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DIALOG

POPULATION POLICY ACCEPTANCE SURVEY

Work package 1

Deliverable 1: State of the art

1. The demographic situation and its challenges

Since the 60ies of the 20th century nearly all industrialised countries witnessed remarkable demographic change. Fertility fell below replacement level inducing –together with increasing life expectancy- population ageing and population decline. While population decline was and can be mitigated by international immigration population ageing remains an outstanding phenomenon. The UN Study on “Replacement Migration” (UN, 2000) illustrates options to maintain population size, the size of the population of working age or to halt demographic ageing with this latter option as a rather theoretical one. The example of Europe may illustrate this.

The 47 countries which Europe comprises in the UN definition had a population of 728 million in 1995. Total fertility rate (TFR) for this Europe declined from 2.6 births per woman in 1950 to 1.57 by 1990-1995. Life expectancy at birth rose from 66.2 years in 1950-1955 to 72.6 years in 1990-1995. With that the proportion of the population aged 65 or older has risen from 8.2 % in 1950 to 13.9 % in 1995 while the potential support ratio (number of working-age persons (15 to 64 years) per 1 person 65 years or older) declined from 8.0 in 1950 to 4.8 in 1995.

In the UN *medium variant* of 1998 (assuming net immigration of 428,000 annually) population decline of Europe is to be expected after 2000 leading to 628 million in 2050. In 2050 27 million persons (4.3 %) would be post-1995 immigrants or their descendants. Working-age population would reach a peak in 2010 and start declining to 364 million in 2050, that are a quarter less than in 1995. The elderly population will grow, and the potential support ratio would fall from 4.8 to 2.1 in 2050.

If annually 1.8 million migrants would come to Europe its population could be kept constant at its 1995 level. 127 million persons or nearly 18 % of the total population of Europe would be post-1995 immigrants or their descendants. In 2050, the potential support ratio would be 2.38 (instead of 2.1 in the medium variant).

In order to maintain the working-age population at its 1995 level an annual net migration of 3.6 million would be required. The total population would grow from 728 million in 1995 to 809 million in 2050 with 26 % of post-1995 immigrants or their descendants. In 2050, the potential support ratio would then be 2.62.

If the goal would be to stop population ageing (here measured by keeping the 1995 potential support ratio constant at 4.8) 25.2 million immigrants per year (a total of almost 1.4 billion from 1995 to 2050) would be required. By 2050, Europe's population would grow to 2.3 billion inhabitants out of which almost three quarters would be post-1995 immigrants or their descendants. Such a scenario is hardly conceivable and realistic. It clearly shows the limited effect of immigration to stop population decline and population ageing. (UN, 79-84)

Population ageing therefore remains a political and societal challenge to assure the social security systems for pensions, health care, including long-term care of the oldest old. With such reform necessities also the issue of intergenerational solidarity and of fair burden - sharing among generations are evoked and are at stake.

Low fertility is accompanied by lower propensities to marry or remarry and an increasing incidence of divorce. Living alone, or living with a partner in a consensual union, or staying at the parents' home has become very popular with the younger generations in Europe. Family formation is delayed and eventually also disregarded. Both age at first marriage and at first birth as well as childlessness increase. The most frequent family form among the middle aged generations still comprises two (married) parents and two to three children. But also couples, married or cohabiting, more frequently remain childless. And because of divorce or separation of parents an increasing number of children are living with a lone parent, mostly their mother, occasionally also in a reconstituted family with a stepparent. Family forms and living arrangements are undergoing profound change and diversification.

Also the living arrangements of the elderly are changing. Among the elderly of today most men are still married while women (being typically younger than their husband and having a higher life expectancy) are frequently a widow. Only a small fraction of the elderly is living in old-age homes or in nursing homes. Three or more generation households have become rare. But the generations of a family are often in close contact and live at short distances though in separate households. Relatively little is known about such actual family ties among generations since official statistics are based on the principle of co-residence of household members. This should also be born in mind when looking at 1-person-households of younger persons; in addition, quite a number of "living-apart-together (LAT)" – arrangements are statistically not visible.

With increasing childlessness, divorce and separation or opting not to marry at all the living arrangements of the future elderly will change. The future elderly will much more frequently live in a 1-person-household. Mutual support in informal networks (friends, neighbours) or

formal support (nurses, doctors, hospitals) will have to step in if family support is not available.

Demographic change hence entails numerous challenges to society, social policies and every individual. Politically spoken, demographic change has the advantage of developing slowly over decades (or generations) giving time to react and to adapt to the evolving ageing of population. Policy-makers will have to know the attitudes and expectations of citizens concerning having children (How many are desired? What can policies do to support these desires? Where are the constraints?) as well as attitudes and expectations of citizens about living as a senior person (How long do they want to be economically active? Which living standard do they expect? What do they expect from their own children or grandchildren, from their partner?). With that knowledge reform policies can be tailored to the liking of the populace and to adapt to demographic change.

Policy-makers may also wish to know whether and how it is possible to halt demographic ageing. As already mentioned immigration does not contribute very much to achieve such a goal if so desired. The main reason is that immigrants are ageing too and in the future will claim acquired rights for pensions and old age security as the resident population does. Therefore, the only demographic solution to the demographic challenge would be to increase fertility. The question whether it is possible to increase fertility requires at least some advice from demographers but certainly also has to consider the views and expectations of the citizens concerned.

2. Studies on demographic change and the impact of population-related policies

In the following we aim at assessing the state of the art on studies that analyse the possible interactions between demographic change and policies related or relevant to such change.

Demographic change and its policy implications will be discussed in view of

- studies on low fertility and related policy measures
- studies on family forms, living arrangements and related policy measures
- studies on gender relations, demographic change and related policy measures
- studies on population ageing, intergenerational solidarity and related policy measures

2.1 Studies on low fertility and related policy measures

Studies on the determinants and consequences of fertility decline easily fill libraries. A comprehensive study is included in “Determinants and Consequences of Demographic Change” by the United Nations (1973). An effort to revisit the issue is offered in Hoehn and Mackensen (1980).

Theoretical approaches to understand fertility decline may be subdivided into

- economic theories
- sociological theories
- psychological approach
- ideational and value change
- gender perspective
- proximate (demographic) determinants

An excellent recent overview on these different approaches (and their most influential defenders) are provided by Dirk van de Kaa (1996) in his article on “Anchored narratives: The story and findings of half a century of research into the determinants of fertility”. These approaches cover historical and contemporary situations all over the world. Van de Kaa also critically discusses so-called grand theories of fertility decline, which aim at bringing together the theoretical approaches from different disciplines, such as the theory (or rather model) of demographic transition. While it is not possible to fully and definitely explain fertility decline since there are too many factors involved it is generally ascertained that the trend to declining fertility is inevitable in the course of modernisation of societies the level where fertility would stop declining likewise cannot be determined. The issue of lowest-low fertility has received more attention since the 1990ies.

Studies more focussed on current European issues, namely persistent low and lowest-low fertility, are also numerous. Here one should mention, inter alia, Josef Schmid’s study on the background of low fertility for the Council of Europe already in 1984. A classic became the study by Van de Kaa on “Europe’s Second Demographic Transition” (1987) with his own follow-up (1999). Here, the “grand theory” of demographic transition which was based on historical experience and observation in Europe leading to a new and stable equilibrium at replacement level (the authoritative study is owed to Coale and Watkins (1986) and considered a model for developing countries is completely modernised to fit to observed fertility below replacement level in contemporary Europe. Van de Kaa’s diagnosis is

persistent below replacement fertility due to changing partner and gender relations, new living arrangements with a focus on the couple and the single on a canvass of affluence, individualisation and progressive values.

Lowest-low fertility emerging in southern Europe and in the central and eastern European countries in transition in the 1990ies is studied, inter alia, by Golini (1998) and Kohler (2001 and Kohler et al. (2002)). Kohler explains postponement of family formation with precarious economic circumstances of younger generations diffused by peer orientation and aggravated by higher lifestyle expectations. Empirical evidence on such expectations is not collected in a comparative way.

Studies on low fertility and related policy measures, in European context obviously of pronatalist nature, are scarce. The bulk of studies on fertility and related policies is directed to developing countries to foster fertility decline by family planning programmes, empowerment of women, education and development. It still seems that enhancing fertility decline is much easier than to promote an increase of fertility. Since the desired number of children in Europe usually does not surpass 2 children and the decision on the number and spacing of children is a basic human right the legitimation of state intervention is limited to creating opportunities to have the number of children desired by couples and individuals.

Among the few studies on possibilities and limits of pronatalist policies we should mention Anne Gauthier (1996), Kaufmann et al. (2002), McDonald (2002) and Demeny (1986; 2003). They are of theoretical nature in so far that they do not rely on survey data as to expectations of (potential) parents. Such survey data are in the meantime outdated being from the early 1990ies (Kamaras et al. 1998). They indicate a rather limited effect of pronatalist policies on having a child. Monetary benefits seemed to have a higher impact on timing of a (desired) child than additional childcare arrangements. The more recent (theoretical) discussion claims that policies helping to combine work and family by offering more childcare facilities are preferred.

2.2 Studies on family forms, living arrangements and related policy measures

Studies on family forms and living arrangements as such are the domain of family sociology. The moment they deal with family formation (the birth of a first child), family expansion (the birth of further children), the impact of marriage or cohabitation on fertility, family dissolution (divorce or separation or death of a parent) or the joint analysis of the family life cycle they belong to family demography. Here we will limit our overview to studies in family demography.

Studies on family formation and the impact of marriage or cohabitation on fertility have become more numerous both from a theoretical approach (Becker 1981; Bongaarts, Burch and Wachter 1987; Roussel 1989) and an empirical perspective (Klijzing and Corijn 2002; Palomba and Moors 1998; Pinnelli et al. 2001) based on survey data which became available in the 1990ies.

While in 1981 Becker develops the economic analysis of family formation, marriage and divorce with microeconomic tools, Roussel writes a sociological analysis of the “uncertain family” inspired by great demographic change to be observed since the mid-sixties of the twentieth century. The demography of the family from a formal perspective with multi-state family life tables, the analysis of several generations and persons of different age forming a family, the living arrangements of children in different family forms, and the analysis of the family life cycle are brought together in a manual edited by Bongaarts, Burch and Wachter (1987).

The empirical analysis of the Family and Fertility Survey demonstrates in a comparative perspective the higher importance of marriage for fertility than in couples cohabiting. The emergence of “new” living arrangements, of living as a single or as an unmarried couple, is in most countries accompanied by a lower fertility. Being married is no longer the unchallenged living arrangement of adults though in most countries still the dominant family form. Divorce and separation increase too also boosting the number of monoparental families, mostly of mothers. While living as an unmarried parent often is a transitory phase in life it often jeopardises the opportunity and preferred environment to have the number of children desired.

Studies on family forms, living arrangements and related policy measures rarely deal with the impact of divorce laws on family but usually on family formation. In that respect we refer to the studies on the efficacy of pronatalist policies already mentioned above.

2.3 *Studies on gender relations, demographic change and related policy measures*

Studies on gender relations, their impact on family formation / fertility and marriage / motherhood remained in the feminist domain until the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. The ICPD Programme of Action stresses the importance of the empowerment of women for development and well-being. Empowerment of women through education and full participation in the labour force, in decision making in the family and in all public domains (gender mainstreaming) since then ranks very high on the political agenda. Of course, empowerment of women is a political goal in itself. At no part the implicit goal to reduce family size /fertility is mentioned. However, women are also to be empowered to decide on the number of their children with the contraceptive method of their choice – which as a rule means a rational planning of the number of births and hence a reduction. The ICPD refers of course to the situations world wide but the focus and concerns are more with the less developed countries.

Concerning industrialised countries including Europe gender relations and fertility and partnership have been analysed by Blossfeld (1995), Mason and Jensen (1995), McDonald (2000) and Neyer (2003). Equal relationships in partnership, the sharing of household chores and of childcare are requested. Policies to enhance gender mainstreaming and every policy to help reconcile work and family rank high on the political agenda. Empirical evidence of what women really want are scarce and internationally comparable surveys virtually non-existent.

2.4 *Studies on population ageing, intergenerational solidarity and related policy measures*

Studies on population ageing and its macroeconomic consequences on the pension system, on health expenditures, health insurance and health care, and on the labour market are available (Kinsella and Velkoff 2001; OECD 2000; United Nations 1992). The need to reform these systems is widely acknowledged and figures high on the political agenda of many European countries.

Much less is known on the attitudes and expectations of citizens concerned, about their view on the elderly of today, of how they would like to live in their own old age, when they would like to retire, what they expect of the state, what of their children.

The role of the three- or even four-generation family and its members is not well documented and understood. Official family statistics are based on the co-residence principle in a household. Though there are not many three- or four-generation households statistically family members do in fact interact in a very efficient way. Many family members do not live far away from each other, they support each other on a daily or regular basis. Grandparents look after their grandchildren when the parents are working. Others make generous financial gifts. Emotional support is customary between generations. Long-term care functions apparently well within the extended family. Knowledge on an empirical base is, however, only accidental and scattered. An important pillar of society, intergenerational family solidarity, is not sufficiently noticed, appreciated and possibly supported.

3. Conclusions for further research needed

Marrying and having a child or children is no longer to be considered “natural” goals of adult life. There are other options such as education, professional career, leisure and sports. Deciding about the number of children and the date of their birth in a free and informed manner is a basic human right and any interference of the state into these private choices are consequently rejected. The state (and the economy) are, however, deemed responsible for providing opportunities for families, in particular for the living children. But also the role and the contribution of the older generation in the family context remains important and is likely to increase in the future.

While theoretical studies on these aspects are available, survey data on attitudes, opinions and expectations towards the state and appropriate and desired measures are not available in a comprehensive, timely and comparative fashion. Here the DIALOG project is supposed to fill an important gap for the information of policy-makers, academia and the families and individuals concerned. The challenges and tasks are the following:

- Analyse the current population policy context and impact of changes in demographic behaviour on future policy options regarding the management of change in family building patterns and population ageing;
- Data harmonisation and setting up of an international database on population policy acceptance;
- Analyse results from the population policy acceptance surveys regarding practices, attitudes and expectations of individual citizens;

- Carry out and analyse results from a Delphi survey in view of evaluating the congruence of policy options brought to the fore by the key policy actors and viewpoints of individual citizens;
- Study fertility intentions and their relation to other life choices of men and women and to policy measures;
- Examine the conflict-area of 'compatibility of paid labour and family' in its diverse dimensions and evaluate the policy measures that were taken to assist families particularly those implemented in reaction to the partial incompatibility between paid work and family in view of their effectiveness and their gender-specific objectives;
- Study acceptance of existing and proposed family-related measures in the national context and in a comparative perspective;
- Study culture-specific meaning given to family relations, children, parenthood and intergenerational solidarity among populations of several European countries;
- Study the caring capacity of family regarding elderly in terms of the perception of needs, identification of the gender perspective and resource persons for care, preferences about living arrangements of elderly and expectations towards public policies in view of one's own ageing;
- Compare the survey results with some basic data of the surveys of the early 1990s in some countries participating in this project.
- Propose standards of population relevant policy in the field of support to families in a life cycle perspective regarding family formation, partner relations and care for children and the elderly, and expectations about one's own old age;

Expected results:

At the policy level, a systematic comparative analysis of the acceptance of existing population policy measures and expectations regarding future is expected to provide informed basis for the development of integrated population policies through active participation of citizens in shaping their own family related choices in a more family-friendly environment. Dialog between policy actors, citizens' associations and individuals is expected to promote democratic decision processes regarding population policy formation and improve governance.

Scientific results are expected to bring the broadening of the theoretical knowledge about the impact of population policies on individual behaviour and the interaction between attitudes, expectations and behaviour. The results relate both to empirical concerns and impetus for the verification and construction of theories concerning the inter-relationship between fertility behaviour, within-family transfers of resources and care, gender equity and public policies.

In view of the participation of several associated countries the project addresses capacity-building and is expected to be of policy relevance for the ongoing enlargement process.

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