconciliation of work and family life: *'It has to do with work and working hours, with children and the hours of school.'* However, these questions continue to be seen usually as exclusively a female matter.

Similar issues arose in Spain and Italy. The legitimacy of state intervention in family matters in Spain was acknowledged by governing conservative party actors, ministerial officials and the small business confederation of employers, as well as by the main opposition party and the two major trade union confederations. This indicated a shift in policy from the previous government's stance, which has been described as maintaining a hands-off position, owing to the strong public association of family policy with the pre-democratic authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, no consensus appeared to emerge between any of the actors regarding what family policy should consist of.

In Italy, the attitude of economic actors to the family was characteristically ambivalent. Many considered the family an important social institution, but economic policies treat the individual as an autonomous subject, and are negotiated without taking account of it. Social considerations often come later in an attempt to remedy the problems spawned by economic measures. As elsewhere, the family is conceived as a social shock absorber, and employers are more interested in drawing on the resources of the family than developing a proper social and labour market policy. In recent years, attempts to increase formal female economic activity from its chronically low level have forced economic and political actors to give more thought to ways of reconciling paid and unpaid work.

However, the sharing of household tasks within families is still poorly developed. The 2000 law on parental leave was expected to encourage more flexible working hours and help facilitate the organization of family life. Trade unionists have supported policies to help families with domestic duties and to encourage greater equality at work. However, large areas of employment are not unionized and family-friendly issues struggle to find a central place on the collective bargaining agenda. Even if economic actors have recognized the growing difficulties facing families over the past 10 years, they do not seem to understand fully the extent of the changes that are taking place.

The three former Communist countries all combined relatively high numbers of working women with a reassertion of traditional gender roles and the collapse of state and employer social provision, such as workplace nurseries, though vestiges of these remained in some Hungarian organizations. The Estonian labour market is highly gender segregated. The impact of broader economic and social policy on families is not taken into account in policy formulation, and the results are not monitored. Existing labour market realities are seen as contradicting both family and equal opportunity policies. Since the

demise of Communism, the priority given to the role of women as mothers has weakened their position and decreased their labour market opportunities. Polish economic actors also think that the relationship between family and economic and social policies operates in such a way that the efficacy of the family serves as a guarantee of the efficient functioning of society.

### **The appropriate role for state regulation**

Everywhere, employers are concerned about state regulation of employment that raises labour costs. However, these objections may be specific and pragmatic, within a generally accepted social model of capitalism, or more ideological and politicized along the lines of US free market business ideology. As a result, two main versions of this potentially universal objection emerged: where state regulation of employment *per se* was a major ideological division; and where consensus was found between economic actors over the need for substantial social regulation, but pragmatic differences over who should be paying for it.

#### DISPUTE OVER STATE REGULATION IN PRINCIPLE

The extent of state regulation *per se* was a central and contentious ideological issue in the UK, though the weakness of the Conservative political opposition has tempered free market voices. Trade unions, family and women's groups advocated more government and EU legislation, both in terms of human resources management and employee rights. In contrast, employers, particularly small businesses, stressed the red tape and extra costs that have been imposed on them. Labour has tried to strike a balance between these two camps, while the main opposition, the Conservative Party, combines a Euro-skeptic attitude to Europe with hostility to most forms of employment regulation.

The large presence of women in the UK service sector and current labour shortages have created a receptive audience for family-friendly policies on both sides of industry and given an impetus to new policy thinking. Most economic actors agree that employees should be regarded as both individuals and parts of families. However, a strong neo-liberal strand among some employers' groups combined hostility to regulatory red tape with a belief that employees must justify their value in labour market terms alone. The policy debate has hitherto concentrated on female caring roles and the extension of maternity leave. However, the March 2001 budget introduced statutory paternity leave, and debate is developing among employers over whether the emphasis should shift to the equalization of parental rights and responsibilities. Among UK employers, however, the specifics of family policies are of far less interest than the overall level of employment regulation. And there remains an abiding sense that the regulation of employment for social ends is illegitimate and economically damaging.

Similar attitudes, combined with the necessity of economic survival, figured high in employers' thinking in the new enterprise culture of the former Communist countries. Sometimes, this was given a positive spin, as in Poland, where employers believe that flexible labour markets and a rich variety of employment options are the best answer to the reconciliation of family and professional roles.

## CONSENSUS OVER SOCIAL REGULATION BUT DISPUTE OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNDING

While German trade unions favoured better opportunities for women and the reduction of private costs for education, aiming at equality and responding to social demand, employers were seeking to raise employment rates and to engage more parents but without paying more taxes. At the same time, employers were critical of government for regulating the labour market by introducing new legislation establishing the right to part-time jobs. Family policy is seen partly as an income redistribution policy, through taxes and the social insurance system, and partly as employment policy, both helping families with children to cover (part of) their educational costs and to participate in the labour market to a greater degree. Economic actors could use regulations at plant level to help parents combine house and paid work more effectively, but few private firms have implemented these regulations.

The main French employers' organization, the Mouvement des Enterprise de la France (Medef) sometimes hankers after the Anglo-Saxon neo-liberal model of enterprise autonomy. For a decade, it has tried to shift negotiation down to company level with individual unions. Ultimately, it would like to pass the baby over to the state because '*We don't see why we should be financing family policy*', though the Medef is aware there is little prospect of this happening. The existing heavy involvement in financing and delivering social policy made the Medef reluctant to envisage taking on new responsibilities for work-life balance, as, they argue:

*This is not a subject that often crops up in our discussions. The 35-hour week provides extra days off. The issue is not raised in discussion about the 35-hour week, but it does come up in discussions about weekend work. This is really a question about private life and the way people organize themselves. I'm not convinced that people want employers to organize their time for them. It seems to be more a question that should be dealt with by initiatives taken outside the firm. When a company does attempt to do something explicitly on the subject, not many people benefit from it. ... The experience of workplace crèches in the 1970s was a failure.*

The Medef is represented on the Council for Equal Opportunities at work, but was skeptical about the value of this body, adding:

*It is difficult for French firms to accept that, under the banner of equality, they're expected to resolve all the constraints that women continue to experience due to the way that women's roles are conceptualized in the family and in society.*

Greek employers felt that the deregulation of working time would be decisive in tackling family time problems, presumably by allowing more women to work part-time. A spokeswoman for an employers' association regretted that the implementation of a measure to encourage kindergartens in private companies had never been promoted actively by the state since this could facilitate reconciliation of working and family life.

More widely, employers tended to shift responsibilities onto employees, the state or trade unions. Hence, Estonian employers regard family issues as '*more a matter for the trade union*' in their social welfare rather than bargaining capacity. In Spain, employers have persuaded the government not only to cancel the employers' social security contributions for employees on maternity and parental leave, but also to pay the social insurance contributions for any replacement employee hired during the absence. At the same time as

employers were amenable to government measures, the administration itself and the ruling party were keen to avoid further spending commitments, since their priority was a balanced budget together with lower taxes. In Italy, too, employers regard the family as a problem that the state should solve.

Social partnership has developed recently at all levels in the Irish economic system and, at national level, has included a national minimum wage, maternity and paternity leave. As a result, the social costs of the impact of economic life on families are being shared by the state, employers and trade unions. The social partners are promoting flexible working hours, home working and jobsharing as well as time off for family commitments.

### **Voluntary industry and company policies**

The role of direct state policy in shaping family-friendly policies varies greatly between countries. Employer provision is always an important, though sometimes hidden, factor. However, employers in some countries are more active than in others, reflecting the extent of Human Resource Management (HRM) policies, labour shortage and the importance of women as a labour resource, while the strength and activity of trade unions in this area also vary. Four main positions can be formulated in this respect: where employers see family-friendly matters as a HRM issue for them; where family-friendly policies are a significant topic of collective bargaining; where statutory works councils play a central role in workplace family-friendly policies; and where employers see family-friendly policies as a luxury they cannot afford.

#### FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICY AS EMPLOYER-DRIVEN HRM

Equal opportunities between men and women, at least at the level of personnel policy, is now part of the conventional wisdom of almost all UK policy actors including employers' associations and trade unions. Early signs can be found that family-friendly policies about flexible working hours and parental leave are being included in collective agreements in certain best-practice sectors, notably banking, but this is far from the norm. Employers generally favour the voluntary approach, with or without unions, as being closer to employee needs than imposed blueprints, allowing best practice to be disseminated in a piecemeal way and employers for choice to garner the labour retention and motivation benefits of their policies.

In Ireland, the main reason why family policy in the area of employment is being given any consideration is because of recent developments in the Irish economy. Though official unemployment figures of 3.6% are open to some dispute, it is generally agreed that there is a shortage of workers. In Ireland, the main issues were the question of childcare, which was by far the most significant, other career provision and transportation difficulties. Another attempt to bring a degree of linkage to the issue saw the launch of [www.familyfriendly.ie](http://www.familyfriendly.ie) on 1 March 2001. However, if the relatively low level of media coverage that this initiative received is anything to go by, it may yet be some time before the childcare issue is comprehensively tackled within the context of employment.

Germany is another case, as shown above where skills shortages and pressure to recruit from the reserve army of women have created pressures for reconciliation policies. Skills shortages in Germany have encouraged individual

businesses to take positive steps as regards childcare arrangements and workplace nurseries, and many works councils have been very active in this field. The level of educational attainment of German women is very high, and central requirements for drawing more women into the labour market are flexible working hours, childcare facilities, all-day schooling and part-time work. Employers in large companies and feminized sectors, such as the public sector and private services, are more likely to provide family-friendly policies. In Germany, larger companies offer more family support, such as childcare provision and schemes to encourage equal opportunities at work, while the public sector provides positive opportunities for parental leave. By contrast, small and medium-size firms tend not to have professional management and to hold more traditional attitudes towards women and families. Generally speaking, they pay less attention to the introduction of measures supportive of the family.

Paradoxically, in most countries, the traditional small family firm may be more inclined to see employees as economic individuals. This said, the Italian trade union, Confederazione italiana sindacati lavoratori (Cisl), argued that small family firms were more likely to pay attention to the social relationship between employers and families than large employers. The highly regulated and feminized, and often low paid, public sector is frequently a family-friendly enclave. In Greece, for instance, it provides the main mechanism for reconciling work and family life for the minority of women in paid work. In the private sector, by contrast, employers usually do not take into consideration that workers are members of a family. In Hungary, working women were concentrated in the very poorly paid teaching and postal services, though some European multinationals had brought with them a more positive attitude to investing in employees as human resources.

#### FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AS A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING TOPIC

Collective bargaining plays a significant role in employment regulation in all the countries involved. There are two prerequisites for it to become a central instrument for family-friendly policies. First, collective bargaining must have wide coverage, and, second, family-friendly issues must be raised in the bargaining arena. Germany certainly meets the first, but in sectors traditionally seen as being for men, joint working parties on pay do not take account of family arrangements. By contrast, in the clothing industry, with a very high proportion of female employees, the pay agreement includes a clause which entitles employees to take three days leave in excess of the legal requirement for the purpose of looking after sick children, making a total of 13 days. Collective bargaining covers less than half the UK workforce and is much weaker in Hungary, Poland and Estonia, which limits its efficacy as a mechanism for introducing family-friendly policies. As one Hungarian union leader commented:

*For five to six years, I've been involved in the work of the European and World Women's Committee within the Union. I was surprised to find that, in foreign countries, they have some means of putting pressure on employers, that the imbalance in the proportion of male and female employment is perceived as a problem, and that women are expected to have some advantages. We're inclined to forget about these issues.*

Greek economic actors agreed that family issues should be included in collective agreements, though the approach of employers and trade unions differed. Employers favoured framework agreements, allowing tailored arrangements according to the specifics of the businesses and the workers involved:

*Good, bad, strong, weak businesses and employers can be found, in the same way as productive and non-productive workers. Therefore, a margin must be established in different sectors and businesses to allow for specific arrangements to be made.*

Greek unions argued for universal measures, such as minimum incomes for families to make them feel secure, better unemployment benefits, new pension schemes, benefits for pregnancy and childbearing and an efficient system of childcare facilities. Spanish and Italian union negotiating teams were composed largely of men. Though the list of initial claims would include reconciliation measures, these were often bargaining chips that got bargained away in favour of more traditional wages and conditions. Hence the union interest in family-friendly policies has produced meagre results in contractual terms.

#### FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICY AS AN ISSUE FOR STATUTORY WORKS COUNCILS

In many countries, union membership is a poor indicator of the level of employment regulation because statutory works council systems give employees and their union representatives a strong voice. Because our interviews were mainly with national-level policy actors, limited evidence was forthcoming on how far general works councils, for example in Germany, have taken up family-friendly issues as part of their central agenda. In countries like Britain without any indigenous works council system (European Works Councils now cover larger firms also operating in other EU countries), this avenue is not yet available.

The French *comité d'entreprise* is the most striking instance. All firms with more than 50 employees are legally obliged to have this body, which is responsible for managing the social activities of the firm. It is funded by the firm at between 0.2% and 3% of the wages bill, and the funds are redistributed as either monetary benefits or services to the workers and their families. *Comités d'entreprise* have played an important role in supporting families and have extended their input from the distribution of food and clothing to children's holiday camps and leisure activities for families. They also subsidize elder and childcare services for families. These bodies operate alongside company human resources policies as mechanisms for family-friendly policies.

#### FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AS AN EXPENSIVE LUXURY

The view that family-friendly policy is a luxury employers cannot afford was particularly strong, and credible, in the new capitalist economies of former Communist Central and Eastern Europe. One Polish employer argued that '*everything depends on the financial and market stability of a given company*'. From a family perspective, stable employment, where this cannot be taken for granted, by one or more family members, is the main priority. Former Communist family-friendly policies, such as workplace nurseries and trade union holidays, were associated with the inefficiency and corrupt indulgency patterns of the '*bad old days*'. A Hungarian union leader said:

*Not only our company but a lot of other companies put an end to their family-friendly institutions. The postal company used to have its own childcare facilities like kindergartens, but they don't exist any more. Economic arguments have priority. They want to get rid of the remaining social welfare institutions, too. They're selling the rest homes and holiday homes.*

At the same time, the corruption of Soviet-style employment systems has led to suspicions about so-called social benefits and a lack of trust and loyalty. Estonian entrepreneurs now have to try to draw up contracts to eliminate any chance of damage being done to the company through disloyal dealings and to get maximum protection for their property.

Doubts were expressed about the role of trade unions in raising the subject of family policies in negotiations with employers. Estonian employers tend to see employees solely as individuals and not as members of a family. Family issues are considered as tasks for the government, trade unions and employees. The sense that *'family life will get in the way of work life'* led one respondent to suggest that *'I have more importance as an employee than as a parent'*. In line with this view, the contribution of business consists in paying taxes to the state. The employee is conceptualized in the language of neo-classical economics as, *'an employee [who]...sells his/her skills and not marital status or family problems'*. A Polish respondent echoed the same view, claiming that *'the employer's role is not to provide care for the family of a person he/she employs'*, though a good employer will do what he/she can. Reconciliation issues are for the employee to sort out, and maybe the state. Nonetheless, it is recognized that business must adjust to the changing values of society. At present, they do not demand family-friendly policies. An Estonian employer made a similar point:

*If the family and children are valued by society, then employers go along with those ideas. It's impossible for business management to have a vision of the importance of families or children while at the same time the whole society is being exposed to the notion that families have no value, as shown by reports of well-known public figures and their divorces.*

The three former Communist countries all have elaborate labour codes, but these appeared to have limited impact on the ground. As elsewhere with family-friendly and equal opportunity policies, formal legal measures are often regarded as an alibi for employer inaction. Polish employers claimed that the existing labour code takes account of family obligations through its maternity and childcare provisions, though some saw scope for enterprise initiatives:

*An employer, then, having a minimum standard set by the labour code, would be able to negotiate and reach other, better solutions, both at his or her enterprise or in the whole sector, on the basis of an agreement between an employer and trade unions, if an enterprise is economically capable of it.*

However, trade unionists believed that, in practice, employers or managers totally ignore employees' family responsibilities, while employers acknowledged there are many ways to get around the minimum wage. In the employers' view, the other family obligations of employees should not be taken into consideration by them, nor included in agreements over wages and conditions. The main obligation of an employer should be to produce profit and to develop a business. If a firm is in good shape, in their view, it will be to the advantage of the employees. Flexible work arrangements may be advantageous for firms

since they may lower the cost of labour. Strong trade unions will impede economic development. According to Hungarian trade union representatives, unemployment and low wages make employees vulnerable, and family considerations take second place. Employers, such as the postal service, do not take into consideration that the employee is part of a family as well. They maintain they are '*not a social welfare institution*'.

These points seem to reflect the rapid transition from Communist economic forms to a cost minimization version of capitalism, which has yet to address the business case for investing in employees. As one Hungarian respondent commented: '*Our national culture hasn't yet reached the level where the employee is seen as an important element of efficiency. It hasn't yet realized that harmonious labour relations result in productivity.*' A Polish trade unionist saw things in similar terms:

*Our Polish entrepreneurs haven't yet realized that they have a specific role to fulfil, that, apart from an economic role, they play a social one and that family issues should be important to them. Unfortunately, capitalism as it has emerged in this country over the last few years shows that only profit matters for these employers. They're looking for the shortest, easiest route to profit making.*

### **Working time and family-friendly policies**

Family-friendly policies related to working time were an issue in two different ways, with each theme more evident in some countries than others. Where work (and social policy) had been traditionally configured around the male breadwinner model, but women had entered the labour market in large numbers, certain employers and employees had established their own customized arrangements. Hence, UK supermarkets offer working hours to mothers to fit with children's school times. In the case of Sweden, the pressure for choice and diversity came from the same direction, but was focused upon the rigidity of an employment system predicated upon symmetrical gender roles that did not exist in reality. Two opposing patterns stand out here. In the first, working time is poorly regulated and a long-hours culture has developed, particularly among men, but the expansion of the service sector has created a strong demand for part-time female work. In the second, working time is tightly regulated, but there is growing pressure for deregulation and more choice and diversity.

#### LOOSE REGULATION OF WORKING TIME

Loose regulation of working time and a long-hours culture, particularly among men, is characteristic of the UK, which has allowed employees to waive the 48-hour working week at the behest of employers. This practice has accompanied Sunday trading and the emergence of a US-style, 24/7 society focused on employer–customer requirements. For instance, most large UK supermarkets now open almost continuously, something which may help women as customers and as part-time workers, but also may lead to antisocial working for full-time men and women with families. Most employment actors recognize that the UK has a long-hours culture like the US. However, employers perceive that trade unions are unwilling to push for hours reduction, for instance by tightening up the implementation of the Working Time Directive. Rather, the emphasis is on the availability of flexible working options during key parenting periods.

Access to family-friendly arrangements is more difficult to gauge than it first appears. Part-time working is very prevalent, especially among women in the service sector, but it is often employer driven and may not be linked to employee family priorities. Moreover, it may be associated with dead-end jobs with no career prospects. Flexible working in career positions is still more difficult and controversial.

The economic system is creating pressure for part-time working in many other countries where it is not already widespread. The extension of part-time work may be family friendly or unfriendly, depending upon the circumstances. Left to their own devices, employers may respond to staff shortages by developing forms of labour market flexibility that are unfavourable to women's employment prospects. For instance, trade unions in many countries see part-time working as a bad option for women, which side-steps the real equal opportunities issues and allows firms to shirk their responsibilities in helping parents to combine employment and family life. The French union, *Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT)*, campaigns for a general reduction of working time, equal opportunities, desegregation of jobs and the involvement of men in domestic work and childcare. They prefer the concept of combining work and family to reconciliation, which implies '*that the two things are incompatible or difficult to reconcile*', and they have seen the negotiations over the 35-hour week as a campaigning opportunity. French unions, in general, regard part-time hours as the wrong way of reconciling paid work and family life because they penalize women, stifle their self-development, and damage their career prospects and pension entitlements. For *Force ouvrière (FO)*: '*If we believe that it's up to women to neglect their own professional development to bring up their children, we're in an economic deadlock.*'

#### TIGHT REGULATION OF WORKING TIME

Most continental European countries have much more rigid and limited working and shop opening hours. France has implemented a 35-hour working week, and German variations in working hours are usually no more than two or three hours longer than a statutory working week of 37.5 hours in most sectors. Similarly, Spain has a 40-hour maximum (average) working week with rigid controls on Sunday opening and a two to three hour closure at lunchtime. Techniques, such as flexitime, job sharing and childcare subsidies, are little known, and part-time working is uncommon, except for cleaning. Part-time work is more available in the Italian public sector than in the private sector.

Sweden is noted for tightly-regulated working time, linked to a state-funded gender equality policy. However, against the rhetoric for the symmetrical family, many employers' organizations and political parties take a more resigned or agnostic view towards gender differences or choices, and see more flexible labour markets, including part-time working and discretionary family-friendly company policies, as a pragmatic and realistic response to both individual and company needs. The Swedish Liberals and the Confederation of Professional Employers (TCO) have co-operated in the formulation of a programme called *Everyday Power*, which implies that everyone must be allowed to decide about the number of hours they want to work, and that the law should not decide for them. The Conservatives also claim that labour market conditions are very important in discussing family issues. For them, it is

crucial to locate obstructions (in the form of laws and regulations) to men's and women's labour market opportunities and family involvement when they have children. Everybody should have the right to stay at home, but it should be up to the parents to decide which one of them remains at home. In Spain, leave for family reasons is thought to benefit only those in stable work in stable companies. At the same time, wide recognition is found among trade unions in the UK and Greece that labour flexibility, such as weekend and evening working, where imposed by employers, may actually be negative for family life.

### **The impact of EU legislation**

The impact of EU legislation depends on the pre-existing state of national provision. First, EU policy can be a dilution of, or more flexible alternative to, existing high but rigid standards of provision. Alternatively, it can raise standards by pioneering legislation on equal opportunities or parental leave where none existed before. Finally, while it might help to establish a family-friendly rhetoric, it has not, as yet, had any practical implications for employment family policy.

#### NATIONAL PROVISION ABOVE EU STANDARDS

Sweden is the most obvious case of a country where national family-employment provision and regulation were already well above EU standards when it joined the European Union. The Christian Democrats in Sweden see their family policy as being closer to the main trends of Europe and claim that Sweden could learn from the tax deduction systems being used in other European countries. Also, the Conservatives find that different ideas about the family are more prevalent elsewhere in Europe. In France too, decisions taken by the EU on issues such as maternity and parental leave have not had much impact because the provisions made in the directives are well below what already exists. In other countries, this is true of certain policies, for example maternity leave, but not others. In Italy, for instance, maternity provision is in advance of EU legislation, and unions fear that it might be dragged down.

#### RAISING NATIONAL STANDARDS

For the UK, trade unions and some employers' organizations recognize, however, that the family-friendly policies process may benefit from an EU or government prompt to set a base-line for poor employers and stimulate more employer activity. EU regulation on equal opportunities and parental leave has played a central role in bringing the debate on family-friendly policies to the fore.

Spain's shift towards the agenda status of family policy has been attributed to the EU's policy of promoting reconciliation of working and family life. The dominant issue was claimed to be the reconciliation of family and working life for women, via parental leave, and ways to encourage families, mainly women, to have children with the introduction of child support benefit. Against this, the macro-economic framework required for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) provided another, possibly contrary, policy influence, as we shall see below. Even so, the Employment Guidelines have also helped to raise the employment rate for women, over which Spain had been singled out as a laggard, as well as over the concept of reconciliation. The 1999

Conciliation Law and 1989 Parental Leave Law both followed EU directives. The former allows employees to request a reduction in working hours and extends leave entitlements to care for elderly and sick people. The EU equal pay and paternity directives have had an impact on Ireland, but more significant influences are the remarkable economic growth of recent years and the movement towards social partnership, which is now being extended from national to enterprise level.

#### LOW IMPACT AND POOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EU LEGISLATION

In some countries, EU legislation has made little practical difference due to economic and cultural barriers or poor implementation. In Greece, economic actors felt that better implementation of laws and regulations intended to support the family was more important than additional state intervention. Opportunities in the workplace are gendered and highly unequal. Family issues have yet to be included in collective (work) agreements, and employers and trade unions differ in their approach with regard to the scope of these agreements. Moreover, agreements need to be implemented. The impact of EU legislation was questioned by all economic actors. One trade union leader even argued that the media had influenced Greek society more than the EU:

*I believe that the impact is small because the situation over working conditions is already established in every country. There are mentalities and habits that can't change easily... unless you reverse the situation from the bottom up.*

This conclusion is based on three reasons. First, formal gender equality directives pre-dated EU legislation, notably in the 1975 Greek constitution. Second, the role of law is limited given the culture and social infrastructure of Greek society. And, finally, the goal of EMU has undermined the importance of social priorities like the family. As one union leader put it: '*EMU brought in a quantitative approach to society and questioned the importance of social sensitivity.*' These three factors apply widely elsewhere.

The main impact of EU regulation in Estonia appears in employment legislation and also in the field of equal opportunities. With the ratification of the EU's social chapter in the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu), discussion of these issues was brought into the public domain, but a paragraph about gender equality was rejected on the basis that '*every process of development takes time*'.

Hungarian economic actors were aware of EU policy, but none of the respondents considered it to be an important factor. As one union representative said, the government followed the measure '*only formally, not in practice*'. They referred to the harmonization of law whereby issues such as equal opportunities for men and women are incorporated into Hungarian law. A union representative pointed out, however, that the issue of equal opportunities for women and men is seen as a special case within the wider debate over '*equal opportunities for everyone*' and has not, therefore, been given enough attention. Likewise, EU policy was taken into account in Poland as part of the process of adjustment of national law to EU requirements.

#### **Tensions between family policies and gender equality**

Formal equal opportunity laws exist in all 11 countries. The relationship between overt family policy, equal opportunities policy and family-friendly employment policy is often a difficult one, however. Three patterns stand out: where equal opportunities policy is well entrenched as management policy and family-friendly policy may come into conflict with them; where a tension exists between conservative family values and equal opportunities; and where both equal opportunities and family-friendly policies are lacking.

#### CONFLICT BETWEEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Genuine equal opportunities is generally supportive of family-friendly policies for men and women, though it can be suspicious of free market family-friendly solutions devised by employers and employees, and predicated on women remaining the main carers. Employers and trade unions in the UK are aware of a potential tension between equal opportunities and family-friendly policies. This may involve tensions between male and female rights, such as maternity versus paternity provision, and between the rights of parents and the childless, some of whom may be involved in elder care or simply have made a lifestyle choice to remain single. Many economic actors see a solution in stressing the management of diversity, whereby all the various groups bring their own particular contribution to the organization, and they talk more generally of work-life balance being customized for everyone in their own way.

In Spain, fear was expressed that further family-friendly policies attached to women, such as caring for older people, would increase employer prejudices against employing women and damage equal opportunities in practice. Objections have already been raised to legal breastfeeding breaks, and many women are still dismissed due to pregnancy, despite the industrial tribunal system. Employers see family men as stable, responsible workers, who will put up with company pressures more than others because of having to keep their families, while family women are considered as an extra cost and a potential problem. Similar fears in the UK have caused the Industrial Society to call for an extension of paternity rather than maternity rights. As in Sweden, the underlying assumption is that only shifts in gender roles in the family will facilitate full equal opportunities. This view was also expressed by the Italian, union, *Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro (Cgil)*:

*Men and women should enjoy equal opportunities with regard to access to work and salaries and career development. The major obstacle to equality is the unequal distribution of care work between the two sexes. In the present situation, employers tend to prefer to take on male workers because they expect them to be able to guarantee their presence at work and adapt to meet the needs of employers.*

#### TENSION BETWEEN CONSERVATIVE FAMILY VALUES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Strong conservative family policy is premised upon men working and women caring, an outlook that precludes the need to reconcile paid work and family life. In Germany, this traditional family model with a male breadwinner gets in the way of equal opportunities. In several countries, a revival of conservative, religious family values has worsened the situation for working mothers, causing a suspicion of overt family policy. Spanish trade unions saw themselves as very distant from both employers and government on the issue, and feared that the

return of concerns about the family was going to be transformed into yet another barrier to the recruitment of women, who were already facing discrimination on the job market. Spanish family policy was not seen as contributing positively to the value put on the mainly low-paid female workforce. Greek respondents were unanimous that equality of opportunity should be a common goal, though it does not exist in real life. Economically-active women are usually obliged to postpone both marriage and childbirth or face unemployment and lack of social security, especially those wishing to work in the private sector. Similarly in Ireland, while social support for working women is rising, childcare responsibilities still fall almost exclusively on women and cultural preferences do not indicate that much is changing.

#### LACK OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Some countries have neither equal opportunities nor family-friendly policies, but a blend of cut-throat capitalism and traditional patriarchal prejudices. This was evident, though not universal, in the three former Communist countries. In Estonia, for instance, men over 30 take preference in the labour market. One actor reported:

*I've attended an employment interview where a male candidate for the post of chief accountant was offered a higher salary than a woman. On asking why this kind of discrimination had occurred, the answer was: men need more for spending.*

In Poland, employers claimed to be sympathetic to family needs, but union representatives painted a bleaker picture:

*A young woman about to get married is warned that pregnancy means the end of her career, that her child's illness is no excuse for taking leave of absence by one of the parents, that family commitments can't constrain the parent's availability for work.*

Union representatives reported similar discrimination in Hungary.

*In a lot of places at the job interview, young female applicants are faced with the question whether they want to have children or not. In this success-oriented world the employee's wish to have children is bad news.*

Most Hungarian women in work were in the low-paid public sector. In teaching, for instance, direct discrimination was low. According to a teachers' union leader:

*Women are not discriminated against, as almost all the employees are women in this field. If there are eight applicants for a job, all of them are young women and potential mothers.*

However, in the better-paid, private business sector, men are routinely valued more. A minority of larger, more profitable business concerns recognize that the adoption of the principle of equal opportunities promotes a healthy, ethical and highly motivating atmosphere leading to higher efficiency. In short, the business case, or HRM.

#### Variations in the family–employment relationship

The relationship between paid employment and family life clearly varies greatly across Europe, depending on a number of historical influences. These include:

the stage of economic development; longstanding religious and cultural influences; and different employment regimes, be they neo-liberal (as in the UK between 1979–97), social market or post-Communist. Nonetheless some broad generalizations or hypotheses are possible.

In many instances, the principal impetus for family-friendly/work–life balance policies came from greater female labour market participation, whether actual or potential. Low birthrates and labour shortages are major drivers of voluntary employer policies. Yet, the business case for harnessing human resources through family-friendly policies only works for certain employment groups, for example the more skilled and highly educated, and in certain periods, as with full employment. Forms of state-initiated social regulation that ride the wave, and then generalize or institutionalize these social and economic pressures across different employment sectors, are most likely to be successful in providing comprehensive family-friendly measures in the long run. Without this policy consolidation, family-friendly provision will remain patchy and skewed towards professional workers, while the tide of interest will ebb, and provision may be abandoned.

All employers are concerned about the cost implications of family-friendly policies. Centralized employment systems and large employers are more likely to take a long-term HRM view. Small employers are least likely to do so, though exceptions do occur. In some economies and companies, a genuine trade-off is made between company survival and employment on the one hand and social provision, including family-friendly policies, on the other. Complaints of red-tape and excessive social costs, however, will always be a routine part of employer rhetoric. Where employers accept the need for extra provision, they will prefer systems funded by general taxation, except for voluntary, discretionary policies that accrue distinct labour market advantages, such as recruitment and selection. Employers in all societies will tend to regard themselves as economic rational actors and their employees as atomized individuals, except where some system of social regulation encourages them to take a broader view.

The interviews with elite economic actors also suggest tentative responses to some widely canvassed political and ideological perspectives. A conservative perspective on strong family values, found in some countries, might lead us to expect strong societal support for work–life balance policies. By and large, however, strongly religious, more traditional societies in transition, such as Spain and Poland, do not provide strong practical employer or state support to working women, and expect them to support their men as the main economic breadwinners. In some cases, like Spain, they spend very little on family policy.

An equality perspective might suggest that the better equal opportunities are between men and women, the more support the family gains from the economic system. This view is largely supported by our evidence, though the weight of women in the labour market (and pressure from staff and skill shortages) would seem to be more important than purely formal equal opportunities policies. The more women there are in paid work, the greater the pressure to turn equal opportunities rhetoric into practical policies at all levels, though this did not appear to be the case, as yet, in the former Communist countries.

A neo-liberal perspective hypothesizes that the more flexible the labour market, the easier it is for men and women to balance work and family life, each

in their own way. Here, it may depend on what we mean by balance and flexibility and whether the gender and class terms implied are acceptable. Over-regulation, for example, by strong restrictions on part-time employment (as in Spain), may block some women from entering the labour market altogether. In the Swedish case, regulation may struggle to impose a symmetrical family on men and women who prefer a measure of asymmetry. On the other hand, flexibility purely on employers' terms may amount simply to overwork, insecurity and gender segregation.

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## 4. Civil Society Actors

*Louise Appleton*

Family policy, broadly defined as those areas of policy that affect families, falls within the remit of not only political and economic actors but also civil society actors. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the responses by civil society actors to questions relating to the processes whereby policies affecting families are formulated, with a particular focus on the available policy options and the motivation underpinning policy choices in the IPROSEC countries.

The origins of the term civil society are usually traced back to the eighteenth century and the Scottish Enlightenment. However, it is over the last two decades that social researchers have become occupied with what has been variously termed the third sector, the voluntary sector, the nonprofit sector, and, more recently since the 1970s, the civil society sector (Morris, 2000). While these terms are not interchangeable, the entity to which they refer, though ambiguous, has some characteristics that distinguish it from other sectors. Numerous researchers, including those involved with the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (JHCNSP), the most thorough investigation undertaken to date of the comparisons between the civil society sectors in different countries, have espoused the sectoral model presented in Table 1.1 in this volume. Michael Schechter, drawing upon a Tocquevillean and Hegelian definition, states that the sector consists of 'those forms of associations among individuals that are explicitly not part of the public, state apparatus, ... or the atomistic market' (Schechter, 1999, p. 66). For this reason, the civil society sector is seen as a third sector outside of the state and the economy, which has developed as an alternative or third way in fulfilling particular welfare roles for society.

Actors in the civil society sector are generally motivated by the cause of social betterment. Robert Putnam refers to this incentive as social capital or 'the features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions' (Putnam, 1993, p. 167), which he sees as the main characteristic of the sector. A second critical feature is the use of volunteers (in addition to paid staff), who form a major part of the civil society sector's workforce, though the contribution made by volunteers varies by field and by country (Dekker and van den Broek, 1998). Unlike the public sector, it is not solely funded by taxes, and unlike the private sector, it is non-profit distributing. The civil society sector is funded by a variety of sources, including taxes, fees and donations. The organizational structure is described as 'ambiguous' because a vast array of organizational structures exists within the sector, including a managerial command system similar to the public and private sectors, voting systems in associations, and varying degrees of commitment, devotion and affection permeating the organizational structure of the civil society sector that are not explicit in the other two sectors. The type and scale of delivery are mainly, though not exclusively, special types of services to niche markets and at a grass-roots level.

David Billis and Howard Glennerster (1998) contend that the civil society sector has come into existence to meet human service needs that are not met by the ordinary market but which government and private sector services are inefficient in providing. Thus, the civil society sector, through its multiple

stakeholders and social capital incentives, reliance on volunteers, mixed finance structure, ambiguous organizational structure, and delivery of services at local level, has a competitive advantage in certain areas of human service provision, especially those requiring a sensitive service. This would suggest why a higher proportion of civil society organizations are involved with personal, societal and community disadvantage than public or private organizations. Indeed, according to Lester Salamon *et al.* (2000), the principal fields in which civil society organizations operate are: culture and recreation, education and research, health, social services, environment, development, advocacy, philanthropy, international aid, religious congregations and family agencies.

This sector model is useful for defining the principal characteristics of the civil society sector and its role in welfare provision in comparison with the public and private sectors. However, the three sectors should not be seen as separate and exclusive entities in opposition to one another. The civil society sector is not simply a deliverer of services, for it plays a political role in society that the sectoral model omits, a point that will be further discussed below. The shortcomings of the sectoral model can be usefully demonstrated through the example of several organizations that do not fit precisely within one sector. For example, where should a nonprofit organization funded predominantly by the state be located, compared with another that may receive little state support? Both are ambiguously organized, driven by the same principles and deliver similar services. What of trade unions, which are tied to the economic sector yet funded by fees and instituted for the welfare of workers? Or religious organizations that in one country would stand at arm's length from the state, while in another they are part of the political apparatus as elected political parties? And what of mutual associations and co-operatives, organized in a non-bureaucratic way, driven by the generation of social capital but also profit distributing to share holders? These examples suggest that the public, private and civil society sectors should not be viewed as separate entities, but as operating in relation to one another. Moreover, as the interdependence between these sectors grows, it is this relationship between the sectors that is becoming important rather than their exclusive existences.

Instead of a third sector, therefore, the civil society sector might usefully be considered an intermediate area, as Evers puts it, 'a dimension of the public space in civil societies rather than a clear-cut sector' (Evers, 1995, p. 159). 'It is within this intermediate area', Evers continues, 'that organizations relate in one way or another to all other sectors, acting as multi-functional organizations whose social and political roles may be as important as their delivery of services'. By redefining the civil society sector as an intermediary area, this broader relational definition serves as a reminder that the civil society sector is not an opponent of the public and/or private sector, but is a primary partner with each of them in the formulation and implementation of policy. Furthermore, it suggests that the characteristics identified in Table 1.1 are not hard and fast rules for marking boundaries between separate sectors. Instead, mixed and interdependent networks in society blur these boundaries, promising independence from direct political coercion and the threat of indirect coercion through the social mechanisms of the modern market economy (Hunt, 1999). Civil society thereby becomes a medium through which organizations can gain influence over political/administrative and economic processes. Given the project's interest in understanding policy formulation and implementation, it is

this broader definition of the sector that has been adopted by the IPROSEC team.

The relationship between the different sectors varies between organizations, between levels of operation and, in the IPROSEC project, between countries over time (see also Salamon *et al*, 1999). Discussions among EU member states at the European level about the development of a civil society sector in the 1990s provide an illustration of this point. In dispute was how the sector should develop and on what terms, with the UK, France and Germany expressing markedly divergent views. The UK was unsupportive of an EU-level civil society sector, largely because of the concern with grass-roots level operations and a fear that a European-level sector could not provide the same standard of service. France and Germany, while supportive of the development of a European-level sector, disagreed on its purpose. France was primarily concerned with the Francophone idea of *économie sociale*, which deliberately draws together the economic and the social in the relational ties of the sector, more in line with the definition outlined above. The German position, however, emphasized a sharp distinction between them and located the civil society sector firmly in a social sphere to protect special ideologies and interests, more akin to the sectoral model summarized in Table 1.1. These opposing views of the sector, as well as the institutional structures that support them in the respective countries, have been one of the main stumbling blocks in the development of a European-level civil society sector. Furthermore, these divergent views indicate that the civil society sector is not a single entity. Instead, it takes different forms and means different things in different places, reflecting the particular political, economic, and cultural influences over time in particular places (Kendall and Anheier, 1999; Geyer, 2001).

Starting from this relational definition of civil society, and recognizing the different national biases in defining the sector, within the sample of civil society actors interviewed by the IPROSEC team are representatives from organizations that combine rationales, funding sources and organizational structures from government, markets and the informal sphere of families, networks and community organizations. The functions of the civil society actors are neither exclusively the implementation nor the formulation of policies, but combinations of the two. However, a universal principle adopted by the research team in their selection of respondents from civil society across all countries was their concern with family policy. Interviewees included representatives from religious and charitable organizations, research institutions, government think tanks, pressure groups, philanthropic associations and trusts, rather than sports and recreation clubs, cultural organizations and environmental groups. Groups concerned with international aid and development are also part of the sector but their interests are tangential to family policy. Furthermore, trade unions, though arguably between sectors, have been included in the report under economic actors rather than civil society actors, largely because of their interest in generating social capital among their members as workers (and sometimes their families), rather than among the general public as a whole.

The paper presents a comparative analysis of the empirical material from interviews with the civil society policy actors in the 11 case study countries. It begins by exploring the role of civil society actors in family policy, which demonstrates the considerable variability of the civil society sector among the

IPROSEC countries because of macro and micro level factors impacting upon its development. It then goes on to examine the legitimacy of policy and the objectives of policy intervention in response to these challenges. The next sections show the main approaches adopted by the sector in policy formulation and implementation. The final section discusses the perceptions among civil society actors of family policy impacts on families, and whether and how civil society actors themselves and/or other organizations monitor such impacts.

### **Civil society organizations as family policy actors**

The degree of involvement of different family policy actors in the civil society sector and in their spheres of activity varies across the IPROSEC countries. In some cases the sector plays a partnership role with the state in delivering complementary initiatives, while in others its role is to provide services to the people not covered by state provision.

Among the countries in the project, only in France was the close involvement of civil society (including a strong and highly organized family lobby) as partners with government in family policy formulation and implementation accepted unquestioningly and actively encouraged. Specialized institutions are well established in the civil society sector to represent the interests of families, including the Union nationale des associations familiales (UNAF), and they work closely with government in formulating and implementing family policy. This relationship is not unique to family policy, but also applies to the close relationship between the French state and the civil society sector in other policy areas. The main exception to the majority of French civil society organizations that provide explicit and coherent mainstream policies is the Women's Movement, which intervenes in family life but only in a limited capacity in some domains. The role of the Church, meanwhile, falls explicitly outside this special relationship. Instead, the Church conducts a family policy agenda separate from, and sometimes in competition with, the state and civil society partnership.

Elsewhere, the relationship between family policy actors in the public, private and civil society sectors is much more tentative, but the elite interviews produced examples of efforts to promote greater involvement of civil society organizations in family matters at all levels. Ireland perhaps comes closest to France in terms of the close relationship between the public and civil society sectors, illustrated by the former's substantial financial provision to the latter (Donoghue *et al.* 1999). Unlike France, however, the Catholic Church continues to be the most influential of the civil society sector's organizations, particularly because the Church and state were strongly intertwined historically, though this relationship has traditionally prevented other organizations from taking an active role in family policy delivery. Over recent decades, while the role of the Church in Ireland has evolved as the country has undergone some degree of secularization, civil society organizations, both religious and especially secular, have remained important in the provision of practical forms of family support, including schools, children's homes, day centres and hospitals. They are funded to a large extent by the public sector, but delivered by the civil society sector, and this relationship is ensured through the ideology of subsidiarity maintained in Ireland, which insists on the primacy of civil society organizations in welfare services.

The role of the civil society sector in family policy in the UK is rapidly gaining ascendance as family policy comes to occupy a prominent role on political agendas, though it still falls a long way short of the place occupied by its counterpart in France. In the absence of a coherent family policy at national level in the past, civil society organizations in the UK were very important in providing services for individuals and families that fall through the net. According to the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR),

*For a long time the government had no explicit family policy. There was no explicit rationale. In that type of vacuum, voluntary sector organizations have been very important in terms of defining the debate and delivering support.*

Such services have traditionally been established to serve families in crisis. In addition, given the fact that organizations have developed around a single issue (lone-parenting, child poverty), it can be argued that this has limited their bargaining power in central government debates.

When the Labour government came to power in 1997, the relationship between government and the civil society sector was strengthened as family policy became a more prominent policy area and as greater power was given to civil society organizations following recommendations in the Deakin Report. Civil society organizations since then have progressively become more effective players in a variety of roles from advising government, lobbying, disseminating information and providing practical help. Instead of filling a role because of the inadequacies of the state, the sector now provides support to the state and is backed by it. A representative of Age Concern England (ACE) suggested:

*I think what's happened with this government in particular is it sought to try and make links with NGOs and voluntary sector organizations, both in development of policy and in implementation and reviewing of policy.*

Organizations working as mediators between researchers, people and the government, especially the Family Policy Studies Centre (FPSC), IPPR and National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), stated that their ability to supply research data was particularly important to government in giving credibility to policies and feeding grass-roots experiences into the policy debate. They argued that '*single-issue NGOs are very often driving the policy agenda forward*' (National Family and Parenting Institute, NFPI). However, respondents agreed that some have a greater capacity than others to shape policy, particularly organizations that are part funded by the state or in which the government have a political interest for winning votes (NFPI, ACE and the National Council for One Parent Families, NCOPF). In this climate of state provision for some and not for others, it is difficult for the weaker civil society organizations to survive. In April 2001, the UK witnessed the closure of the FPSC, a charity carrying out independent research on policy impacts on families, because it could no longer survive when the bulk of its subsidy was transferred to the NFPI.

Elsewhere, the role of the civil society sector in family policy is more limited to particular types of activity or levels of activity due to a variety of social, political, cultural and historical factors. Policy debates concerning families in Sweden, for example, involve organizations from the civil society sector, but their role is restricted and their focus of attention is not the family unit. Their limited role can be understood, in part, as a product of the historically well-

developed social security systems in Sweden, which have meant that civil society organizations have not had to fill the gap as they have elsewhere. This is reflected in the relatively small size of the sector in general compared with other civil society sectors across the IPROSEC countries. A few organizations concentrate their efforts on the wellbeing of children, while older people have established their own powerful lobby through which to make their concerns heard. Nonetheless, their roles remain limited.

The situation is different in Germany. The role of civil society organizations is essentially to deliver services to families. They have a strong presence at local level but complain of a lack of awareness and co-operation at national level. Thus, despite the subsidiarity principle, civil society organizations, and especially those working in areas of family policy, are less well recognized by the state. However, researchers and representatives of the sector feel that the role of civil society organizations will increase in due course, not least because of the financial difficulties facing the social security system, and perhaps also as the need for family policy becomes more readily acknowledged.

In Greece, despite their limited scope, finances and experience, civil society organizations are found to be lucid and open-minded in their approach to family matters and the state has begun to acknowledge the important role they play in family policy. In particular, the state has attempted to register all civil society organizations, excluding the Church, by setting up criteria for funding, and by mobilizing them to take part in the emerging National Care System. The Greek Orthodox Church remains important in providing services, but other secular organizations are gradually replacing church and care associations. These secular organizations are defined as either non-government charitable organizations or public-funded bodies that provide care for different population groups and tackle social problems. The close relationship between the Orthodox Church and the state has meant that the sector has not developed substantially, but the weakly developed welfare system means that the sector, nonetheless, is forced to play an important role in family policy in place of the state.

In Italy, organizations in the civil society sector limit their own roles in the area of family policy because they tend to concentrate their efforts on particular family types. As a result, they often find themselves in conflict with a powerful Catholic lobby that focuses on families in general and traditional family types more specifically, which, in turn, damages the credibility of a third sector and the realization of its full potential in family policy issues. Thus, the Church plays a role in partnership with the state in Italy, while the majority of civil society organizations have a limited capacity to influence policy because they lack the financial means and recognition to do so as a political body of civic organizations. They are important service providers, but they deliver welfare especially to those not covered by the state.

Similarly in Spain, the role of civil society organizations in family policy is limited because of a strong Catholic lobby, as well as the Spanish statist political culture that is supportive of exclusive rather than co-operative state intervention, the sector's limited financial means and its lack of credibility as a separate sector. However, while the civil society sector operates at a distance from the state, its role in family policy formulation and implementation is visible and institutionalized. The sector is engaged in debate with the state through the Party Secretary for Equality, which conducts consultations with civil society

organizations such as the National Union of Family Associations, the Association of Separated and Divorced Women, and the Association of Women with Family Responsibilities, among others. Despite the institutionalization of civil society activity, however, the influence of these organizations is limited. The traditional role of the Catholic Church and religious organizations in delivering services to families is maintained in Spain, with a limited capacity for secular civil society organizations.

While each is very different, the candidate countries share a similar story to each other: since transition, they have all seen an increase in the role of the civil society sector in family policy. Nonetheless, compared with the IPROSEC EU member states, the role of the sector in family policy remains small and is constrained by tense relations with the state. In Estonia, growth of the sector has been largely due to the mutual agreement that the civil society sector has an instrumental role to play in making the transition to modernity. This relationship has been institutionalized with the establishment of a Ministry of Family and Population to bring family policy under the remit of one organization. Despite the recognition and willingness for the sector to play an important partnership role, however, its organizations lack resources to be effective partners with the state, not least because they do not have the financial means to pursue long-term initiatives. Due to this lack of resources, Estonian civil society organizations see their role as offering advice and specialized services. However, the Society of Families with Many Children does have some power in the lobbying process, supported in their role by research conducted by the Unit of Family Studies at Tartu University. Government take account of their ideas and, as a result, their everyday activities are supported from the state budget.

In Poland, the ascendance of the sector's role has been largely connected with a rise in the influence of the Catholic Church, which is by far the most influential third sector organization. The civil society sector outside the Church is relatively small and weak. One representative from a leftwing feminist organization stated that '*non-governmental organizations have never, under any government, been treated as a partner*'. Their impact is also reduced by the incoherence of family policies. According to rightwing Polish civil society organizations,

*We have a programme but we can't speak of coherence, for not all the ruling actors, not everybody who administers the finances in the state is aware that all the actions taken by different departments are directed at family and are initiated with the development of the family in mind.*

Leftwing Polish civil society organizations are more critical of the lack of coherence of family policies, suggesting that the programme for family policy, which was created by the rightwing government, is '*just wishful thinking with no chance of implementation*'. Furthermore, the contribution of the sector to family policy is largely determined by their political affiliations. Hence, while the sector is generally small, the relative political power of its organizations varies considerably. Polish civil society organizations are divided into two blocks, one connected with Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnosc (AWS, Solidarity Electoral Action) or small Catholic parties, and the other with leftwing and liberal parties. Between 1997 and 2001 (the latter part of which was when these interviews took place), the ruling coalition was rightwing. If an organization was connected with the rightwing ruling coalition, then it played a strong role in policy formulation, though not an equal role it must be said. If it was a leftwing NGO,

then it was generally not invited to debates and was excluded from the policy-making process. One interviewee from the League of Polish Women summarized the situation thus:

*Only the party that is currently in power matters, only its opinions, its viewpoints [are relevant].... The situation at present is that, for example, the Family Rights Commissioner does not co-operate with any organization targeted at women and family outside the groups from the Catholic alignment.*

These groups from the Catholic alignment were involved in drafting the Charter of Family Rights during the parliamentary elections in 1997 and were widely represented in the Sejm.

In Hungary, the relationship between the sector and the state is not a partnership but a distant alliance in the family policy arena. One respondent stated: '*There is a gap between the civil society organizations and political parties; they don't have much to do with each other, including the liberal parties*'. As in Estonia, an institutionalized relationship exists between the state and civil society sectors, with the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs co-ordinating the initiatives of organizations in the civil society sector. Yet, despite this structural integration of the public and civil society sectors in family policy, Hungarian organizations believe that they are not fully integrated into the government's family policy formulation process. Instead, they pursue their own plans for family policy, based on the needs of families. Financial controls imposed by the state, however, prevent many organizations from working independently of the government. When they have to rely on state support to function, organizations need to align themselves with the operations of funders to keep themselves financially afloat. In this uncertain financial climate, they are unable to provide strong opposition to lobby the state in policy formulation, lest their funding be cut. Nonetheless, Hungarian civil society organizations do play a role in areas where state intervention is not considered appropriate or sufficiently effective, such as gender equality, equal treatment of men and women at the workplace, child and elder care and adoption. They also provide services, such as help and advice centres, and the churches provide other forms of practical help, such as shelters for the homeless and victims of abuse, medical provision and benevolence. This role has been significantly increased since the reduction in state support in these areas following measures recommended in the Bokros Package in 1995. The sector's contribution to family policy in Hungary is, therefore, divided between those well-funded organizations offering services in conjunction with the state, and those that are less financially secure working in competition with, or outside the remit of, government family policy.

In sum, the role of the civil society sectors in shaping and implementing family policy across the IPROSEC countries varies considerably according to their relationship with the state and the advancement of a family policy agenda.

In France and increasingly, though not yet on a par with France, in Ireland and the UK, the sector is playing an important role in partnership with the state in the family policy domain, while in other countries, such as Spain, Greece, Italy, and the candidate countries, their role is marginalized, save for the interests of the Catholic Church, whose role is declining in most countries except Poland. In some cases, both policy formulation and implementation are important, as in France, the UK, and Ireland; in others the sector primarily lobbies, as in Sweden, and perhaps also Poland and Estonia, though with

varying degrees of influence; and in some cases the main role of the sector is delivery of services, for example, Germany, Greece and Hungary. These variations can be explained by the historical development of the sector in relation to the state, financial provision, the political power of organizations and the influence of the Catholic Church in the formulation and implementation of family policies.

### **Legitimacy of policy intervention**

The various roles played by the civil society sector can also be situated in relation to the legitimacy of state intervention in family life in each country. Thus, while the previous section discussed their role in relation to the state, this section focuses more specifically on views of civil society representatives regarding whether or not the state should intervene in family life, to what extent, and on what terms. Given that the respondents are in the civil society sector, some form of legitimizing of their own roles in socio-political life might be expected. Respondents, for example, are not likely to call for the heavy hand of the state because this would leave no room for their sector. It is the degree of intervention by the state, and the relationship of the civil society sectors in the delivery of policies, therefore, that is interesting to observe across the IPROSEC countries. The call for state intervention is made by all respondents, but on the condition that it is limited and delivered mainly through civil society organizations. Some respondents more clearly define the duties of the state as separate from those of the civil society sector, either in function or in the level at which operations take place. No respondents, understandably, suggested that the state should 'go it alone' in the family policy arena.

Civil society policy actors in France, the IPROSEC country with the most explicit and supportive family policy, as reflected in national law and practice, readily acknowledged the legitimacy of state intervention in family life. However, they also recognized the duty incumbent on civil society organizations to take account of family factors in partnership with the state. This approach remains uncontested in France, and is reflected in the co-operation between the state and civil society discussed above. As a result, support for state intervention has not meant a weak civil society sector, but instead has enabled a strong partnership to develop between the two sectors.

By contrast, in Sweden, while state intervention is also acknowledged as being legitimate, the role of governments is to create favourable living conditions for families with children and not to influence family building. For this reason, it is civil society organizations working for children that have been influential in setting the policy agenda in Sweden, and the role of the state is to facilitate the improvement of services. In contrast to the situation in France, however, the civil society sector acknowledges the legitimacy of state intervention but only in specified areas that create a well-defined, though small, niche for the sector, and the state is expected to formulate and implement most policy targeting families.

The legitimacy of state intervention according to respondents elsewhere in Western Europe is less well defined and, in Germany, the UK and Ireland, where the civil society sector is undergoing change, perceptions appear to be confused. In Germany, for example, policy actors admit that the country lacks a coherent family policy, while at the same time claiming that the family is high on

the policy agenda and has become a legitimate topic for government intervention. As family policy has moved out of the private domain, civil society actors suggest that they see their role increasing in designing and implementing policy and in being consulted on policy issues. However, they stated that they are not always aware of their potential to intervene in this relatively new direction of family policy. Furthermore, German civil society organizations are unclear about the role they can play in relation to the state.

Similarly in the UK, after long being considered a country where the state kept its distance from the private domain of the family, a shift in approach in the mid-1990s left a new, but unspecified, role for the sector in relation to the state. Unlike Germany, however, the role in the UK is more clearly defined because of the traditional focus of the sector on crisis families. From being highly fragmented, family policy has become more focused. Organizations within the civil society sector welcome the new approach, but they continue to express caution about state involvement in family affairs. *'Intervention should be a last resort strategy'*, one respondent from the FPSC replied, while others stated that the government should intervene but only as a facilitator: *'On the one hand they should intervene to help those who are most in need.... But they should only intervene when it is to the advantage of the group'* (NCOPF). It was also apparent in the UK that, as the government are beginning to politicize the previously private domain of the family, civil society organizations are instrumental in making this sea change palatable to the public and in delivering it to the public effectively: *'We know what people want and what they need because we are in contact with them every day at the grass-roots level. Government respect that position and they listen to us.... It's in [government's] best interest to listen to us'* (NCOPF). This cautious acceptance of state intervention, yet recognition of the need for civil society support, reflects the growing importance, and perhaps even convergence, of civil society organizations in the family policy field, similar to the situation in France. However, this caution also provides one reason why civil society organizations are predominantly single-issue (crisis) organizations rather than general family welfare organizations. These are deemed to be legitimate forms of intervention without being considered too obtrusive in family life.

In Ireland, attitudes have also evolved towards the legitimacy of policy intervention, but while the reaction is positive, legitimacy is restricted to specific areas. The Catholic Church traditionally kept government influence and interference to a minimum. Although it maintains this position, the influence of the Church has been declining to make way for both the state and an emerging role for secular charities and campaigning groups. While acceptance is growing of government intervention in family matters from secular organizations, the latter are aware of the need for it to be justified, and they do so primarily on economic grounds and with reference to labour shortages. Thus, family policy has a legitimate role, but only in certain areas, according to Irish respondents.

In the Mediterranean countries, legitimacy of state intervention, as in Ireland, is also restricted to certain areas. In Greece, views about whether the state should intervene in family life depend on the political alignment of the respondent. In general, political actors do not feel they are expected to intervene to influence family structures, but they can justify action if it is aimed at protecting and facilitating family life. More liberal civil society actors, such as those supporting victims of domestic violence for example, also shared the view

of the state as facilitator rather than manipulator, stating that '*intervention should help or support families and not punish or penalize them*'. The Greek Orthodox Church and the Association of Large Families, however, suggested that the state should intervene to influence family structures. They argued that policies should protect the traditional family unit and resist changes to the nuclear family model.

The Italian civil society respondents argued in favour of specific geopolitical levels of state intervention (regional, provincial and local) as well as areas of legitimacy. Civil society organizations, respondents suggested, are involved in partnership with the state at these sub-national levels. In particular, Italian representatives said that, although family policy had been given little attention among policy makers, state intervention in areas such as child protection and parental leave are considered especially important at sub-national levels. In other areas and at other levels, however, legitimacy is less readily recognized.

In Spain, less predictably, the legitimacy of government intervention in family issues is acknowledged but, as in Italy and France, it also implies a strong role for the civil society sector. This represents a shift in policy from the previous government's stance, which was described as maintaining a 'hands-off' position, owing to the strong public association of family policy with the pre-democratic authoritarian regime. However, legitimacy of policy intervention in family matters is acknowledged because Spanish civil society organizations believe that policy should be delivered through the civil society sector, with core funding from the state, thereby cementing a relationship between the two sectors with the former fulfilling the grass-roots, hands-on function of the latter's family policies.

Government intervention in the candidate countries was generally considered legitimate, particularly in light of their long history of state intervention in family life, but not as direct intervention. In Estonia, as in Italy and Spain, representatives from the civil society sector argue that legitimacy of government intervention rests on the expansion of the role of the civil society sector in formation and implementation of family policies in a practical and efficient manner at the local level. This view is expressed in the response of a representative from the Open Estonia Foundation: '*If the state wants to exist, then it has to foster ... the linkage between family issues and political rhetoric, which should reach each individual*', adding that it was the third sector that was in a position to make this link between the state and individuals. Also in Hungary, while most actors considered government intervention to be legitimate, concern was expressed over the reasons behind it, and what such intervention should entail. A member of the Methodist Church argued: '*I don't believe that having children has anything to do with patriotism*' and '*the state should not intervene in forming attitudes about having children*'. Instead, it was argued, the state should be concerned with the provision of minimum standards for the functioning of family life.

In Poland, less support was expressed for state intervention in family matters, but the perceived level of acceptable intervention differed among respondents according to their political alignment, similar to the situation in Greece. Rightwing-aligned civil society organizations agreed with the government in power at the time of the interviews that family is a major public policy issue and policies should aim at enhancing the fulfilment of family

functions, and should be more prescriptive. Leftwing organizations shared the belief that family policy should allow different forms of family life to develop and be more enabling. Nonetheless, among the candidate countries, Polish respondents expressed most concern about state intervention and the need to limit it to some extent. This view perhaps reflects the strong role traditionally played by other organizations in family policy and welfare outside the state, namely the Catholic Church and informal networks.

In terms of legitimacy, therefore, while the need to intervene in family life is generally recognized, it is only accepted unreservedly in France. In other countries, intervention is considered legitimate in certain areas, reflected in the views of respondents in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, the UK and Hungary. In Sweden, intervention is considered legitimate by the state if it operates separately from the interests of the small civil society sector. In contrast, the UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Estonia accept intervention but only if the civil society sector plays a strong role. Poland shared this view, but cautioned against state intervention at the expense of the Church's role.

### **Policy objectives**

The previous sections outlined the perceived legitimacy and social acceptability of intervention by the state, which in turn highlighted the case for civil society organizations to be involved in family policy. This section is concerned with the work of civil society organizations in family policy areas, and discusses the policy objectives of the sector.

The aim of French civil society sector family policy is to offer help to families most in need. The objectives of French public policy have changed over the latter half of the twentieth century from pronatalist and universal initiatives to more targeted protection for families at risk, irrespective of family type. In this sense, the sector complements the aims of the state, ensuring a smooth delivery of policies to, and on behalf of, French families.

One of the main tasks of family policy, according to German civil society organizations, is to ensure the material and financial protection of families, which calls for the satisfactory inclusion of family members in income-generating work and gainful employment, education and appropriate housing. In short, families should be supported by a strong infrastructure, co-ordinated by all sectors to benefit all families. This holistic vision, however, has not yet come to fruition because of the current piecemeal approach to family policy.

It is not clear what the policy objectives are in the UK, particularly as the attitude towards family policy is in flux and organizations have different aims. However, some consensus was found that the state's family policy is economically driven in contrast to civil society organizations' concerns with providing for families' needs beyond the economic sphere (social rather than economic capital). The IPPR reported that '*[state] family policy is focused largely on income, working patterns, and has focused less on social support, social services*'. In addition, the civil society actors agreed that family policy was largely reactive to crisis situations, and this is epitomized by the location of the Family Policy Unit (FPU) in the Home Office, '*a place responsible for drugs and crime*' (FPSC). This policy objective of the state is shared by civil society organizations, which largely focus on single issues providing support in crisis

situations. The main exception to the crisis function of civil society organizations is the Catholic Church, whose representative stated:

*Unlike other civil society organizations, the Catholic Church doesn't just focus on crisis families. The whole of the Church's work is about supporting families as much as the salvation of mankind or other great aims that we're meant to have. The family is very much the unit, and most services, support structures and goals are about supporting the family and enabling them to cope in our world today.*

Policy objectives, therefore, differ between the state and civil society, and within the civil society sector in the UK.

Civil society policy actors in Sweden also advocate the strengthening of a whole social infrastructure to support families through the protection of individual civil liberties. Respondents stated that the role of the Swedish government and policy makers should be to create an enabling environment for families to make their own lifestyle choices. Policy in Sweden can, therefore, be considered permissive and proactive.

In the Mediterranean countries, policy objectives are more divided between liberal concerns and protection of the traditional family, though the interests of the latter are losing ground in contemporary society. In Greece, two of the respondents (the Church and the Association of Large Families) argued that intervention should aim to maintain the existing structure and resist changes that are perceived as threatening the nuclear family and the birthrate. All other representatives seemed to promote protection and facilitation of families rather than influencing family structures. Given the state's focus on traditional definitions of the family, Greek civil society organizations are largely working towards helping those excluded by the state, and hence fill a gap left by public policy.

The civil society sector in Ireland is dominated by the Catholic Church and is strongly supported by public financing. The objectives of both the state and the state-supported civil society organizations are closely allied: they are both reluctant to intervene in family life and the definition of the family has recently been revised, though it remains ambiguous. The objectives of the civil society sector, especially those advanced by secular and more independent organizations, are to promote the well-being of all types of families, and to create the optimum socio-economic conditions. Civil society organizations, therefore, share some concerns with the state, but smaller, single-issue, liberal-leaning organizations cater for those excluded by the state apparatus of family policy.

The objectives of civil society organizations in Italy with regard to families can be considered protective, though, as in Greece and Ireland, some organizations have a less conservative idea of what family policy should incorporate. The Catholic Church, in close alliance with the state, is largely protective of the traditional male breadwinner family, but consensus is growing that policies should aim to support all families whatever their structure. In comparison, civil society organizations and churches working independently, as well as in conjunction with local and regional (rather than national) government, deliver more permissive policies that respond to the needs of people in the area, and may extend beyond the remit of state family policy objectives. For example, Arci Gay in Pisa has successfully campaigned for a register of civil unions in the administrative area of the city, while, at the national level, there is no consideration of implementing such a policy universally.

In Spain, as in Italy, public policy aims to protect the family, but civil society actors differed in their views about how that should be achieved. Pro-government respondents from the civil society sector believed that intervention was needed only to help families in difficulties, while others, such as the representative from the Centro de Ayuda a Víctimas de Agresión Sexual (CAVAS, Centres to Help Victims of Sexual Aggression), felt that intervention should be aimed at protecting fundamental human rights. Actual policy objectives, however, divide the civil society sector between those who give priority to support for family life and those whose primary concern is family structure. In the first case, the dominant issue is the reconciliation of family and working life for women, via parental leave; in the second case, the focus is on supporting families, mainly women with children, via child support benefits (though these are at a very low level compared with other member states). Some tension, therefore, arises between permissive and enabling family policies and prescriptive and prohibitive ones.

In Estonia, the main family policy objectives of civil society organizations are to improve the economic situation of families and to increase public awareness of issues that can arise in family life. Organizations are working in conjunction with the state to fulfil these aims, complementing government initiatives and, at times, leading the state towards more effective family policies.

In Hungary, civil society actors argue that state policy objectives are prohibitive and prescriptive, which, they contend, is not the most effective means of enabling and supporting families in the modern era: *'The government are reinforcing the conservative family model while the world has changed; some women want to build a career, participate in public life'*. Some civil society organizations, meanwhile, support the development of women and their careers, and take a more proactive line in furthering this policy objective. Criticism is also levelled at state policies that influence family structures. A representative of the Methodist Church commented that it is inhuman to persuade people to have fewer children while encouraging others to have more children through all kinds of support. He added his own view:

*I do not believe that, in a world where governments are coming and going, people will have children only because they belong to the social stratum which provides for the country, or because they want to procure glory for the Hungarian homeland.*

Hungarian civil society organizations, in contrast to the state, have as their aim the support of family life more generally. They try to remain neutral and support individual choices.

Civil society actors agreed in Poland that policy objectives should be supportive and enabling rather than prohibitive, though the leftwing respondents were more keen to follow this liberal policy objective than those on the right. The policy objectives of leftwing civil society organizations are universalist and inclusive, with the specific aim of tackling family poverty and other pressures, irrespective of family type. For those on the right, policies are more protective and preventive, with the aim of protecting the family unit and preventing breakdown. When families break down, however, rightwing civil society organizations are then supportive and provide assistance to lone-parent families, especially if dissolution is due to the death of a spouse. The aims of civil society organizations are, therefore, divided between political positions that also change over time, thereby preventing any real partnership with state

initiatives. Only the Catholic Church plays a complementary role to the rightwing government's family policy formulation and implementation.

In terms of family policy objectives, two groups emerge from the IPROSEC countries. Firstly, a group composed of France, Germany, Sweden and the UK tends towards permissive family policies, with an interest in developing an infrastructural response to those most in need. Estonia also appears to be pursuing this kind of objective. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean countries, Hungary, and especially Ireland, a mix is found within each country between organizations working on a prohibitive family policy agenda, and those that are more liberal, permissive and proactive. The Catholic Church in Spain, Italy and Ireland seems to fall between these two extremes, while in Poland, where the Church is closely allied with the state, it advocates more prohibitive objectives regarding family policies.

### **Family policy formulation**

Having outlined the general aims of civil society organizations in promoting the cause for family policy, the next two sections focus on the ways in which these organizations are engaged in family policy. The first is in formulating policy, and the second is in delivering the fruits of those policies to people, or service delivery.

Only in France were government departments, economic actors and civil society organizations found to be working together in complementary roles in the formulation of policies. Specialized institutions are well established in the civil society sector to represent the interests of families, including the UNAF. They work closely with the government in formulating (and implementing) family policy. The example of France, therefore, suggests that the lobbying role of civil society organizations can be effective because of the close relationship between the state and civil society through their co-ordinated approach to family policy. The same outcome is not, however, found in other IPROSEC countries.

Intervention in Sweden, for example, is implicit and indirect. Yet, as in France, the civil society sector is integrated into the policy formulation process. The nature of family policy can be understood as a consequence of the structuring of the social system around the individual rather than the family unit. Since support is directed towards individuals, impacts on families are indirect. Due to Sweden's historic legacy of strong advocacy and the weak service role for the sector as a whole, civil society organizations are involved in lobbying government on behalf of individuals. The implicit and indirect nature of the policies means they are well equipped to campaign for the needs of individuals, thereby ensuring appropriate policy measures.

In Spain, as in Sweden and most of the IPROSEC countries, the approach to family policy is implicit. No administrative body is responsible for family policy mainstreaming, and indirect measures are used to avoid additional expenditure on policies of a separate policy domain that would be explicitly devoted to family policy. These indirect measures include fiscal policy, particularly tax allowances. In this political climate, civil society organizations are unable to tap into a coherent family policy lobby, except for the Catholic Church, which has a strong presence in Spanish politics. A small number of other organizations also play some part in policy formulation in Spain, but their influence is dependent

upon their political affiliation. The Federation of Women for Democracy and the Associations of Large Families, Widows and Homemakers play an important role, while others are less involved because they are considered leftist by the more conservative government. Even where policy is being developed in the specialist area of an organization, the organization is not necessarily called upon to offer advice. For example, the government's 'Plans of Assault Programme' was pioneered by prominent associations of feminist lawyers and advice centres for victims of violence, but they were not brought into the policy-making process because of their liberal leanings. As a consequence, the sector's main contribution to family policy is in policy implementation rather than policy formulation.

In Greece, respondents commented that family policy was piecemeal and inadequate and, as in Spain, the financial cost of family policies explained the aversion towards more explicit policies. A Greek researcher commented: *'the state could have options and instruments [to implement family policies], it doesn't have them, it doesn't want to have them either. It wants to save money, to restrict budgets'*. The lobbying arm of civil society organizations in Greece is, therefore, prevented from having any meaningful impact in family policy because their demands cannot be met by a financially impoverished state.

Elsewhere, as with the question of legitimacy, the approach to family policy is becoming more explicit as the family is being increasingly prioritized on the policy agenda. Approaches, however, are far from coherent at present. Respondents in the UK from the civil society sector commented on the new approach adopted by the British government. The establishment of the FPU, housed in the Home Office, appears to have been a step towards more co-ordinated family policies between government departments but also between the public, private and civil society sectors. Within the civil society sector, the general feeling is that this co-ordination has not yet reached maturity: *'the government are talking about this so-called joined-up policy. There are links across departments, but on some policies it's not working'* (NCOPF). A civil society representative from the FPSC commented: *'There's been so much activity going on over the last three years, often carried out departmentally, that there are tensions between positions of our different departments'*. However, despite the limits on the development of co-ordinated policies, the political authority of civil society organizations in lobbying government were said to have improved. Though not yet on a par with their counterparts in France or Sweden, UK civil society organizations all agreed that the Labour government were taking the civil society sector much more seriously in the formulation of policy. Groups such as ACE, NSPCC, NCOPF, NFPI make considerable contributions to family policy at different stages of its formulation. Nonetheless, other organizations, such as the Catholic Association for Social Concern (CASC) and the former FPSC, have (or used to have in the case of the latter) less influence in the policy formulation process because of their looser financial and/or political ties with government.

Estonia also has a history of incoherent family policies, but, like the UK, has recently established a governmental unit to bring family policy under the remit of one organization. In Estonia, however, this is brought under the auspices of a minister in the Ministry of Family and Population. Civil society actors complained that a shortage of social and economic resources had limited the effectiveness of the ministry to date, and policy has, therefore, remained

incoherent. In addition, the lack of resources has meant that the involvement of civil society organizations in formulating policy has been limited, while the strong statist tradition left after several decades of Communist rule has resulted in the lobbying role of the sector being curtailed. However, the Society of Families with many Children does have some power in the lobbying process, and they have been successful in many areas, including securing the provision of additional benefits to families at the end of the financial year payable from any money remaining in the state budget. Although there is some indication that the situation is changing, the civil society sector is still only marginally involved in family policy formulation in Estonia.

Hungary also has an explicit approach to family policy at government level, with the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs co-ordinating the initiatives of organizations in the civil society sector. Yet, despite this structural integration of the public and civil society sectors in family policy, Hungarian organizations believe that they are not fully integrated into the government's family policy formulation process. Instead, they pursue their own plans for family policy, based on the needs of families. The traditional established churches (Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical) remain closer to the state according to the interviewees, and it is these, along with state-funded civil society organizations such as the National Association of People with Large Families (NOE), that tend to have the most authority in lobbying. Civil society organizations not aligned with the state, including the smaller churches, are marginalized in the policy formulation process. One respondent from the Equal Opportunities Foundation said: *'We are unable to influence the government's policies, partly because of my position. I left the Ministry. I often attack the minister in my publications'*.

In Poland, no central organization orchestrates family policy as in Hungary or Estonia, though the situation was expected to change following the re-election of the leftwing government in September 2001. Policies are explicit in their approach, in the sense that they are openly conservative, protecting the (traditional nuclear) family, as illustrated by the restrictive legislation on abortion and contraception. The Catholic Church is instrumental in the policy formulation process, and the open conservatism of family policies reflects this input. Another church-related organization, the Polish Federation of Catholic Families, is very powerful in family policy issues, particularly under the rightwing ruling coalition between 1997 and 2001. The contribution of other organizations in the sector to policy formulating is limited by party affiliation. Under the rightwing government in power until September 2001, if an organization was connected with the coalition, it played a strong role in policy formulation, though not an equal role. If it was a leftwing organization, it was generally not invited to debates and was excluded from the policy-making process.

In Italy, family policies are not co-ordinated, but civil society organizations have played some role in remedying the situation by providing their own co-ordinator of family associations Caritas. In addition to co-ordinating family associations, Caritas is a social policy lobby group of the Catholic Church, and is the most influential organization in the sector for lobbying government. Other civil society organizations outside the Catholic Church receive little political recognition, a feature that is characteristic not only of Italy but also of Poland, Spain and Ireland. At the sub-national level, however, other organizations in Italy have also made a significant contribution to formulation of policy. Arci Gay,

for example, has been instrumental in drawing up new legislation in Bologna to improve the status of unmarried cohabiting couples in public housing provision. Nonetheless, the weak family policy structure, coupled with a strong state and powerful Catholic Church, leaves little scope for formal policy formulation by the civil society sector. Their primary role is, instead, policy implementation.

The situation is similar in Ireland. There, the policy approach is piecemeal, and the call for a more comprehensive family policy programme does not generate the attention that the civil society actors feel it deserves. Instead, attention has focused on economic policies; and social policies are of secondary concern, especially in the light of rapid economic development over the 1990s. In reporting on the secondary importance ascribed to family policy, one respondent from the Women's Educational Research and Resource Centre stated that: '*The question of an overarching family policy has been lost in the maelstrom that is the Celtic Tiger economy of Ireland*'. In this context, the lobbying of the civil society sector carries little weight unless supporting the economic aims of the state, due to the large amount of funding derived from the public sector, estimated at 74.8% of all sector income in 1995 (most recent data available). In the UK, a smaller proportion, but still a considerable amount, of state funding has ensured greater involvement of the civil society sector in policy formulation rather than restricting its initiatives as in Ireland. It seems that the principle of subsidiarity in Ireland and the separation of the public and civil society sectors prevent any real role for organizations to formulate state policy.

The principle of subsidiarity also explains the weak lobbying role of the civil society sector in Germany. As the family has moved out of the private domain and onto the political agenda, the approach has become no more coherent in Germany. Divided between different levels of governance, from the *Bund*, *Länder* and *Kommunen*, and covering a range of areas from education, old people, intergenerational relations, and the economy, family policy is piecemeal. Policy is also implicit, with measures being taken only when really necessary and, as in Ireland, the first priority is economic policy. With the marked separation between the civil society sector and the state, and the centrality of the German principle of subsidiarity in the provision of social welfare, the civil society sector is engaged in its own separate field of family policy, which limits the opportunities for lobbying the state.

In general, countries can be characterized according to the lobbying role of civil society organizations. France, Sweden and, to some extent, the UK fall into the category of strong lobbyists. In Poland, the civil society sector plays a strong lobbying role, due to the prominence of one organization, the Catholic Church. Similarly in Spain, Italy and Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church makes an important contribution to family policy formulation. The rest of the sector is relatively weak because of its small size, limited funds and the prominence of the state and the church. However, secular organizations that have some link with the state and/or the Church, either through their funding or through the influence of individuals, are more influential lobbyists than those without these connections. In Germany and Greece, the lobbying role of the civil society sector is poorly developed.

### **Delivery of services for families**

While the government, through the provision of public services and benefits, formally implement family policy, civil society organizations participate in the delivery of services in a number of ways. Generally those services are delivered at grass-roots or local level, sometimes in conjunction with public administration and, at other times, in areas not covered by the public sector. They provide varied services, including telephone helplines, food, clothing, shelter, emotional support, children's and old people's homes, schools, hospitals, leisure and social centres, parent-toddler groups, training, counselling, holiday camps, cash benefits and grants. Different organizations have an interest in supporting particular groups, such as lone mothers, widows, older people and ethnic minorities, while others, like the Church-based organizations, provide more general family services. The salient question is whether these services complement state provision, whether they take the place of state provision, or whether they have their own separate agendas in addition to that of the state. The answer varies among the 11 countries included in this research.

In France, for example, services provided by nonprofit organizations are delivered in conjunction with the state. The umbrella organization UNAF (and especially its largest member Familles de France) is responsible for managing certain social services, including those sub-contracted by the state. The co-ordination of family policy implementation under the administration of one body ensures its harmonization not only among nonprofits but also between nonprofits and the state. Furthermore, given that the sector receives 58% of its total income from public funds, it is not only its rhetorical co-operation but also its financial support that ensures the bridge between the public and nonprofit sector is strongly maintained. The legal structure also ensures a prominent role for French nonprofits in implementing policies. The decentralization laws that were passed during the first Mitterrand presidency (1981–88) produced a political climate in which policies had to be delivered at local level, though in co-operation with central government. In part as a result of these laws, by 1995 nonprofit organizations were running 55% of the overall number of residential care facilities in France and maintained a quasi-monopoly over services for people with disabilities (Archambault *et al*, 1999. p. 85). Nonetheless, although services are delivered in conjunction with the state, the formal separation between Church and state since the French Revolution, means that those services delivered by the Catholic Church in France are less well co-ordinated with family policy agendas.

Civil society organizations in Germany and Ireland similarly work in close co-operation with the state in delivering services to help families. Although family policy in both countries is weakly co-ordinated, the principle of subsidiarity that underlies social welfare (and which was cited as a factor limiting the lobbying role of nonprofit organizations) ensures that, in terms of service delivery, the state both guarantees and shapes nonprofit provision. Indeed, in family policy, which is incorporated within fields such as health and social services, nonprofit organizations appear to be quasi-governmental and at times almost indistinguishable in their operations from the encompassing German bureaucracy. The blurring of boundaries between sectors is hardly surprising given the large amount of public money invested in the nonprofit sectors in Germany and Ireland, which accounts for 64% and 75% of their respective total revenues in 1995. One respondent in Germany suggested that the state is keen to provide this funding because '*the state and public bodies are in no position to*

*match what the charitable organizations can offer ... as far as the implementation of family policy measures is concerned.*

The large amount of state funding received by the sector in Ireland, however, conceals the fact that little of this funding (3%) is directed towards social services and, therefore, the implementation of family policies by nonprofit organizations is not necessarily controlled by the state. Instead, the Catholic Church dominates the nonprofit sector, and is especially important in shaping policy on behalf of the nonprofit sector and also within government. It is more accurate to say that subsidiarity in Ireland ensures co-ordination between family policy formulation and implementation with the state and the nonprofit sector, but the glue holding this together is not so much state funding as nonprofit (namely Catholic Church) strength. In Ireland, the Catholic Church and its organizations have historically been the principal providers of services, beginning in 1829 with the Catholic Emancipation Act that stated health, education and social welfare were to be provided by nonprofit, especially Catholic, organizations. Since the Church plays such an influential role in government in Ireland, its schools, children's homes, old people's homes and centres and hospitals are well integrated with government initiatives.

The Catholic Church, because of its promotion of voluntarism and community action, has an important role to play in policy implementation, not just in Ireland. Where Catholicism is the major religion and has a significant place in the national culture, as in Spain and Italy, the role of the nonprofit sector in implementing services is significantly enhanced. In Spain, for example, the Catholic Church is the primary provider of family services outside the family, and the state plays a limited role. The Church, therefore, provides a service that the state fails to offer, but even this role is limited since families tend to service their members as much as possible. Some civil society organizations outside the Church deliver a service that is supported by government through core and programme funding, such as the provision of ten or so centres throughout the country to help victims of sexual aggression. The call on civil society is designed to target help where it is most needed. Over the past decade, the implementation of family policies by Spanish nonprofit organizations has become more prevalent, but the Catholic Church continues to hold a central place.

Similarly in Italy, the Catholic Church, particularly through its parishes, is an important service provider. With no co-ordinated family policy within government and a weak social welfare system, as in Spain, the Catholic Church in Italy has provided external help to those most in need and maintains a relative monopoly in the provision of welfare services, especially in health and education. The decentralizing tendency of Italian politics has also contributed to this monopolization. However, decentralization has also enabled other secular nonprofit organizations to make important contributions to family policy implementation. For example, Telefono Azzurro, a children's helpline, was set up nationally to help children through their problems. At local level, however, in the Province of Rome, it also provides a centre for disabled children and supports children in, and coming out of, prison. These nonprofit organizations operate most effectively where state provision is inadequate and, therefore, their contribution varies considerably by region according to the needs of the communities not adequately covered by state and/or family support mechanisms.

Poland's Catholic Church similarly plays the primary role in implementing family policy and, because of its influence in the state, its services are largely delivered in conjunction with state family policies. Catholic organizations collect money and redistribute finances to programmes offering support for youngsters. They support youth organizations, community centres and cultural centres, and take care of older and disabled people. Employing approximately one third of all nonprofit sector employees, the Polish Catholic Church and its affiliated service providers are unarguably the most important actors in family policy implementation. Other Polish nonprofit organizations deliver services, but their contribution to family welfare service provision as a whole is limited by their financial insecurity and hence by their relationship with the government on whom they depend for financial support. As a consequence, Polish nonprofits are able to provide services, but these are only effective if they are shaped by the views of the state. The Polish Women's League and the Fund for Women's Rights provide financial support for the most destitute families suffering from transition. They help single mothers, organize canteens for poor children, run vocational schools for girls from dysfunctional families, provide family counselling, conduct programmes against domestic violence, offer legal and psychological guidance to women victims of abuse and set up hostels for victims of domestic violence. Despite the wealth of services offered, these organizations are seen as contradictory to the previous (until 21 September 2001) rightwing coalition government, and they were offered little financial support from the state, with their potential impacts not being fully realized. This political division among some nonprofit organizations and the state has also contributed to the monopolization of the Church in terms of family service provision, though whether the new leftwing government brought to power in 2001 will have any impact on strengthening the input from secular nonprofits remains to be seen.

The centrality of the Church in Greece has also prevented nonprofit organizations from developing a strong service role, but this is as much because of its advocacy of state and family involvement in family welfare as because of the Church's involvement. Undoubtedly, the Church of Greece, which has 90 General Poor Funds at bishoperic level and 3,194 Parish Poor Funds, provides the most important form of family services. The Church delivers meals-on-wheels, gives one-off financial payments for rent debts, electricity bills or hospital fees, sends patients overseas for medical treatment, funds hostels, orphanages, old people's homes and so on. In addition, Family Support Centres have been set up in 16 dioceses to provide counselling, social work, emotional support and advice, as well as material assistance for large families. Although the services provided by the Church are numerous, the criteria used to judge who should receive allowances has been criticized. According to Symeonidou (1997, p. 82), 'Selection is usually at the discretion of the parish priest, who may well prefer to make payments to those who are frequent church goers rather than those who are really in need'. Other influential nonprofit organizations outside the Church, though few, deliver more targeted services. The Foundation for Children and the Family provides support to families in remote areas, to women prisoners and to children born with AIDS. The Foundation for Social Work provides support to families in crisis, immigrant families and children, and the disabled seeking employment.

The strength of nonprofit organizations in delivering services, however, is largely controlled by the state. As has been shown in the Polish, Irish, Spanish and Italian cases, only those nonprofit organizations, especially secular ones, that receive state financial support play any kind of role in delivering services. This is also the case in Greece. However, government funding of nonprofits in Greece is conducted in a non-rational fashion, with the allocation of funds guided mostly by partisan interests. The ability of nonprofit organizations to deliver effective services is, therefore, dependent upon their relationship with the government, and, in particular, with individuals in government who might be able to secure funds for their cause in return for favours.

In countries where the Church is a key provider of family services, a reluctance is similarly found for the state to intervene in the private domain of the family. Family policy specifically, and social welfare more generally, is weakly developed at government level, and instead, families provide the welfare net for individuals who need help. The Church, often seen as an extended family, is an acceptable means of intervention to support families in difficulties and has stepped in to fill the gap in family policy provision, which goes some way toward explaining the importance of the Church and nonprofit organizations in general in family policy implementation in Spain, Italy, Poland and Greece.

The UK public has also been reluctant to see the state intervene in the private domain of the family and, as a result, the nonprofit sector has traditionally had a significant part to play in supporting families not served by the state. The nonprofit sector has continued to provide the services needed by families as family policy has become a more central policy domain, and as the family has become a less restricted area for policy intervention. The sector has eased the acceptance of policy intervention into what has long been held as the private domain, without being seen as the heavy hand of the state intruding. One interviewee from ACE stated: *'I think the government are perhaps seeing NGOs as a way of giving credibility to their policies'*. Coupled with this social change in the acceptance of policy intervention in family life, the general political shift in the UK towards decentralization, in which the government have favoured contracting out not only to nonprofit organizations but also to private companies (particularly in health and social services), has enhanced the policy implementation role of the nonprofit sector. A representative from a centre-left think tank stated: *'You name it, the things that touch families are often voluntary or community-based organizations as opposed to state organizations'*. The government are keen to get nonprofits on board in their implementation of policies because organizations working locally and at grass-roots level can adapt to the specific needs of the local population more readily than government. According to a representative of the Catholic Church, *'NGOs have a much better understanding of where families are at, and at that end of the spectrum are engaging far more than any statutory organizations'*. Their specialist work in niche areas and at the local level predispose nonprofit organizations to respond more sensitively to different forms of disadvantage, and the state is, therefore, content to provide some financial support to these organizations to ensure a better quality of service to its clients and greater value for money for taxpayers. However, the significance of different family nonprofit organizations in the UK varies considerably and, as was seen in the case of family policy formulation, those nonprofit organizations receiving state

support work in close co-operation with the initiatives of the government to implement family policy. The NSPCC, for example, has been an important local-level implementer of the national Sure Start Programme, initiated by the Labour government in 1999, making significant contributions to families with state funding. Similarly, ACE provides vital services to the elderly and their families, many of which are funded through contractual agreements with local government level. In contrast to Greece, however, the organizations that are well funded by the state also have a powerful voice in formulating family policies, which ensures that they are less constrained by state support and more enabled to deliver policies that they endorse, as is the case in France. The churches in the UK, however, which are involved to a lesser extent in policy formulation and receive less funding from government, provide their own support to families, which is more universal than the government initiatives.

In Estonia and Hungary, the service provision by nonprofits is much less significant than elsewhere, largely because of state centralism and the small size of the nonprofit sector. However, since the Church was able to exist in some capacity under Communism, while civic organizations more generally were pushed underground, it is church organizations that today continue to provide most family services. In contrast to other countries, however, church organizations do not provide services for all families, but instead focus their attention on particular issues. In Estonia, the Lutheran Church has almost a monopoly on rehabilitating ex-prisoners, conducted through two purpose-built rehabilitation centres. The Catholic organization Caritas is one of the main contributors to the cause of integrating minorities. Secular, family-oriented nonprofit organizations, such as the Society of Families with Many Children, and the Society of Lone parents, also provide important services, including cash benefits, humanitarian aid and free legal advice. The former also make loans available for large families to set up businesses. The service role of the Estonian nonprofit sector has been enhanced since 1999 following the signing of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (Eesti Kodanikeühiskonna Arengu Kontseptsioon, or EKAK), which advocated cross-sector co-operation (EKAK, 2000). Government and local authorities as well as local businesses are beginning to contract with civil society organizations for services, as is the case in the UK. A Lutheran organization, for example, agreed in 2001 a contract with the Ministry of Social Affairs to provide all services for victims of crime (Siplane, personal correspondence). However, in contrast to the UK, the weak development of local government in the aftermath of a centralist state system, in addition to limited financial resources, has inhibited the growth of grass-roots activities in Estonia and, despite the awareness that contracting out could save money and deliver better services, it is yet to be fully realized (Ruutsoo *et al*, 1999).

The implementation of family policies by Hungarian nonprofit organizations has traditionally been limited by a centralist state but, as in Estonia, a recent government initiative aimed at reducing costs on welfare has enhanced the role of the sector. In 1995, finance minister Lajos Bokros implemented a financial package aimed at reducing the Hungarian government's large welfare state bill (amounting to 27% of GDP). Free childcare places and higher education were withdrawn, generous maternity benefits were cut, and substantial numbers of public sector jobs were lost. As the state withdrew from these areas, the service arm of the nonprofit sector was

extended. A large number of Hungarian nonprofit organizations are benevolent social organizations providing the safety net that the state withdrew in 1989 and again in 1995. Hence, nonprofits in Hungary are especially active in areas where state intervention is not sufficiently effective. In these areas, the state provides some financial support on which many organizations depend for survival. However, in return for this funding some policy autonomy is lost. According to a Methodist priest: *'If state support is provided, then the state thinks that it has the right to intervene in the functioning of the supported organizations'*. The ability of nonprofits to offer a specialist service is thereby thwarted by the state because the latter limits the independence of the former, which, in turn, dilutes the relative advantage of civil society organizations.

The Churches are also important service providers in Hungary. The Methodist Church is particularly active and provides homeless shelters, medical care and ambulances for homeless people, mother-child shelters for women and children victims of abuse and refugee shelters. However, even the effectiveness of the services provided by the churches is influenced by the state. The larger churches, such as the Methodist and Catholic Churches, are more loyal to the state, and their initiatives are supported financially. The smaller churches, however, are less loyal to the state and, since they receive less financial support, their ability to offer effective services is also limited.

Finally in Sweden, the nonprofit sector does not play a role in family policy implementation. The traditional idea of the sector in Sweden was for nonprofit organizations to provide services that the state could not offer, strongly supported by the state in terms of financial and material assistance. In time, the state would take over the activities of the organization by making its services more generally accessible and more uniform. In a country where welfare provision is strong, the service role of family nonprofit organizations has been almost lost. Nonetheless, some Swedish nonprofits do offer services to clients placed there by municipalities and, thereby, serve the state. For example, they treat alcohol and drug abusers, or provide support and counselling services through organizations that complement the work of the state. The sector is barely distinguishable from the state in terms of service provision to families, and has not developed into a separate sector to which the state contracts out.

The primary role of the nonprofit sector in all the countries studied, except Sweden, is family policy implementation. This section has shown, however, that this role, its function, and its autonomy varies between countries according to the co-ordination of family policy, party politics, the role of the Church and the sources of financial support. Family policy is implemented in close co-operation with the state in France, where the state functions in a reciprocal agreement with the nonprofit sector. In Germany and Ireland, family policies are implemented by the sector with full endorsement and substantial financial support from the state, but in Ireland the Catholic Church continues to ensure that the autonomy of nonprofits is not compromised by the state's financial support. Religious organizations are the main implementers of family policies in the Mediterranean countries and Poland, but their role is not so great as that of nonprofit organizations elsewhere because of the primacy of families in taking care of their own welfare. Furthermore, since the Church in Spain, Italy, Greece, Poland and also Ireland is represented in government, its services complement the initiatives of the state, but they are provided in fields and to groups that state programmes do not adequately serve. The extent of provision

of services from other secular organizations, though limited, varies considerably, and is dependent upon political patronage and how closely allied the organization is with people in government that control the purse strings.

Estonia and Hungary also provided evidence of party politics influencing the extent and types of service delivery. Organizations out of favour with the government, though providing vital support to families, do not receive adequate financial backing. In Estonia and, especially, in Hungary, in view of their experiences under Communism, it is widely held that the state should provide for the needs of families. Although this belief is declining – as much by necessity following austerity measures as by changing experiences – the service arm of the nonprofit sector is smallest in these countries compared with the other countries studied.

In the UK, by contrast, where the state has traditionally considered the family to be a private domain out of bounds for state intervention, the nonprofit sector has developed family services to fill the vacuum. More recently, as the government have become more involved in family policy, they have contracted out their services to nonprofit and private organizations. However, while this has meant nonprofits that are well supported by the state are able to continue to provide services, whereas others are less able to survive, their lobbying involvement has ensured they do not become state-controlled nonprofits as has happened in many cases, for example in Greece, Italy and the candidate countries.

### **Monitoring the impact of family policy**

Except in countries with a long tradition of concerted and explicit family policy, few governments have put in place mechanisms to monitor policy or to co-ordinate responses to family issues. Where monitoring does take place to some extent, this is divided between political, economic and civil society actors. This section first discusses the organizational structures for co-ordinating family policy in different countries. Second, it identifies both where that monitoring takes place and how monitoring is conducted. Third, it looks at the perceived impacts of those policies, and whether they are critically monitored or not.

In France, dedicated institutions, such as the Haut conseil de la population et de la famille, play an important role in monitoring trends in family building and structure. All forms of benefits for families are co-ordinated centrally by the Caisse nationale des allocations familiales (CNAF), and an annual Conférence de la famille sets national priorities. Similarly in Poland, it is the state that carries out monitoring, with annual reporting obligations imposed on ministries, but the civil society respondents do not consider these critical. As a consequence, monitoring has not necessarily improved the efficacy of pro-family policy under the rightwing government who were in power until September 2001.

In the two other candidate countries, family policy is co-ordinated, but it is only monitored in Hungary, though not independently from government. Hungarian civil society respondents agreed that family policies implemented by the state have some effect on families. However, the impacts of transition since the early 1990s appear to have been such a major influence, especially on women and their inability to obtain full-time, decently paid jobs, that monitoring the effects of family policies would be hugely complex and difficult to isolate

given the rapid and diverse changes taking place. Some negative impacts of family policies were noted by one respondent, who complained that attempts are being made to help women gain employment through flexible working hours, but *'in reality, these atypical employment forms are advantageous not for women but for employers because of the cheap labour force'*. The impact of the work of civil society organizations on people rather than state policies *per se*, however, is strong in Hungary, largely because they are able to provide grass-roots support where it is most needed rather than institutional responses to problems.

Estonian family policy is co-ordinated through the Ministry of Population and Family Issues, but no critical monitoring of the impacts of policies is undertaken. The positive impact of family policy, according to Estonian civil society actors, is felt most through financial benefits paid to parents. However, interviewees complain that the state, while formulating and implementing wider economic and social policies, does not evaluate their impacts on families.

In the United Kingdom, a Ministerial Group on the Family and a Family Policy Unit (FPU) were established in the late 1990s to introduce a more co-ordinated approach, and policy has become much more 'joined-up', as in France, Hungary and Estonia. However, many of the civil society organizations were critical of the limited success to date. One respondent talked at length about the shortcomings of the Ministerial Group on the Family, in particular, stating:

*What I think is interesting is that the overall responsibility for family policy has been located in the Home Office, without, if I may say so, consideration as to whether it has been most well-equipped historically as a department to do the sort of thinking required for a joined up policy.... There wasn't enough stand back and think time. Comparably, in the Number Ten Policy Unit, family policy was one of somebody's several areas of interest. I don't think they have been able to devote enough intellectual horsepower to thinking their way through that. That said, I'm not at all surprised.... It wasn't, in my view, set up in the way that it was most guaranteed it would succeed. (FPSC)*

The respondents from independent research groups were more critical of the organization of family policy in the UK: *'the government are talking about this so-called joined-up policy. There are links across departments, but on some policies it is not working'* (IPPR). Most suggest, however, that it is too early to see the real impact of family policy because it is too new: *'I don't think you move overnight from a society that has had almost no explicit family policy, not even used the language, to one that has a coherent way of thinking forward'* (FPSC). The research community conducts most of the monitoring of state policies in the UK, often on a contract basis for government, in addition to independent research organizations, such as the FPSC (which is now closed) and the IPPR. In terms of actual policy impacts, some monitoring is carried out by civil society organizations, such as that of the Sure Start Programme by the NFPI and other members of a committee on which members from non-government and government organizations serve. This programme received unanimous commendation from the respondents. Criticism was made of some family policies because of the negative impacts they have had on families, such as the provision of unpaid maternity leave, which is ineffective because many women cannot afford to take it; and the change in housing policy, which reduces the benefits received by lone parents. The married person's tax credit,

according to the Catholic Church, also had negative impacts because it sent out the wrong messages about marriage. The Church welcomed its abolition. A representative from the NCOPF stated that family policies have had negative impacts on children, especially because of the increased pressures on mothers to work, and new standards of childcare.

In Germany, governments sometimes ask experts for reports on the impact of family policies, which can be considered independent, critical views. Experts have found, for example, that the tax policy favours high income families at the expense of those in the lower income brackets. Despite such reports, it was more generally agreed among the civil society respondents in Germany that government policy has no large, direct effect on family life, but the indirect effects are important through employment, economic, fiscal and social policies.

Policy in Ireland is largely uncoordinated between actors in the political, economic and civil society spheres, and no formal monitoring of impacts is provided. Although policy objectives have been revised in response to changes in society since the 1980s, following the experience in the United Kingdom with policies addressing employment and single parents, the Irish government are not prescribing any solutions or forcing these issues onto the policy agenda. Their abortion policy also remains undecided, and these examples suggest that, in some areas, policy is failing to address social needs in an attempt to remain uncontroversial. Impacts of family policy are, therefore, noticeable due to their absence as much as to their implementation.

In Greece, civil society actors consider family policy to be fragmented and lacking co-ordination. The family impact of economic and social policies is not monitored, though research centres undertake some work on measuring policy impacts and policy needs. Nonetheless, civil society actors stated that they felt some policies had had positive impacts. For example, the reform of family law in 1981, which provided for gender equality in marriage and equal sharing of domestic and childcare responsibilities, was said to have also been important for ensuring the financial security of women following divorce. The increase in child benefits for the third and subsequent child(ren) was said to have had a significant impact on family choices and lifestyles, but only for large families. Other policies, however, remained ineffective according to the interviewees, such as unpaid parental leave, which most parents are unable to afford to take up.

In Spain, co-ordination is not thought to be strong, although instances were cited of 'mainstreamed' meetings between ministerial departments and one or two cases of attempted 'transversal' policy programming. In general, it was felt by respondents that public policy developments since the transition to democracy had had an impact on family behaviour and relations, making them much '*more democratic and less authoritarian*' as one civil society actor put it. While the effects were not monitored as such, they had shown up in attitude surveys. No family impact assessments have been carried out in Spain of specific policies. The concept of policy evaluation (*evaluación*) is still new. It was only introduced under the previous government for its first Equality Plan, but has not become widespread and, as a consequence, one civil society actor suggested that '*the transformation of families has taken place without the government even finding out*'. The rise in the flat-rate tax allowance was cited as one case where policy has had a negative impact. It was argued that the

policy allowed higher income earners to fall into a lower band of taxable income, which *'only serves to support families in abstract, while being regressive and increasing disparities in standards of living between actual families'*. Although policies are largely unmonitored in Spain, respondents agreed that the impacts on families, whether negative or positive, were minimal. One civil society representative commented that economic policies implemented to influence housing provision do little to overcome

*the chronic shortage of low cost housing and the price of subsidized housing schemes in relation to worker's incomes, all of which prevent children from moving out of the parental home and forming their own families.*

In Italy, although family policy is indirectly implemented through economic, fiscal, employment and housing policies, civil society representatives agree that some progress has been made over the past few years as the government tried to build a system of support for parents. Nonetheless, concern is expressed about the government's approach: family policies have been too scarce, and their lack of co-ordination prevents any real progress for families.

Among the IPROSEC countries, therefore, while family policy is administered in a variety of different ways and civil society organizations play divergent roles in policy formulation and implementation, no consensus is found over the impact of policy on families. Although monitoring is far from institutionalized, the respondents in the Mediterranean states, Ireland and the UK are perhaps the most positive about the impact of family policies. In the candidate countries, they had mixed views, though any progress would be difficult to monitor given the huge impacts of transition on these countries, which is impossible to separate out from family policy impacts.

### **The changing role of civil society in family policy**

The civil society elite interviews provide an interesting perspective on the processes whereby decisions affecting families are reached at national and sub-national levels. They indicate that motivations underpinning choices are influenced by a range of social, cultural, political and economic factors that vary between countries over time. In particular, the relationship between the state and the civil society sector, as determined by financial ties, consultation or advisory and service delivery roles, influence the ways in which policy decisions are made. The prominence and power of organizations, the position of the churches in state affairs, and the historical legacy of the civil society sector in providing for the social welfare needs of the country also influence policy decisions affecting families. Finally, the perceived needs of individuals and the legitimacy of intervention in family life to administer to those needs influence both whether and how family policy is formulated and implemented.

Among the IPROSEC countries, a pattern emerges despite the huge variability of civil society organizations working in the area of family policy. France and Sweden, for example, stand out among the project participants: the former because of the partnership role established between the state and civil society in family policy, the developed, co-ordinated and coherent approach to family policy and the inclusion of the sector throughout the policy-making process; and the latter because the state is the primary player in family policy, with only a lobbying and advisory role for the civil society sector.

Elsewhere, the patterns are more mixed. Germany and the UK, for example, share similar characteristics with regard to family policy and the civil society sector. They are both countries that have experienced the recent emergence of family policy as a new field of politics, but they see the role of civil society organizations as important to that development. In the UK, the sector is working in close alliance with the state and is approximating a situation similar to (but not yet close to) that in France. In Germany, because of the historical precedent of subsidiarity, the role of the sector is to support the work of the state's family policy agenda but to remain separate from it.

Ireland, in some respects, is similar to Germany because of its founding principle of subsidiarity, but it is close to the Mediterranean countries because of the strong influence of the Church. In all these countries, the Church was found to hold a traditional view of the family and strongly endorsed protective and prohibitive policies to promote traditional family types. In recent years, however, the churches have become more liberal and advocate more permissive and supportive policies that are inclusive of a variety of different family types. Other secular organizations that share these aims are also gaining ascendancy in the family policy field, though only in certain areas of family policy and, in the case of Italy and Spain, in particular regions.

Estonia, Hungary and Poland form a separate cluster, largely because of their recent transition from a state-centric welfare system towards one that is less administered by the state, but nonetheless retains some of the former legacy. Yet, despite their shared transitions to democracy, each country differs in many respects from the others. Estonia is closer to the British model of civil society family policy, particularly in the partnership role that organizations from the civil society sector intend to play with the state (finance permitting). Hungarian organizations, however, are under no illusion that their work can influence the state in any real way and, like the German model, state and civil society operate in different spheres that rarely meet. Poland, however, is more like the Mediterranean states and Ireland because of the prominent role of the Church but, unlike these countries, the Church in Poland is unrelenting in its traditional prohibitive family policies, and no other organizations are able to weaken this hold. Unlike the other candidate countries, however, Poland is less accepting of state intervention in family life.

This paper illustrates the large variations that exist in the ways in which family policy is formulated and implemented in and through the civil society sector. It provides new evidence of the ways in which family policy operates and is mediated by civil society. In some countries, it proved difficult to track the process and the possible impacts of the sector in the absence of any formal monitoring mechanisms. In others, particularly the candidate countries, the pace of social change has been so rapid that it is difficult to isolate the role played by civil society actors. By comparing and contrasting the findings from the 11 countries in the study, the IPROSEC team have, however, been able to provide some new insights into the intricacies of the policy process and identify examples of good practice that might have potential for cross-border transfer and development.

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## 5. Family Policy Network Models

*Louise Appleton*

The papers in this collection have shown that, among political, economic and civil society actors, the degree of involvement in family policy is determined by several factors, including the historical role of each sector in family policy formulation and implementation, the place of family policy on the policy agenda and the perceived legitimacy of different types of intervention in family life. Across all sectors in each of the countries examined, it is clear that policy actors seldom work in isolation. They co-operate with others, whether within the same policy sector or with key actors in different sectors. It is these relationships, or networks, that help to explain how the family policy process operates.

This concluding paper focuses on the characteristics and functions of family policy networks and, more especially, on the relationships between policy actors within them. Two extreme types of policy networks can be identified: integrated and segregated. In the first type, the different sectors contribute collectively and co-operatively to family policy, while in the second, political, economic and civil society sectors operate independently from one another, with no co-operation. These two types of network represent opposite ends of the spectrum. Most of the countries included in the IPROSEC project have policy networks that fall between the two extremes, with varying degrees of co-operation within and between the different sectors.

The first part of the paper discusses family policy networks clustering towards the integration end of the spectrum, as exhibited in France, Sweden, Ireland, Germany and the UK. The second part describes segregated family policy networks, as represented by Poland, Estonia Hungary, Spain, Italy and Greece. The paper explores the reasons for variations, before going on to suggest possible implications for policy delivery.

### **Integrated family policy networks**

Integrated networks operate through policy actors working closely together across the three sectors in formulating and/or implementing family policies. Integration can be between all three categories of policy actors, or between two sectors, while the other sector plays a more marginal role.

Among the IPROSEC countries, France is the only country where family policy is formulated and implemented by all three sectors together, through a coherent and co-operative approach aimed at achieving the same goals. A number of factors have contributed to the development of an integrated family policy network in France, beginning with the broad consensus among policy actors and among the population in general that the family is a legitimate area for policy intervention, whether by the political, economic or civil society actors. The role of the state in family matters in France has been codified in the Constitution and, despite political party differences regarding the approach, party consensus is expressed about the desirability and necessity of state intervention. In addition to the state, economic actors are thoroughly involved in family policy because the policy area is financed by social insurance contributions from employers through the Caisse nationale des allocations

familiales (CNAF), which centrally co-ordinates all forms of benefits for families. Economic actors participate in the management committees of the family allowance fund, which not only defines the sector and its part in family policy, but also holds meetings together with civil society actors, ensuring the initiatives of both sectors are jointly managed. Civil society organizations are united under the umbrella group for family civil society organizations, the Union nationale des associations familiales (UNAF), which enables the sector to develop a coherent policy agenda across the sector. UNAF also helps to co-ordinate family policy cross-sectorally in France, through its role in planning the annual *Conférence de la famille*, at which all family policy actors meet to discuss the family policy agenda.

In sum, the internal structure of the sectors, co-operation within and between them through umbrella organizations and at meetings designed to facilitate cross-sector co-operation, joint agenda setting and the shared and well-established belief that the family is a legitimate policy area have all contributed to the development of the family policy network currently exhibited in France. Unlike most of the other countries in the project, however, the Church in France operates in isolation from the three sectors and is not included in the integrated family policy network.

The family policy network in Sweden is also integrated, but it has not achieved the same level of co-operation as in France, largely because of the absence of a single policy field focusing exclusively on families. Welfare in Sweden is more individualistic, and policies affecting families do not fall neatly into one policy field or within the remit of a single government department. Responsibility for family matters is assigned to junior ministries for Health and Social Affairs, and Industry, Employment and Communication. Nonetheless, Sweden has a strong legacy of social acceptance of state intervention in family life that dates from the period between the 1950s and 1970s when family policy was a more explicit policy domain.

A major concern in Swedish public policy since the 1970s has been gender equality, which has resulted in the close involvement and integration of economic actors in making and implementing policies designed to tackle the question of the work–life balance. At the same time, economic policy actors have been strongly allied with the state in delivering universal social protection for workers. Since the basis for social security is the ability of individuals to support themselves on incomes from work and few benefits are means-tested, it is in the interest of both the state and employers to ensure people are in work and paying taxes. However, while co-operation is assured between the political and economic sectors, alliances are made along party lines, with two consequences: the role of economic actors and the policies that they implement vary according to the party in power. The political right and Swedish Employers' Federation have formed an alliance, favouring greater freedom of choice for parents and alternative ways of organizing childcare, while the political left is in close alliance with most trade unions, which support the public provision of childcare.

In the formulation of policies affecting families in Sweden, the role of the civil society sector is also integrated with the initiatives of political actors. Historically, civil society defined the policy agenda by carving out niches where support was needed. Having established expertise in these niches, the sector both advised and lobbied. In time, civil society organizations were replaced by

the state, which attempted to transform grass-roots initiatives into a universal public service. Lobbying government was, and continues to be, the link whereby the civil society sector contributes most to the family policy network. However, despite this link and the close working ties and mutual interests between economic and political actors in the Swedish family policy network, the civil society sector today plays only a minimal role in policy implementation. Since welfare provision in Sweden is strong, the role of nonprofit organizations in delivering family services is limited, except in specialist areas, such as support for alcohol and drug abuse cases, where the state considers the civil society sector to be better equipped to deliver services.

In Ireland, Germany and the UK, by contrast, it is the relationship between political and civil society actors that provides grounds for their inclusion in the integrated policy network group. The welfare system in both Ireland and Germany is founded on the principle of subsidiarity, legalized in Ireland in 1829 in the Catholic Emancipation Act, and formalized more recently in the Constitution of Ireland in 1916 and of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1949. Subsidiarity guarantees the primacy of the civil society sector in terms of its provision of social welfare, with the state being seen as the last resort. This principle has been shaped in a context where the state views civil society organizations as better equipped to deal with social problems. However, the ties between the two sectors are not only contractual but also incarnate in the form of the Church, through the Catholic Church in Ireland and the Lutheran and Catholic Churches in Germany. In Ireland, the centrality of the Catholic Church in society (at least until the late twentieth century) as a proponent of voluntarism and communitarianism further fuelled the emphasis on civil action and social dissatisfaction with government intervention in family life. The Church's position as co-ordinator of civil society organizations created the link between the political and civil society sectors. Furthermore, its dual identity as a member of the state apparatus and of civil society enabled the Church to sit in both political and civil society circles, and ensured coherence between the two sectors in family policy formulation and implementation.

Similarly in Germany, civil society and political actors are united through religious affiliations, especially with the Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Party, CDU), which advocates Catholic values. The CDU, also has a trade union wing, which enables the organization to act as a pivotal link between the political and economic sectors. Similarly, the German Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party, SPD) plays a significant role as the bridge between the political and economic sectors that is arguably more influential than that of the CDU because of SPD's close ties with trade union organizations through their shared political ideologies. The trade unions are thereby able to use the SPD to lobby government on behalf of the economic sector. The political, economic and civil society sectors are also integrated through the taxation system in Germany. The tax (*Kirchensteuer*), paid by members to their churches, is collected through employers, forming a further point of co-operation between the different policy actors.

In the UK, the absence of a formal family policy field (as in Ireland and Germany) enabled the civil society sector to become the principal actor in family issues for many years and to remain independent in their initiatives. As family policy developed into a more specific policy field towards the end of the 1990s, civil society organizations were viewed by the state as the experts in the

field and some, though not all, were called upon to work closely with government in defining the policy agenda. The public's lack of support for public intervention in the private domain has placed the civil society sector in a favourable position to mediate for government. The political and civil society sectors have become increasingly co-ordinated through designated organizations and government departments. The state has recognized this relationship through contractual arrangements that allow civil society organizations to provide some welfare services on behalf of the state.

An interesting development that occurred across all three countries throughout the 1990s was the increasing role of the economic sector in family policy formulation and implementation in response to socio-economic trends. In Ireland, for example, the unprecedented economic boom of the 1990s, and resultant labour shortages, brought a need for increased female labour market participation. In the FRG, state welfare long endorsed a family policy that championed the traditional male breadwinner model, which contributed to the low female employment rate and a relative dearth of reconciliation policies for parents. As female employment rates have increased in Germany, the need for reconciliation policies has become apparent. In the UK, the growing feminization of the workforce, labour shortages and the long-hours culture have moved family-friendly issues onto policy agendas. Employers in all three countries have thus come to recognize the need for policies to help balance work and family life.

The economic sector's co-operation with the political and civil society sectors in family policy formulation and implementation is, however, mixed. In the UK and Germany, family policy in the economic sector has been based on a largely voluntarist response, with individual employers implementing flexible working hours, parental leave and other initiatives at a company level rather than responding to greater state regulation. Policy can be said, therefore, to be piecemeal within the economic sector. However, the establishment of the Family Policy Unit (FPU) in 1997 to co-ordinate family policy in the UK encouraged dialogue between different government departments and policy sectors, leading to an attempt at 'joined-up' policy thinking. Moreover, the government have been keen to endorse policies that encourage better and more productive business, and, hence, rely on economic actors to find their own workable routes that respond to both the family needs of employees and the business needs of employers. As a result, the 2001 Green paper on Parental Leave combined the initiatives of policy actors from across government departments and policy sectors. Furthermore, the British government are co-operating with the economic sector in family policy fields by contracting out some services to private companies, especially in areas such as pre-school education, elder care and healthcare. In Germany, the ties between the Social Democrats and the trade unions have ensured some degree of coherence between the aims of the economic sector and those of the government in the design and implementation of policies affecting families. In Ireland, co-operation between the state and economic sector has developed as a result of the joint drafting and implementation of the national minimum wage, and maternity and paternity leave policies administered at national level. The increased secularization of Irish society (in part as a result of an anti-clerical influence) is also weakening the hold of the Catholic Church on family policy. As the preoccupation with economic growth continues, some policy actors

argue that the integration of the economic and political sectors is likely to increase to meet the needs of a changing Ireland.

### **Segregated family policy networks**

The remaining six countries in the IPROSEC project (Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Spain, Italy and Greece) have family policy networks that can be considered segregated, with policy sectors working separately and, often, independently. The former Communist countries share some common characteristics that help to explain their segregated family policy networks. They each exhibit an aversion towards state intervention in family life, though, in the Constitutions of all three countries, the family is presented as being fundamental to the preservation and growth of the nation as the basis of society and must, therefore, be protected by the state. Since the start of transition in 1989, therefore, all three countries have designated ministries for the family, which co-ordinate family policy in the political sector: the Ministry of Population and Family Issues and the Family Board of the Ministry of Social Affairs in Estonia; the Department for Family Affairs in Poland, and the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs in Hungary. However, despite the official support for state intervention, inadequate resourcing has limited policy delivery, and the priority continues to be economic development. In addition, each of the candidate countries has a relatively large number of women in work, though female employment rates have declined since the early 1990s reverting to more traditional gender divisions. At the same time, the end of Communism has seen the collapse of state and employer social provision of services to support families, such as workplace nurseries. The civil society sector in all three countries (except perhaps Poland) barely existed under Communism. It is only now beginning to develop into an identifiable separate sector with policy potential. In the absence of coherent family policy agendas and following the loss of services that once assisted families under Communism, the family has become an important resource, providing assistance for its members that was previously ensured by the state and employers.

Nonetheless, at the national level, family policy networks have developed in the candidate countries, and each exhibits some unique characteristics in function and design. In Poland, for example, the civil society sector, dominated by the Catholic Church, has long been at the forefront of family issues. The Church maintained this position throughout the Communist period at a time when Estonia and Hungary experienced the weakening of civil society. Poland's civil society sector was, and continues to be, relatively strong as a family policy actor, largely because of the Catholic Church, in a society where a large proportion of the population (95%) are Catholics, and three quarters of the total population practice their religion. The Church is closely involved in government discussions regarding family issues. For some observers, the important role of the Church in setting the agenda for family policies explains the emphasis in Poland on protection of the family unit and the institution of marriage, which are not considered to be so important in many other European countries. The close relationship between the political and civil society (Catholic Church) sectors is reminiscent of the situation in Ireland until the early 1990s, but the link in Poland has not been formally institutionalized in law or by financial ties, as it has in Ireland, and the scope for secular organizations to be included in the

family policy debate remains limited. Furthermore, while ties have been established between the civil society and political sectors, the relationship with the economic sector has not been maintained. Economic actors in Poland consider family policy to be an expensive luxury since transition. While the state may make recommendations and institute directives, employers avoid implementing measures to support families because of the cost. In the absence of workplace assistance since the 1990s, Polish families are expected to carry the burden of the responsibility for balancing work and family life, with Church organizations making some contribution to the process.

In Estonia, the family policy network is segregated, but it has recently begun to show signs of co-operation through the institutionalization of links between the political and civil society sectors. The Lutheran Church was, and continues to be, an important provider of services to families which are endorsed by the state. The potential for secular organizations to make the same contributions to family policy has been assisted by the signing of the *Eesti Kodanikeühiskonna Arengu Kontseptsioon (EKAK)* in 1999. This bill advocates cross-sector co-operation between the two sectors, but only in policy implementation not formulation. As in the 'Compact' agreement signed in the UK, the EKAK has promoted contracting out of public services to civil society organizations, largely because the latter are considered more acceptable forms of intervention in family life than the direct hand of the state. As in Poland, however, limited funds have inhibited the development of the link to date. The nation's preoccupation with economic development, coupled with the loss of state and workplace service provision, has diminished the role of the workplace in family life and has prevented the economic sector from engaging in the family policy debate. Although the work-life balance issue has recently moved onto the policy agenda, and trade unions are charged with the task of protecting the social welfare of workers, co-operation between the political and economic sectors in Estonia has not been in evidence. By and large, the relative strength of the state, the marginal place of family policy on the political agenda, the preoccupation with economic survival and the legacy of social dissatisfaction with state intervention in family life have prevented any meaningful dialogue between sectors from taking place on family policy issues.

The situation in Hungary is similar, but no relationship between the political and civil society sectors exists either informally, as in Poland, or formally (if hypothetically), as in post-Communist Estonia. Hungarian state and workplace social provision has been eroded since 1989 and, in the vacuum, families have had to take on the role of social welfare providers. Some civil society organizations, especially grass-roots initiatives, have been able to fill the gap, but financial constraints have limited their capacities. In addition, vestiges of Communist-era workplace nurseries and trade union services remain. Multinational companies have introduced some policies to help employees and their families, but they are minimal and operate in isolation. Elsewhere, economic concerns take priority, with little or no opportunity to develop voluntarist workplace policies. In Hungary, therefore, no concerted effort exists from within policy sectors or between sectors to develop a strong family policy that would require an integrated policy network. Instead, each sector, where it does get involved in family policy formulation or implementation, operates independently and in a piecemeal fashion.

While the family has taken on greater responsibility for the welfare of its members in the candidate countries since transition, this has long been the norm in the Mediterranean countries of Greece, Italy and Spain, which also exhibit segregated networks. These three countries each share a political climate in which the state guarantees to protect families, as outlined in their national constitutions, but the social climate does not accept direct and explicit state intervention in family life because of its association with fascism and dictatorial rule. Coupled with this ambiguity are the absence of designated ministries to work on policies relating to families and a failure to develop a separate policy field devoted to the family. This lack of coherence has consistently prevented family issues from reaching political agendas.

Political devolution of social policy in both Italy and Spain has also meant that sub-national differences exist in family policies in the absence of a central co-ordinating body at national level. Regions, provinces and municipalities are considered better able to respond to the needs of families and, therefore, have more legitimacy to intervene, which leads, in practice, to considerable sub-national variations, with regions such as Catalonia, Valencia and the Basque country in Spain developing family policies, while other Autonomous Communities have not done so. Devolution in Italy and Spain has also enhanced the co-operation between local government and the civil society sector. In societies suspicious of central state bureaucracy and in the absence of services to support families, grass-roots organizations have been important social welfare providers, often working closely with local government in areas where they share the same aims. The centrality of the Church, not only in Italy and Spain but also in Greece, has ensured an important role for the civil society sector in family policy, but the lack of co-ordination across the sector means that this role is carried out independently. Paradoxically, the dominance of the Church has also prevented other civil society organizations from making significant contributions to the formulation of policies. Thus, the co-operation between political and civil society sectors at the sub-national level has largely been a result of the absence of the state rather than of an attempt to integrate policy initiatives. The potential for more formal links between the sectors has not yet been realized, especially in Greece, where civil society organizations have limited scope, funds and experience.

In the changing economic climates of all three Mediterranean countries, as elsewhere in western Europe, the need has been growing for economic actors to develop policies to support an increasingly feminized workforce. Some laws have been passed, thanks in part to the strength of trade unions, and companies have implemented family-friendly policies on a voluntarist basis. However, family-friendly issues struggle to find a central place on the collective bargaining agenda, largely because of the absence of unions in many areas of employment and the absence of women on the negotiating teams. In addition, families continue to be considered as a resource on which workers can draw when demands from the workplace conflict with their private lives, rather than a social unit that employers should protect. In such a social, economic and political climate, the piecemeal policy practice of the three sectors across Greece, Italy and Spain and ensure that family policy networks remain segregated.

### **Shifting family policy networks**

Broad trends have been identified that define policy networks as integrated or segregated, but the relationship between policy sectors and between policy actors within sectors varies among the 11 countries considered in this research. The variation can be accounted for by the type of approach adopted by key actors in family policy, the historical role of each sector in family policy formulation and implementation, the legacy it has left, developments over time, the perceived legitimacy of different types of intervention in family life, and the significance of family policy in relation to other policy areas. These factors are not stable. Key actors come and go with parliamentary elections, budgetary changes, swings in the economic climate, and the movement of personnel driving the direction of policy interests in a particular institution. Their legacy may be difficult to remove, or change may be too rapid, as in the transition countries. Perceptions of the legitimacy of policy intervention are less fluid, and shifts in social attitude gradually emerge with time, as has been shown in the research reported here. In cases where the legitimacy of state intervention in family life may have been considered unacceptable in the past, it is becoming more acceptable, as in the UK, whereas countries that experienced a greater degree of state involvement in family life in the past may now prefer less state intervention, as in countries with authoritarian regimes. Analysis of policy networks provides a snapshot of the situation in one policy field at a particular point in time.

The snapshot presented here of 11 European countries has illustrated that family policy or, more accurately, policies with a family impact, are formulated and implemented in various ways in different countries. In some cases, family policy is primarily the responsibility of the state; in others, that of the civil society sector; and in yet others, that of the economic sector. In some countries, this responsibility is shared almost equally among all sectors and co-ordinated so that policies complement each other. In contrast, in other countries, co-ordination is minimal or absent, and policy is fragmented and piecemeal. Whether greater integration makes for more relevant policy outcomes that touch the lives of families in more positive ways, or whether integration implies compromise with limited gains for families remains an open question.

## Annex 1 Elite Interviewees

Political Actors	Economic Actors	Civil Society Actors
<b>FRANCE</b>		
Caisse nationale des allocations familiales (CNAF, National Family Allowance Fund)	Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT, trade union)	Fondation Nationale de Gérontologie (National Gerontological Foundation)
Commission des Affaires sociales du Sénat (Senate Social Affairs Committee)	Confédération générale du travail (CGT, trade union)	
Conseil supérieur de l'Egalité professionnelle (Council for Equality at Work)	Force ouvrière (FO, trade union)	
Coordination nationale des mouvements de femmes (National Co-ordinating Committee for Women's Movements)	Mouvement des Entreprises de la France (Medef, employers' federation)	
Délégation interministérielle à la Famille (Interministerial Delegation for the Family)		
Direction de la population et des migrations (Department for Population and Migration)		
Haut Conseil de la population et de la famille (National Committee for Population and Families)		
Parti communiste français (PCF, French Communist Party)		
Secrétariat d'État aux Droits des femmes (Junior Ministry for Women's Rights)		
Verts (Greens)		
<b>GERMANY</b>		
Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)	Bundesvereinigung deutscher Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA, employers' association)	Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO, labour movement)
Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschland (CDU, Christian Democratic Union)	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, Hessen, Thüringen (DGB, trade union umbrella organization)	Caritas (Catholic church)
Christlich Soziale Union (CSU, Christian Social Union)	Gewerkschaft Öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr (ÖTV, public services and transport worker's union,)	Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (DPWV, welfare association)
Die Grünen (Greens)	IG Metall (steel industry trade union)	Diakonisches Werk (Protestant church)
Local authorities Social Department, Mainz	Industrie- und Handelskammer, (IHK, chamber of industry and commerce)	Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge (club for public and private care)
Ministerium für Frauen, Hessen, Thüringen (Regional Ministries for Women,)		Zentrale Koordinierungsstelle für Ausländer (ZKA, Central Co-ordinating Office for Foreigners)
Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD, Social Democratic Party)		

Political Actors	Economic Actors	Civil Society Actors
<b>GREECE</b>		
<p>Δήμος Κορυδαλλού (Municipality of Korydallos)</p> <p>Αριστερό Κόμμα (SYNASPISMOS, Coalition of left)</p> <p>Γενική Γραμματεία Ισότητας (General Secretariat for Equality)</p> <p>Δήμος Αγίου Δημητρίου (Municipality of Agios Dimitrios)</p> <p>Δημος Αθηναίων (Municipality of Athens)</p> <p>Δήμος Χαλανδρίου (Municipality of Halandri)</p> <p>Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα (ΚΚΕ, Communist Party of Greece)</p> <p>Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα (ΠΑΣΟΚ, PASOK, Socialist Party)</p> <p>Υπουργείο Εθνικής Οικονομίας (Ministry of National Economy)</p> <p>Υπουργείο Εργασίας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων (Ministry of Labour and Social Security)</p> <p>Nea Democratica (Liberal Party)</p>	<p>Γενική Συνομοσπονδία Εργατών Ελλάδας (GSEE, General Confederation of Greek Trade Unions)</p> <p>Κέντρο Μελέτης και Τεκμηρίωσης (KEMETE, Centre for Studies and Documentation)</p> <p>Ομοσπονδία Λειτουργών Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης (OLME, Federation of High School Teachers)</p> <p>Ομοσπονδία Τραπεζοϋπαλλήλων Ελλάδας (ΟΤΟΕ Federation of Bank Employees)</p> <p>Σύνδεσμος Ελληνικών Βιομηχανιών (SEV, Association of Greek Industries)</p> <p>Συνομοσπονδία Δημοσίων Υπαλλήλων (ADEDY, Confederation of Trade Unions of the Public Sector)</p>	<p>Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικών Ερευνών (ΕΚΚΕ, Greek National Centre for Social Research)</p> <p>Ελληνική Εταιρεία Δημογραφικών Μελετών (Greek Society of Demographic Studies)</p> <p>Εταιρεία Οικογενειακού Προγραμματισμού (ΕΟΡ, Society of Family Planning)</p> <p>Ίδρυμα για το Παιδί και την Οικογένεια (Foundation for the Child and the Family)</p> <p>Ίδρυμα Κοινωνικής Εργασίας (IKE, Foundation for Social Work)</p> <p>Ινστιτούτο για την Υγεία του Παιδιού (Institute for Child Health)</p> <p>Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία (Orthodox Church)</p> <p>Σύλλογος Αγαμων Μητέρων (Association of Unmarried Mothers)</p> <p>Σύλλογος Κοινωνικών Λειτουργών Ελλάδας (SKLE, Association of Greek social workers)</p> <p>Σύλλογος Πολυτέκνων Οικογενειών (Federation of Large Families)</p>
<b>IRELAND</b>		
<p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment</p> <p>Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs</p> <p>National Economic and Social Council</p> <p>Progressive Democrats</p>	<p>Irish Congress of Trade Unions</p> <p>Irish National Organization of the Unemployed</p> <p>Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union</p>	<p>National Women's Council of Ireland</p> <p>Women's Educational Research and Resource Centre</p>
<b>ITALY</b>		
<p>Consigliere regionale del Veneto della Lega Nord (Lega Nord, Regional Council for Veneto)</p> <p>Ministero Pari Opportunità, (Ministry for Equal Opportunities).</p> <p>Osservatorio nazionale per la famiglia e le politiche locali di sostegno alle responsabilità familiari (National Observatory for the Family and Local Policies to Support Family Responsibilities)</p>	<p>Confcommercio (organization representing business).</p> <p>Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro (Cgil, Italian General Confederation of Labour).</p> <p>Confederazione italiana sindacati lavoratori (Cisl, Italian Confederation of Trades Unions)</p> <p>Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato (Cna, National Confederation of the Craft Industry)</p>	<p>Arci Gay (Lesbian Group)</p> <p>Caritas (Catholic Church)</p> <p>Federacasalinghe (Housewives' Federation)</p> <p>Telefono Azzurro (Telephone Helpline)</p> <p>Unione Comunità ed Organizzazioni islamiche in Italia (Union of the Community of Italian Islamic Organizations)</p>

Political Actors	Economic Actors	Civil Society Actors
<b>ITALY</b> (contd)		
<p>Ufficio programmazione, indirizzo e coordinamento delle funzioni delegate in materia di assistenza, Trento (Office for Planning and Co-ordination of Social Assistance Trento)</p> <p>Unità organizzativa Famiglia, minori e dipendenze, Lombardia (United Organization for the Family, Minors and Dependants, Lombardia)</p>	<p>Confinterim, Agenzia di lavoro interinale (Confinterim, Temporary Employment Agency)</p>	
<b>SPAIN</b>		
<p>Ministerio del Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales (MTA, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)</p> <p>Partido Popular (PP, Popular Party)</p> <p>Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, Spanish Socialist party)</p>	<p>Confederación de Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas (CEPYME, Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Businesses,)</p> <p>Departamento de la mujer de Comisiones Obreras (Trade Union Confederation, Women's Department)</p> <p>Departamento de la Mujer Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT, Women's Department of the General Union of Workers)</p> <p>Departamento de la Seguridad Social de Comisiones Obreras (Social Security Department, Trade Union Confederation)</p> <p>Gabinete Económico y Social (Economic and Social-Labour Cabinets)</p>	<p>Asociación de Mujeres Abogadas (THEMIS, Association of Women Lawyers)</p> <p>Centro de Ayuda a Víctimas de Agresión Sexual (CAVAS, Centres to Help Victims of Sexual Aggression)</p>
<b>SWEDEN</b>		
<p>Folkpartiet (LIB, Liberal Party)</p> <p>Kristdemokraterna (KD, Christian Democratic party)</p> <p>Moderaterna (CON, Conservative Party)</p> <p>Socialdemokraterna (SOC, Social-democrats)</p> <p>Socialministern (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs)</p> <p>Vänsterpartiet (LEFT, Leftist Party)</p>	<p>Landsorganisationen (LO, Swedish Trade Union Confederation)</p> <p>Svenskt Näringsliv (SAF, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise)</p> <p>Sveriges akademikers centralorganisation (SACO, Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations)</p> <p>Tjänstemännens centralorganisation (TCO, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees)</p>	<p>Rädda Barnen (Save the Children)</p>

<b>Political Actors</b>	<b>Economic Actors</b>	<b>Civil Society Actors</b>
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>		
<p>Children Services, Children and Families Division, Luton Borough Council</p> <p>Family Policy Unit, Home Office (FPU)</p> <p>Marriage and Relationship Support, Family Division, Lord Chancellor's Department</p> <p>Work and Parents Team, Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)</p>	<p>Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPD)</p> <p>Confederation of British Industry (CBI)</p> <p>Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)</p> <p>General Municipal and Boilermakers Union (GMB)</p> <p>Institute of Directors (IoD)</p> <p>Knitwear, Footwear and Allied Trades (KFAT)</p> <p>The Industrial Society</p> <p>Trade Union Congress (TUC)</p> <p>Transport and General Workers Union (T&amp;G)</p> <p>UNIFI (finance union)</p> <p>UNISON (public service union)</p>	<p>Age Concern England (ACE)</p> <p>Catholic Agency for Social Concern (CASC)</p> <p>Family Policy Studies Centre (FPSC)</p> <p>Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR)</p> <p>National Council for One Parent Families (NCOPF)</p> <p>National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI)</p> <p>National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)</p>
<b>ESTONIA</b>		
<p>Equal Opportunities Bureau</p> <p>Ministry of Population and Family Issues</p> <p>Riigikogu (Parliament)</p> <p>Riigikogu Commission for Culture and Education</p> <p>Riigikogu Social Commission</p>	<p>Eesti Suurettevõetete Assotsiatsioon (ESEA Estonian Business Association)</p> <p>Estonian Euro-Management Institute</p> <p>Media</p> <p>Public Relations</p>	<p>Avatud Eesti Fond (AEF, Open Estonia Foundation)</p> <p>Eesti Evangeelse Luterliku Kiriku, Diakoonikeskus (EELK, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Diaconal Centre)</p> <p>Eesti Üksikvanemate Liit (Society of Lone Parents)</p> <p>Lastekaitseliit (Estonian Union for Child Welfare)</p> <p>Paljulapseliste Perede Liit (Society of Families with Many Children)</p> <p>Punane Rist (Red Cross)</p>
<b>HUNGARY</b>		
<p>Budapest Főváros</p> <p>Önkormányzata, Szociális és Lakásügyi Főosztály (Committee on housing and social affairs)</p> <p>MSZP (Socialist Party)</p> <p>Nőképviselői Titkárság, Szociális és Családügyi Minisztérium (Secretariat for Women's Representation, Ministry of Family and Social Affairs)</p> <p>Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (Alliance of Free Democrats)</p> <p>Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége (SZDSZ, Liberal Party)</p> <p>Szociális és Családügyi Minisztérium (Ministry of Social and Family Affairs)</p>	<p>Családbarát munkahely (Family Friendly Workplace)</p> <p>Magyarországi Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetségének Nőtagozata (National Organization of Hungarian Unions Women's Committee)</p> <p>Pedagógusok Demokratikus Szakszervezete (Teachers' Union)</p> <p>Postás Szakszervezet (Postal Workers' Union)</p>	<p>Egyenlő Esélyek Alapítványa (Equal Opportunities Foundation)</p> <p>Nagycsaládosok Országos Szövetsége (National Association of People with Large Families)</p> <p>Nővonal (Women's Line)</p> <p>Oltalom (Charity Foundation)</p>

Political Actors	Economic Actors	Civil Society Actors
<b>POLAND</b>		
<p>Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnosc (AWS, Solidarity Electoral Action)</p> <p>Commission for Children's Rights</p> <p>Commission for Family Affairs</p> <p>Department of Family Issues, Office of Prime Minister</p> <p>Family Committee of Sejm, Ministry of Women and Family Affairs (dissolved by current government).</p> <p>Family Committee, Sejm</p> <p>Family Committee, Senat</p> <p>Ministry of Education</p> <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare</p> <p>Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL, Polish Peasant Party)</p> <p>Social Policy Committee, Sejm</p> <p>Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD, Democratic Left Alliance)</p> <p>Unia Wolności, UW (Freedom Union)</p>	<p>Biuro Lobbingu (Lobbying Institute, Business Centre Club, employers' association)</p> <p>Forum Biznesu Polskiego, Polish Business Forum, employers' association)</p> <p>Konfederacja Pracodawców Polskich (Polish Employer Confederation)</p> <p>Krajowa Izba Gospodarcza (Polish Chamber of Commerce)</p> <p>Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ, (All Poland Trade Union Alliance)</p> <p>Solidarnosc (Independent Self-government Trade Union)</p>	<p>Caritas</p> <p>Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet (Foundation Centre for Women's Rights)</p> <p>Fundacja Matki Samotnej (Single Mother Foundation)</p> <p>Liga Kobiet Polskich (Polish Women's League)</p> <p>Międzynarodowa Fundacja Kobiet (International Women's Foundation)</p> <p>Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Rodzinie (Foundation of Family Help Movement)</p> <p>Stowarzyszenie Rodzin Katolickich (Polish Federation of Catholic Family Associations)</p>

## Notes on Contributors

**Peter Ackers** is Reader in Employment Relations, Business School, Loughborough University, and Co-ordinator of the Research in Employment and Management (REAM) group. His research interests are in employee involvement, trade unions and the family–employment relationship, as mediated through worker–employee negotiations. His recent publications include *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism* (with C. Smith and P. Smith, eds, Routledge, 1996); ‘Trade unions and social partnership: rhetoric, reality and strategy’, *International Journal of HRM*, 9 (3), 1998, pp. 529–49 (with J. Payne); ‘Reframing employment relations: the case for neo-pluralism’, *Industrial Relations Journal*, 33 (1), 2002; ‘Going against the historical grain: perspectives on gendered occupational identity and resistance to the breakdown of occupational segregation in two manufacturing firms’, *Gender, Work and Organization*, 9 (3), 2002, pp. 266–83.

**Louise Appleton** is a Research Fellow at the European Research Centre, Loughborough University, where she is engaged on the Framework Programme 5 project, described in this volume, investigating the relationship between socio-demographic trends and social policy in EU member states and candidate countries. Her research interests span cultural geography, national identity, historical geography, the politics of scale and media analysis, and the role of the nonprofit sector from a cross-national comparative perspective. Her publications include an edited issue of *Cross-National Research Papers*, 6 (2), on *Spatio-Temporal Dimensions of Economic and Social Change in Europe* (2000), and articles in the *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* and *Cultural Geographies*.

**Paul Byrne** is Senior Lecturer in Politics in the Department of European and International Studies at Loughborough University. His research interests are in the theory and practice of social movements, with particular reference to the United Kingdom, and in British government and politics. His publications include *Social Movements in Britain* (Routledge, 1997); *Cross-National Research Papers*, 5 (2): *The Changing Political Environment, Socio-demographic Change, Social and Economic Policies in the European Union* (ed., 1999); ‘From hard to soft law and from equality to reconciliation in the United Kingdom’, in L. Hantrais (ed.), *Gendered Policies in Europe: reconciling employment and family life* (with B. Bagilhole, Palgrave, 2000).