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WELLCHI NETWORK

The well-being of children: the impact of changing family forms, working conditions of parents, social policy and legislative measures

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WELLCHI NETWORK



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Contents

Introduction	4
Section 1 – Project execution	5
Project objectives	5
Consortium Members	6
Activities	6
Section 2 – Results of the project	11
Research findings, policy implications and recommendations for policy reform	11
Research findings	11
Recommendations for policy reform	15
Findings and recommendations regarding the exploration and harmonisation of statistical sources	17
Findings	17
Recommendations	22
Section 3 - Dissemination and use	26
Scientific Publications	27

Publishable Final Activity Report

"The well-being of children: The impact of changing family forms, working conditions of parents, social policy and legislative measures - WELLCHI NETWORK" is a Coordination Action, research project under the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission (2004-2007).

Introduction

The purpose of this project has been to set up and operate a European network of researchers with the aim of improving our knowledge of the impact of changing family forms, the working conditions of parents, and social policy and legislative measures on the well-being of children and their families. It has sought to bring into focus, co-ordinate, channel and publicise the results of research that have already been carried out through the organisation of international workshops and conferences. These events have brought together a large number of professionals from different specialist areas in this field, in order to debate and compare their research and experiences, to tackle the ways in which different kinds of public policy and legal reform can ameliorate the conditions of children and to explore the best strategies for the exploitation and dissemination of academic outcomes to wider audiences.

The very basic idea on which the Wellchi Network has based its endeavours is that raising public awareness of the problems related to childhood is an integral part of their solution. Therefore, one of our primary efforts has been to reach out to actors beyond the research community to get their cooperation in the dissemination of the results of our research and obtain their feedback to assess how to improve our approach to these problems. For this reason, the activities of the Wellchi Network have included several instruments for disseminating information to civil society, of which the creation of the Children's Well-being International Documentation Centre (the project's website: www.ciimu.org/webs/wellchi) and the setting up of Commissions of Local Agents (composed of stakeholders in the well-being of children from various areas of expertise) can be counted among the most relevant achievements.

Section 1 – Project execution

Project objectives

The focus of the project has concentrated on the analysis of the potential consequences of family diversification on the well-being of children and their parents. The decline of the nuclear, male-breadwinner family model has led us to assess the extent to which the emergence of new household forms can be associated with adverse outcomes for children.

The challenges raised by the increase in family diversity in modern European societies are caused not only by changes in household composition (development of different family models, especially one-parent families, etc.) but also by the growth of ethnic heterogeneity. The proliferation of new family forms in recent decades has been associated with a number of deficits affecting children and their families in terms of access to various forms of capital: monetary, human, cultural, social and personal or emotional. In this context, the WELLCHI NETWORK has sought to discuss the societal arrangements underlying these issues, to analyse the operation of social and political mechanisms responsible for the causation of the shortcomings involved and to try to respond adequately to the associated challenges in terms of policy reform.

Considering that our general goal is to improve the well-being of children, one of our main guiding principles was finding ways of ensuring more equal opportunities for all children in a society characterised by family diversity. In particular, we are greatly interested in understanding how to combat child poverty in a more effective way and how to deal appropriately with the issues resulting from family changes by means of legal and policy reform.

The main subjects of our research have included the transformation of family forms and relationships, patterns of migration, changes in the structures of labour markets and parents' work conditions and new trends in social policy and family law and the extent to which they can influence the well-being of children. Children's quality of life depends primarily on how processes of change in family structures are institutionally managed and confronted. Therefore the Wellchi Network has focused specifically on areas such as parents' labour conditions, policies improving social cohesion, including the integration of migrants into host societies, as well as the regulation of family law, considering that the growth of family diversity implies an increased need of equal opportunity policies for all children, irrespective of the type of household in which they live. Prominent themes in our concerns are the following: new trends in divorce and

extramarital fertility, the increase in one-parent families, absent fathers and the provision of child support, how to curb child poverty, the evolution of migration patterns, the extent to which measures of reconciliation between family and work are affecting children and the transmission of social inequalities across generations.

One of the main assets of the WELLCHI network is that it endeavours to bring together different approaches to the study of the factors affecting the well-being of children. To begin with, it has suggested different ways of dealing with the problems concerning the 'children of divorce': through family law or social policy. Similarly, the WELLCHI network has attempted to bring together the two main theoretical paradigms that are currently dominating the sociology of childhood: the social investment approach, and what can be termed the 'new studies of childhood' or the 'child as a fully-fledged citizen'. Our network has successfully hosted contributions from these two approaches, and this has indeed provided considerable opportunities for cross-fertilisation.

Consortium Members

Our network is a multidisciplinary group of researchers in which mainly sociologists, lawyers, anthropologists and political scientists take part to strive for better knowledge of various structural and institutional factors influencing the well-being of children. The project was coordinated by the Institute of Childhood and Urban World (CIIMU) based in Barcelona, Spain, and included members from nine European countries. The members of the consortium are: the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) from Greece; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam from the Netherlands; the Department of Sociology of the University of Göteborg, Sweden; the Department of Social Policy of the London School of Economics, UK; the École Nationale de la Santé Publique from France; the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships off the University of Edinburgh, UK; the Morgan Centre for the Study of Relationship and Personal Life of the University of Manchester, UK; the Institute for Legal Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; Norwegian Social Research; and the Institute of Sociology of the University of Hamburg, Germany.

Activities

Our activities have essentially consisted of four interrelated areas: (1) holding workshops and conferences; (2) setting up an international documentation centre; (3)

harmonising of statistical sources on the well-being of children; (4) disseminating results to wider audiences.

Workshops and Conferences

The organisation of international workshops and conferences has been the bulk of our activities. During the 3 year lifetime of the project, we have organised 6 workshops and 3 international conferences. We have managed to involve a substantial number of participants outside our network, who have taken part as external advisors and experts in our debates. These have offered the possibility of debating, comparing and exchanging research and experiences as well as engaging in different proposals for legal and institutional reform in several countries in order to alleviate the negative outcomes on children. The workshops and conferences have covered the following topics:

- **W1** (Leeds, United Kingdom - November 2004): New approaches and perspectives on childhood.
- **W2** (Sophia, Bulgaria – April 2005): Which are the legal provisions in Family Law that foster children's well-being and which kind of reforms should be envisaged in this respect?
- **W3** (Rennes, France – September 2005): Working flexibility and caring arrangements.
- **W4** (Athens, Greece – December 2005): Children in multicultural societies.
- **W5** (Göteborg, Sweden – September 2006): Transmission of inequalities from generation to generation and their impact on social cohesion.
- **W6** (Oslo, Norway – November 2006): The relationships between children and non-resident fathers and the impact on quality of life.

- **C1** (Oxford, United Kingdom – January 2005): Challenges and opportunities faced by European welfare states: The changing context for the child welfare.
- **C2** (Hamburg, Germany – April 2006): Well-being of children and labour markets in Europe: Different kinds of risks for children resulting from various structures and changes in the labour markets.
- **C3** (Barcelona, Spain – February 2007): How can the well-being of children in a knowledge-based society be ameliorated? Convergence and divergence patterns in a European perspective.

Children's Well-being International Documentation Centre - Website

The second area of work is the creation and operation of an International Documentation Centre on the Well-being of Children in Barcelona. This includes a compilation of projects, research centres and groups, researchers, interesting links, statistics and so on connected with child research. The WELLCHI Documentation Centre website is also used as a powerful platform for the dissemination of the results of our events and activities (<http://www.ciimu.org/webs/wellchi>). Most of the papers and presentations contributed to the conferences and workshops as well as the six issues of the project's Scientific Newsletters can be downloaded from the WELLCHI website. The website also acts as a useful source of information on childhood as it offers access to a review of the state of the art and the mapping of research competences on childhood studies and a complete list of links to research centres, and public and private institutions working in this field. A Discussion Forum was set up in order to collect suggestions and remarks from social actors commenting on the conclusions of our research. In addition, the website includes a free-access series of working papers obtained from some of the most relevant contributions presented at the international conferences.



The project's website www.ciimu.org/webs/wellchi

Exploration and harmonisation of statistical sources on the well-being of children

The exploration and harmonisation of statistical data on children has been the third of our areas of work. The central purpose is to make recommendations for a common,

harmonised system of indicators that can improve research opportunities, as well as the effectiveness of political measures in this area. Childhood is statistically invisible and children appear more as objects than subjects in statistical data collection and research. We intend to help improve these long-standing shortcomings.

The development of a common set of statistical indicators to monitor children's well-being on a European level remains a priority task both for researchers and for policy-makers. The WELLCHI network has contributed to these efforts by producing a report which recommends the adoption of indicators in different areas, taking the child as the primary unit of observation and analysis. Such an approach will help to overcome the traditional invisibility of childhood in social surveys by offering cross-country data and, most importantly, European standards of well-being. Indeed, while countries such as the United States elaborated multidimensional indexes of child well-being long ago, the European Union lacks a common standard and only recently was an index of child well-being proposed¹. In order to respond to the specific needs of EU countries and to provide effective tools for social demands and political willingness to adopt child-oriented policies, there is a need for EU data on children, in particular from a child-centred perspective.

The final recommendations for the harmonisation of the statistical sources on the well-being of children include contributions that address the state of the art in the statistical monitoring of children in various fields, shed light on existing shortcomings and discuss how they can be overcome by adopting new indicators to improve our knowledge of European children. The contributions cover the following topics: care arrangements for children aged 0-3 and work-family balance (indicators of working conditions, institutional arrangements, childcare services, family benefits and parental leave); the impact of divorce on children's well-being (legal frameworks, parental practices, child contact after separation, child support, family services and post-divorce living standards); indicators of child health beyond the traditional yet unsatisfactory infant mortality and morbidity indicators which ought to include gender dimensions, mental health measurements and in short explore the wide range of child health determinants and the diffuse boundaries between health and well-being; the measurement of child poverty using multi-dimensional indicators (linking poverty with family models, social protection structures, the social, economic and employment characteristics of the family) that allow us to monitor poverty transitions between different ages and finally access to material and community resources.

¹ Bradshaw, J., P. Hoelscher and D. Richardson (2007). 'An Index of Child Well-being in the European Union'. *Social Indicators Research* 80: 133-177.
<http://springerlink.metapress.com/content/f3642p2x00hn5h01/fulltext.pdf>

Dissemination and evaluation

The fourth area of work concerns the dissemination and evaluation of the results of the project. We consider dissemination to be a way of raising awareness of children-related problems and a bridge between research and practice on a local/national level. To begin with, as has already been said, the dissemination of the knowledge generated by the project takes place through the aforementioned International Documentation Centre on the Well-being of Children, as all relevant materials produced by the WELLCHI NETWORK are published via its website. Secondly, a key action in the dissemination and self-evaluation of the project is encouraging the formation of Commissions of Local Agents in participant countries with the aim of bringing together policy-makers, NGO officers, local administrators, divorce lawyers, social workers and other professionals working in the field to debate issues regarding the well-being of children.

The consortium members have established Commissions of Local Agents in three participant countries (Spain, United Kingdom and Greece) and organised four meetings focusing on the following themes:

- First meeting of local agents in Barcelona, May 2005, on “Children in the family-break process”
- Second meeting of local agents in Edinburgh, July 2005, on “The well-being of children: Challenges and issues”
- Third meeting of local agents in Edinburgh, November 2006, on “Migration, families and relationships”
- Fourth meeting of local agents in Athens, March 2007, on “The well-being of children in European multicultural society”

These meetings of local agents aim to ensure an effective exchange of views between academics and policy-makers, offer the possibility for consortium members to receive feedback from social workers concerning recommendations and proposals for reform emanating from workshops and conferences, and guarantee that input for the political agendas of governments can be generated. Commissions of Local Agents are also responsible for providing ideas about good practices to be recommended, and for assessing the contributions made by workshops and conferences. Finally, by means of these commissions, new concepts and approaches resulting from the network's activities trickle down to wider audiences in civil society. While in some countries the impact of our activities on wider audiences may help put neglected issues related to the welfare of children on the political agenda, in some others the trickling down of our themes to a wider society may help others devise more innovative actions, schemes and practices in order to improve the well-being of children.

Section 2 – Results of the project

Research findings, policy implications and recommendations for policy reform

Research findings and policy implications

- In recent decades factors impinging on the well-being of children have become more complex, so that nowadays they are not only affected by the old but still persisting class inequalities but are also challenged by new social risks. The new risks tend to affect people at younger stages of their lives than the old social risks did. Children make up one of the social groups that are most affected by these risks, insofar as they have a diminished mobilising capacity and greater difficulties in representing their interests.
- Many of these new social risks result from family change. A number of ongoing social processes, such as the trend towards individualisation of family relationships, the de-institutionalisation of marriage, the growth of marital instability and partnership dissolution, and the proliferation of new household forms, together with the intensification of labour market insecurity, have led to an increase in the hazards that often involve cumulative high-risk vulnerabilities for some groups of children and their families.
- One of most relevant changes underlying the transition to a post-industrial society is the loss of legitimacy of patriarchal domination. The legal rights of women and children have been extended in all countries, and the expansion of education and paid work has extended autonomy. The massive incorporation of women into paid work has increased women's bargaining power with respect to men, and undermined the legitimacy of men's domination as the main economic providers in the family.
- Individual life courses have become increasingly diversified. The most dramatic change in children's lives over the past one hundred years has been the growth in the number of children spending at least some portion of the childhood in a single-parent family. Although most single parents are women, in recent times a growing number are men.
- The changing nature of families and the contributions that men and women make to them as well as the restructuring or recasting of modern welfare states are processes that constitute important variables in the understanding of variations in children's well-being throughout different countries.

- In contemporary societies the dominance of male breadwinner families is losing ground in practice and in terms of cultural legitimacy. The decline of this family model, and the transition towards an emerging universal adult breadwinner model in which it is assumed that the majority of the child population lives in dual-earner households, is the backdrop against which we have to understand most of children's issues.
- The shift from the male breadwinner family towards a new adult worker model requires a fundamental reorganisation of welfare states. The terms and conditions in which the transition to what appears to be an 'adult worker family model' is undertaken are crucial for children's well-being. What happens to adults is critical for the well-being of children.
- One of the important problems that the universal adult breadwinner model leaves unresolved is care work. In fact, nowhere is there a fully-fledged adult worker model family. Nevertheless, it makes a big difference whether the model is supported by social policies rather than being developed solely by the operation of the market. In the case of lone parents this difference can be critical.
- In recent years child poverty rates have increased in most advanced nations. The proportion of children living in poverty in the developed world has risen in 17 of the 24 OECD nations for which data are available. No matter which of the commonly-used poverty measures is applied, the situation faced by children is seen to have deteriorated over the last decade.
- Although causes underlying child poverty are related to a number of complex factors, its recrudescence in recent years is basically connected to two kinds of transition processes, i.e., the shift from industrial societies to service and knowledge-based economies, on the one hand, and the shift from the male breadwinner family model to the adult worker family model, on the other.
- The rhythm of these two transitions, as well as the diversity of responses from governments in the face of strains generated by societal transformations, contribute to understanding the great variety of child poverty regimes in various European countries. In this sense, the slow adaptation of social policy to changes in family organisation and the emergence of new family forms is also responsible for the intensification of child poverty.
- The co-existence of single-earner and dual-earner households creates higher poverty risks for the former, especially when they are low-income ones. When the average standard of living takes for granted a double income, households

with a single breadwinner are obviously facing higher poverty risks. Although this factor affects both two-parent families with a single breadwinner and single-parent households, it is the latter that face higher poverty risks.

- If our basic concern is with economic hardship, lone mothers are the group at greatest risk. However, one must not forget that in the European Union, in terms of the volume of population concerned, most poor children live in two-parent households. On the other hand, the growth of child poverty cannot be simply explained by the increase of single-parent families.
- Undoubtedly long periods of deprivation affecting children are specially damaging for their expected life chances. Short spells of child poverty may be bearable; but if poverty is intense, persistent, and it chiefly affects children in critical stages of their lives, it can have long-term consequences in the form of low intergenerational social mobility.
- Some evidence suggests that those countries with low intergenerational earnings mobility are the same as those who have the highest level of income inequality measured at a particular moment in time. The same is true in reverse. The opportunity structure appears far more egalitarian in countries with more equal income distributions. Accordingly, social inheritance appears stronger in less egalitarian societies. Additionally, government distribution tends to be far stronger in countries that are more egalitarian.
- Coping with a divorce is undeniably painful for most children, just it is for most adults, yet it may not be divorce per se that is problematic but the way in which it is handled by adults in their interactions with children. While destructive in the short-term, divorce can also be positive, creating new opportunities for long-term personal growth.
- Growing up in a family affected by divorce increases to a great extent the chances that one's own marriage will also end in divorce, a phenomenon called the divorce cycle, or the intergenerational transmission of divorce. Each divorce can affect many future marriages. The transmission of divorce between generations can be thought of as a cascade.
- We know that adults and children from divorced families, as a group, score lower than their counterparts in married-couple families on a variety of well-being indicators. On average, children growing up with just one parent do lose out relative to other children. Only about half the disadvantage associated with growing up in a single-parent family is explained by economic factors. Family structure seems to matter for reasons that go beyond income and are likely to be related to the role-model that parents provide, to the attitudes they pass on

to their children, but also to the different allocation of time and money between family members.

- Research demonstrates that conflict between parents is associated with increased risk for psychological problems among children in all families, whether the parents are married, separated, or divorced. In most studies of children from divorced families, the quality of the relationship between a child and his or her primary residential parent is the strongest predictor of that child's psychological well-being.
- Money is a central issue before, during and after divorce. Much research indicates that, for parents, financial support and contact are intertwined. Where there is contact, support is more likely.
- International research tends to show that it is the nature and the quality of parenting by the contact parent that is crucial, not contact in itself. It is not the arrangements in themselves which matter most to children but how their relationships are managed. It appears that, for the majority of children, traditional visiting patterns and guidelines are outdated, unnecessarily rigid, and restrictive, and fail in both the short and long term to address their best interests.
- A common trend in European countries is the liberalisation of conditions for divorce while introducing at the same time more regulation of the parental relationship in separated families, especially in respect of conditions for paying maintenance.
- It appears that the concept of "reconciliation" is not an adequate academic concept for analysing the relationship between family and the employment system, and the tensions and contradictions that might develop. It is suggested to use a broader approach to the "arrangement of work and family", one which tries to conceptualise the differing ways in which the family can be linked to paid work, the role of care work, and the gendered nature of this relationship.
- The public provision of childcare does not meet the needs of parents in many countries. However, it is not obvious at all that children's interests are being necessarily considered or promoted when childcare facilities are created by governments. We do not only find important differences in the extent to which the provision of childcare is seen as a public good and is placed under collective responsibility but also to which children's rights and the importance of childhood in its own right is being emphasised.

- In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children are considered as subjects with rights. It is increasingly acknowledged that children have rights as citizens. Children's citizenship has remained largely invisible until very recently, and scholars have just begun to examine how it relates to existing views of citizenship in terms of rights, responsibilities, identity and participation. Children are not simply tomorrow's citizens; they are today's citizens.

Recommendations for policy reform

- In order to try to improve the general condition of children in any country it is absolutely necessary to envisage the eradication or reduction of child poverty, especially in its most severe and persistent forms. Reducing poverty, and especially childhood poverty, might contribute to reduce intergenerational inequality.
- In order to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation, preventive strategies are undoubtedly much more effective than remedial interventions, insofar as the latter are operating on often irreversible situations. Long-term public investment in children, in particular if it is based on early intervention, constitutes a good guarantee, allowing the securing of adequate levels of child well-being. In particular, the reduction of child poverty is a prerequisite for children with certain deficits to be able to take advantage of opportunities that are offered to them by the school system.
- It is difficult to confront child deprivation without increasing levels of social expenditure for families and children. Although activation measures for (female) paid work and enforcement of maintenance payments can make an important contribution to the fight against child poverty, the rise in the levels of social transfers, in particular of child benefits, is one of the measures that can produce better outcomes. In this sense, a good system of economic support to families, with adequate levels of universal child benefits, is an indispensable means of combating child poverty.
- There is a need to develop a full array of social rights for children, in keeping with the rights of adults. Even if the rights of children to health care and education are fully guaranteed in all European countries, the same is not true of their welfare rights. We are referring in particular to an important deficit that we find in some EU countries where there is no universal coverage of child benefits, the most typical children's welfare right.
- However, it appears that a strategy based exclusively on income redistribution may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. A really effective strategy must attack

inequalities in parents' cultural transmission. The most effective way to tackle children's social exclusion in the long run is to combat social inheritance.

- Divorce regulations that may promote the well-being of children include the establishment of minimum amounts of maintenance, the advancement of payments to the custodial parent by public agencies in charge of recovering the money from the liable parent (usually the father), and the introduction of joint legal custody as the norm after divorce.
- Research-based parenting plan models offering multiple options for living arrangements following separation and divorce more appropriately serve children's diverse developmental and psychological needs.
- Many EU governments are actively encouraging parties involved in divorce proceedings to use mediation services or other forms of dispute resolution. In reality, however, consulting the child in mediation remains a relatively undeveloped area of practice.
- The notion of listening to children so that they can participate in decision-making about their everyday lives has become an established principle of child law and policy in most European countries. However, it is not necessarily in children's best interests to be dragged into decision-making, or to voice their views in a way that sets them apart from or even in opposition to their parents by placing undue burdens of responsibility and guilt on them at too young an age and compromising their loyalties.
- The promotion of an adequate work life balance is essential. Parents' time input in the family should be regarded as a contribution to children's education and socialisation. Children experience a need for stability and regular rhythms, which is in opposition to the labour market ideal of the flexible worker. Whereas parents' work life balance has been broadly discussed, the children's perspective on their parents' work life balance and on their own time use and preferences has remained a neglected issue so far.
- Only promoting men's participation in unpaid work at a similar level as women's and in particular fathers' contribution to childcare would really address the unresolved problem of care and would improve gender equality. In this sense, some measures implemented in certain countries such as 'daddy leaves' de-commodification schemes and standard provisions for joint custody in case of divorce or dissolution of partnership, are an important contribution to the promotion of men's family responsibilities.

- Implementing a number of public measures for the care of children aged 0-3, including schemes of paid parental leave and a system of accessible, affordable and high-quality childcare facilities can produce benefits of various sorts. In the first year of life, extended parental leave policies, giving parents the choice to stay at home, could be paired with policies to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of infant childcare.
- It is important to go beyond the dichotomous construction of children as either competent and autonomous, or vulnerable and dependent, and to be able to preserve a delicate and fragile balance between both the children's right to participate and their legitimate need for protection.
- There are still powerful political and social forces that see children as dependent subordinates, thus excluding them from political participation. It is most probable that if young people were given the chance to participate, they would take more responsibility and would also be more willing to take part in local and national political affairs.
- There is a clear need to design relevant interventions that support actual forms of child participation. In particular, the introduction of citizenship education in the school curricula of all EU countries specifically based on children's rights would be a very helpful experience. Few schools know about the significance of the UN 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is a need to reform schools to promote a culture of children's rights.

Findings and recommendations regarding the exploration and harmonisation of statistical sources

Findings

- Children as a social category are almost statistically invisible. Although children appear in the statistics as an age group, they seldom become categorised as a separate grouping with definite rights and specific needs.
- To the extent to which children are treated as citizens in their own right and not merely as appendices to their parents, it is more likely that there is an increasing need to focus on their specific problems and wants and therefore to develop statistical instruments and social indicators to describe relevant phenomena pertaining to them.

- Since the beginning of the WELLCHI project, the situation of statistical sources on childhood has mostly improved and a number of interesting developments have made easily accessible to the specialists as well as to the general public a great wealth of child-related data. Although the situation is still unsatisfactory, today we have an increasing amount of information about the children's condition in Europe, both in quantity and in quality.
- Despite the fact that in recent years we have obtained a lot of data on separate aspects of children's behaviour (health, school achievement, family structure, etc.), this valuable knowledge is of limited use because we still lack relevant information about the complex ways in which all these dimensions are interrelated and in particular the extent to which outcomes produced later in adult life cycle may result from critical episodes or processes occurred during childhood.
- Survey data on the well-being of children are seldom produced using the child as a unit of observation, as the purpose of many statistical sources is to get information about adult conditions, practices and representations. The needs and priorities of children do not necessarily coincide with those of parents and other adults and therefore we cannot simply assume that both interests are the same. In fact, in certain cases they cannot only be different but even radically divergent.
- Most of Eurostat indicators developed as a part of the EU social agenda to monitor the evolution of poverty and exclusion are responding more to economic concerns (such as efficiency or competitiveness) than to matters of social justice. The inadequacy and insufficiency of available data on Europe's children is an indication that the interests of young people are not given full attention in the debate on European integration.
- Another example of the EU low priorities regarding the production of indicators of the children's well-being is the shortage of data on the time-use of children. Eurostat has missed a golden opportunity when it has failed to cover children in a systematic way in its project on harmonisation of time use surveys.
- Several attempts have been made to produce composite indices of child well-being. However, Europe clearly lags behind the United States as far as the development of a Child Well-Being Index is concerned.
- One attestation of the vigour and dynamism this emerging field is the organisation of a conference on child indicators in June 2007 and the launching of the *Child Indicators Journal* to be published by Springer.

- Residence and contact are the frames within which children sustain and develop their relationships with their parents and in which parents meet their parental responsibilities towards their children.
- Little is known about how parents negotiate with each other, what role children themselves play in these discussions, how parents adapt to changing circumstances, and the nature of any agreements between them.
- While divorce increases the risk of adverse outcomes for children and stress in the short-term, most children don't have adverse long-term effects.
- *Quality*, rather than *quantity* of the parent-child relationship is what matters most. Some strategies to reduce opportunities for conflict and exposure to it are short course for parents, detailed and specific parenting plans that reduce the scope for argument, handovers that are brief and in neutral settings and encouraging parents to work with parent coordinators.
- While family law and policy in EU member states generally encourages contact between non-resident parents and children, little is known about how this is experienced or negotiated by children and parents. Even less is known about how children's views are taken into account
- It is important for children to be consulted about the major decisions that affect their lives, and post-divorce family arrangements are one such example. Our understanding about how and how much parents and children make use of family support services around separation and divorce, and how these compare in different countries, is poorly developed.
- Particularly for low income families, private child support can form an important component of an income package whose sources are the labour market, the state and the family. At present, there are no international bodies that regularly report standardized (private or public) child support information
- Demographic information about household structures and transition is better than evidence in other areas, although the unit of analysis tends to be either the household or the individual adult, and rarely the child.
- Social exclusion is now an important part of a mainstream political rhetoric and policy which is primarily directed towards a notion of social exclusion from the labour market and has little to tell us of children experiences of social exclusion within the immediacy of childhood, among peers or exclusion from social activities.
- Poverty is strongly linked with unemployment, ethnicity, lone parenthood, sickness and disability

- The first challenge for any government seeking to reduce child poverty is to establish a consensus on how it may be best defined and measured: draw the line between the poor and the non poor, update the poverty line.
- Large-scale surveys provide insights into some of the outcomes of poverty for children, including poor health, poor cognitive development, low self-esteem, poor educational achievement emotional and behavioural outcomes and teenage out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
- Income measures are indicators of well-being based on the assumption that family income affects child outcomes but other indicators are not included. For example, we have insufficient or no information about child abuse/neglect, child labour, child care, good schools, quality of school life, safe neighbourhoods, crime etc.
- Little is known about income/expenditure/consumption needs of children in most developed countries and how these needs vary by age, gender and location.
- The implementation of a health determinant approach is extremely relevant, because the direct impact of behaviour on health status has been shown in several studies: i.e. childhood mortality is highly associated with changes in maternal behaviour, educational level, and the social autonomy of women
- Health is viewed as more than the absence of diseases, and that public health policies and interventions try to improve health by acting on four groups of 'health determinants': biological and genetic factors, lifestyle, the environment and the health care system.
- Assuming that mortality can fully reflect the state of health is a mistake since other indicators of health, such as morbidity (observed and self-perceived), disability, injuries, social and behavioural pathologies, health policies, lifestyles and other health determinants should be included to capture a fuller range of health states and welfare.
- A detailed set of indicators should include social relationships for a good monitoring of child health. A useful framework for viewing and conceptualising the kinds of social relationships a person has with others is provided by social network analysis.
- The dominant focus in health policy has traditionally been the provider of biomedical systems with their principal care sectors (primary health, hospitalisation, paediatrics, mental health resources, etc.), but other resources (traditional medicine, complementary medicines, folk and religious resources

and, over all, popular systems) have a great importance for health analysis, health information systems and child health and child care.

- The notion of health transition gives us a historical and cross-societal and cross-cultural perspective. Child health can not be restricted to standard and traditional measurements of health status (i.e. mortality), because the boundaries between health and welfare are not clear, especially in this age group.
- The interest in monitoring work-family arrangements in households with under 3's brings together the interest in selecting indicators of family change and in the quality of employment and working conditions in the focus group.
- The idea of comprehensive systems to support the care of children under 3 is progressing in social policy agendas (as a labour market precondition, rather than as right for families or children).
- Leaves and services can be viewed as complementary or alternative schemes, and the quality and coordination of the whole system is relevant from the perspective of children and parents' well-being.
- The relevant information we need for a deep understanding of this 0-3 period to enable a proper evaluation of the present situation and trends is not always provided by well-established harmonised and continuous quantitative data sources (e.g. information on leave arrangements for which we can not find comparative or even national quantitative data, information on the extent of companies and collective agreements involved in family-friendly policies...).
- There is a paucity of good cross-national data on care, i.e. on care needs, on informal care and informal carers, on care services and on the care workforce. This is the result of frequently inadequate data on a national level and of the absence of a system of international statistics for care services and care arrangements.
- The most comparable data on public policies regarding care services and leave allowances are provided by the social protection datasets from EUROSTAT (the ESSPROS database) or from the OECD (the SOCX database). Even though they do not reveal much about use or users, they do describe macro magnitudes, policy priorities and the relative importance of different care solutions.
- The European Labour Force Survey (ELFS) has the potential to provide annual cross-national data on the care workforce and on some of the care

arrangements of the working population (e.g. maternity and parental leave, part-time work, employment situation by gender and children within age groups).

- Some dimensions of informal family-based care arrangements can be closely examined by means of the EU Harmonised Time Use Survey (2002-2003), and EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC from 2004 onwards, and its precedent the European Commission Household Panel ECHP between 1994 and 2001): for example, the proportion of adults in an age group involved in family-based care of children or other adult dependents and the time spent on it.
- The recently launched OECD family database brings together information from different OECD databases (for example, the OECD Social Expenditure database, the OECD Benefits and Wages database, or the OECD Education database, and databases maintained by other international organisations (www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database)).
- The analysis of the more general categories of public expenditure on families and children (i.e. public expenditure on transfers or on services) as a percentage of GDP provides an overview of relative policy efforts and priorities in relation to alternative options of family policy.
- The clearest gaps in comparative data and indicators have been identified in relation to the effective use of parental leave schemes. Except for public social expenditure, most comparative data is presented in terms of potential entitlements rather than as effective use and coverage (in terms of caring time) in relation to infants and toddlers.
- Data on specific family leave arrangements (e.g. maternity leave) does not always provide a comprehensive picture of the workings of leave policies (leave arrangements should be viewed as an integrated system). Information on taking unpaid leave is even more difficult to obtain, and is only usually provided through ad hoc survey data.
- Since late 1990's both the EC and the OECD have addressed the need for good and adequate data related to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, the OECD from the perspective of making life-long learning a reality for all, the EC from the perspective of ensuring the reconciliation of employment and family life and gender equal opportunities.

Recommendations

- The development of statistical system for monitoring the children's well-being must be grounded in a theoretically-informed conception of childhood. The improvement of the statistics of the childhood requires the adoption of a new approach. The only way of fully knowing about children's own representations and perceptions is to ask them.
- Developing childhood as a social category requires to be able to carry out analysis using the child as the unit of observation. This means assessing the features under study as a part of childhood in its own right rather than as a part of other categories or phenomena.
- Not only it is important to listen to what children have to say by using the child as a unit of observation and analysis, but also to emphasise their specific needs and rights of citizenship as a strategy of construction of childhood as a social category in its own right.
- Eurostat should develop and adopt the EU-25 multidimensional Child Well-Being Index proposed by Professor Jonathan Bradshaw and his associates.
- One of the most serious gaps in the system of indicators to monitor the well-being of children in the European Union is the lack of a EU-wide panel survey using a sample drawn from a cohort of children. Cohort studies enable researchers to inquire into causal processes leading to certain outcomes and into the long-term consequences of events affecting children's lives. The knowledge of factors influencing the well-being of children would be mostly improved if Eurostat decided to launch a EU-wide cohort study focused on the trajectories of European children.
- Longitudinal data sources could provide us with better child-centred information about household transitions, and their nature and frequency.
- There is a necessity to employ multi-level and interdisciplinary research in the study of child poverty. In other words, the EU should adopt multi-dimensional indicators of child well-being.
- It might be possible, via secondary analyses of some datasets that have full information about all children in the household, to produce a child-centred dataset by modifying the dataset in such a way that each case is an individual child.
- A more child-centred dataset could tell us, for example, more about the households in which children live and for each child, who are the other household members, and what is their relationship to that child?

- There is a need to create new indices depicting the overall state of the child including references to family models, employment and social characteristics of the family of provenance and of the children as well as to social protection provisions.
- We need particular indicators for early childhood (0 -3 years old) and (3-8 years old), later childhood (9-12 years old) and adolescence (13-18 years old) to assess a range of developmental issues that take place at all stages, as well as to explore and understand factors that help or delay the post-high-school transition (including career objectives and commitment to goals).
- Indicators of child care should include: child care use and time use (formal or informal), care provided by a relative or non relative, children receiving care in a home based-based setting than their own home, care provided in public or private schools including also cost per week and cost per hour.
- Indicators should also assess a broad array of developmental outcomes including, emotional well-being, cognitive abilities and achievements, behavioural problems, education and school performance.
- A set of health indicators should include social, economic, political and culture sensitive guidelines in order to gain commitment from the players in the child health field and to reinforce the process of health transition in advanced capitalist societies. Health indicators are the crossroads of action (policies) and data (information health systems)
- A more detailed list of indicators should be developed from health existing data in many EU member states, for example: use of health resources, medication, mental health, mental retardation, morbidity (childhood cancer, diabetes, asthma and infectious diseases) or illicit drug intake (cocaine, heroine, amphetamines, etc.).
- Improved data and comparative indicators are needed in the following fields: Parental leave schemes, Working conditions, Time use distribution, Early childhood care and education policies, and Income Support to Families (Transfers, benefits, and tax deductions).
- Monitoring the 0-3 work-family arrangements and policies would require a comparable summary of indicators of: (1) Parental Leave schemes (and the quality of work flexibility and parental labour market conditions); (2) Services and programmes for early childhood education and care; (3) Economic support (including the impact of the tax system) to families, comparing the outcome of 0-3 policy packages in various types of families across countries (or regions);

- (4) Informal family based arrangements and the use of time within the household and family networks.
- The use of the whole leave system (users and time used) or in relation to specific leave arrangements, also needs to be approached from the perspective of the child as a percentage of newborns (and average time used per newborn); as percentage of mothers or fathers with children under 1, under 3; or as a percentage of the working population in a reference age group (e.g. 25-45) or occupational group (public sector employees, teachers, health professionals, retail trade...).
 - It would also be relevant to estimate the actual use of parental leave schemes, but also their potential coverage. Entitlements clearly cover the well employed population, but it is not always clear to what extent entitlements also cover casual employees, the self-employed, or the unemployed.
 - Other useful indicators would be: (1) Percentage of children under one, between 1 and 2, between 2 and 3 at home with a parent on full-time or part-time parental leave; (2) Average time used by mothers and fathers per child; (3) Percentage of total paid time used by mothers and by fathers; (4) Percentage of leave users (per gender) attending additional support schemes such as parent groups, advice services... aimed at empowering new mothers and new fathers, and helping them create positive initial family bonds and constructive aptitudes in upbringing; (5) Sociodemographic characteristics of various types of users of parental leave schemes, which would help evaluate the impacts of specific measures and types of regulations; (6) Public (and mandatory) expenditure on parental leave schemes: as a percentage of GDP (differentiating if possible between income maintenance, or flat-rate benefits); and as Purchasing Parity Standard Monetary Units per Head; (7) Average expenditure on leave per newborn as a percentage of GDP per capita or in PPS units per head.
 - Research orientated towards the process of deciding whether or not to become a mother or father and the related reasons and concerns would be useful. A systematic gender approach means taking into account the perspectives of both mothers and fathers, for in this field mother-infant discourses are very much the more dominant, and the visibility of fathers and fatherhood sometimes needs to be emphasized.
 - The evaluation of outcomes and impacts, and of costs and benefits, still needs much research. From the perspective of social protection databases, the integration of data on users from different social protection schemes (medical leave, parental leave, and unemployment benefits) would somehow contribute

to a better knowledge of dynamic costs and benefits. Dynamic accounts and analyses of different policy options and alternatives, taking into account the various stakeholders and interests involved, are needed.

Section 3 - Dissemination and use

Overview table of the dissemination activities

Planned/actual dates	Type	Type of audience	Country addressed	Size of audience	Partner responsible/involved
12-13 November 2004	1 st Workshop	Academic	UK	33	P8 (Leeds-UNIMAN)
November 2004	Children's Well-Being International Documentation Centre (website)	General public	International	Wide	P1 (CIIMU) P7 (CRFR – UNEDIN)
7-9 January 2005	1 st Conference	Academic	UK	77	P5 (Oxford-LSE)
February 2005	1 st Scientific Newsletter (in the website)	General public	International and Spain (Spanish and Catalan versions)	Wide	P1(CIIMU) P6 (ENSP) P11 (UNIH)
15-16 April 2005	2 nd Workshop	Academic	Bulgaria	21	P9 (IPN)
May 2005	1 st Local Agents Meeting	Policy makers. Governmental bodies, NGO's, academics	Spain	150	P1 (CIIMU)
July 2005	2 nd Local Agents Meeting	Policy makers. Governmental bodies, NGO's, academics	UK	50	P7 (CRFR – UNEDIN)
September 2005	3rd Workshop "Working flexibility and caring arrangements"	Academic	Greece Spain Italy France UK Sweden	40	P6 (ENSP)
July 2005/ October 2005	2nd Scientific Newsletter (in the web site)	General public	International and Spain (Spanish and Catalan versions)	Wide	P1(CIIMU) P6 (ENSP) P11 (UNIH)
October/ December	4th Workshop "Children in multicultural societies"	Academic	Greece Spain France Sweden Germany UK	25	P2 (EKKE) Participants: P1, P4, P6,
October 2005 / February 2006	3 rd Scientific Newsletter (in the web site)	General public	International and Spain (Spanish and Catalan versions)	Wide	P1(CIIMU) P6 (ENSP) P11 (UNIH)

March / April 2006	2 nd Conference "Different kinds of risks for children resulting from various structures and changes in the labour markets"	Academic	Canada Germany UK Netherlands Island Spain Finland France Norway Belgium	80	P11 (UNIH) Participants: P1, P2, P4, P5,
September 2006	5 th Workshop: "Transmission of inequalities from generation to generation and their impact on social cohesion."	Academic	Sweden		P4 (UGOT)
November 2006	3 rd Local Agents Meeting	Policy makers. Governmental bodies, NGO's, academics	UK	50	P7 (CRFR – UNEDIN)
November 2006	4 th Scientific Newsletter	General	International and Spain (Spanish and Catalan versions)	Wide	P1(CIIMU) P6 (ENSP) P11 (UNIH)
November 2006	Publication: <i>Children, Changing Families and Welfare States</i> , Jane Lewis (ed.)	Academic and General	International	-	P5 (LSE)
December 2006	6 th Workshop: "The relationships between children and non-resident fathers and the impact on quality of life"	Academic	Norway		P10 (NOVA)
January 2007	5 th Scientific Newsletter	General	International and Spain (Spanish and Catalan versions)	Wide	P1(CIIMU) P6 (ENSP) P11 (UNIH)
January 2007	Press Dossier on the 3 rd Conference	Journalists	Spain		P1 (CIIMU)
February 2007	3 rd Conference: "How can the well-being of children in knowledge-based society be ameliorated?"	Academics, policy makers, governmental bodies, NGO's	Spain	150	P1 (CIIMU)
February 2007	International Collection of Working Papers (via the website)	Research	International	Wide	P1 (CIIMU)

February 2007	Media interview (TV)	General public	Spain	-	P1 (CIIMU)
February 2007	Discussion Forum (website)	Academic and general public	International (European)	-	P1 (CIIMU)
March 2007	4 th Local Agents Meeting	Academics, policy makers, governmental bodies, NGO's	Greece	60	P2 (EKKE)
May 2007	6 th Scientific Newsletter	Academic and general public	International and Spain (Spanish and Catalan versions)	Wide	P1(CIIMU) P6 (ENSP) P11 (UNHH)

P1 (CIIMU): Institute of Childhood and Urban World – Project Coordinator

P2 (EKKE): National Centre for Social Research

P3 (VUA): Institute for Legal Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

P4 (UGOT): Department of Sociology, University of Göteborg

P5 (Oxford-LSE): Oxford University moved to London School of Economics

P6 (ENSP): Ecole National de la Santé Publique

P7 (CRFR): Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, University of Edinburgh

P8 (Leeds-UNIMAN): University of Leeds moved to University of Manchester

P9 (IPN): Institute for Legal Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

P10 (NOVA): Norwegian Social Research

P11 (UNHH): Institute for Sociology, University of Hamburg

Scientific Publications

The findings of the project are laid down in various scientific publications.

Edited Volumes / Monographs

The members of the WELLCHI NETWORK have published 2 monographic volumes as a compilation of outstanding papers presented in some of Wellchi's academic fora: the first international conference entitled "Challenges and opportunities faced by European welfare states: the changing context for the child welfare." Held in Oxford, and the second workshop entitled "Which are the legal provisions in Family Law that foster children's well-being and which kind of reforms should be envisaged in this respect?". The resulting publications are:

LEWIS, J. (ed.) (2006) *Children, Changing Families and Welfare State*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

The chapters in this book were first presented in the Conference "Challenges and opportunities faced by European welfare states: the changing context for the child welfare" held in Oxford in January 2005.

The book includes contributions by: Fran Bennett, Ulla Björnberg, Jonathan Bradshaw, Ann-Zofie Duvander, Karin Halldén, Barbara Hobson, Jane Jenson,

Ute Klammer, Marie-Therèse Letablier, Jane Lewis, Ruth Lister, Rianne Mahon, Peter Moss, Diane Perrons and Birgit Pfau-Effinger.

TODOROVA, V. and KAMENOVA, T. (2006) *Family Law and the Well-being of Children*, Sofia: Institute for Legal Studies.

The chapters in this book were first presented in the Workshop “Which are the legal provisions in Family Law that foster children's well-being and which kind of reforms should be envisaged in this respect?” held in Sofia in April 2005

The book includes contributions by: Tsanka Tsankova, Mavis Maclean, Judith Masson, Caroline Sawyer, Vasil Prodanov, Kirsten Scheiwe and Laura Cardia-Vonèche.

It is also expected to prepare a volume, to be published by the end of 2008, from a selection of papers presented at the Barcelona Conference, focusing on the themes of children's citizenship and participation.

Articles in Referenced Journals

The papers presented in our project's workshops and conferences are very numerous. Many of them, written both by members of the Network and external collaborators, have been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, books, official reports, etc. Here is a list of publications.

ADDIO, A. C. d' (2007). 'Intergenerational Transmission of Disadvantage: Mobility or Immobility across Generations? A Review of the Evidence for OECD Countries'. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 52. Paris: OECD.
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/28/38335410.pdf>

BJÖRNBERG, U. (2006) “Paying for the costs of children in eight North european countries: ambivalent trends”, in Lewis, J. (ed) *Children, changing families and the welfare state*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Originally presented in the 1st Conference of the Wellchi Network; Oxford, January 2005

BLANDEN, J. Gregg, P. and Macmillan, L. (2007) “Accounting for Intergenerational Income Persistence: Noncognitive Skills, Ability and Education“, *Economic Journal*, Vol. 117 pages C43–C60.
Originally presented in the 5th Workshop of the Wellchi Network; Goteborg, September 2006

BRADSHAW, J. (2007) “Beyond Child Poverty” Wellchi Working Paper Series 2/2007. Children's Well-being International Documentation Centre. Barcelona: CIIMU.
http://www.ciimu.org/webs/wellchi/working_papers/wp2_bradshaw.pdf
Originally presented in the 3rd Conference of the Wellchi Network; Barcelona February 2007

BRADSHAW, J. Hoelscher, P. and Richardson, D. (2007) *Comparing Child Well-being in OECD Countries: Concepts and Methods*, IWP 2006-03. Florence:UNICEF.
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Originally presented in the 3rd Conference of the Wellchi Network; Barcelona February 2007

CHAUVEL, L. (2006) "Social Generations, Life Chances and Welfare Regime Sustainability" in Pepper D. Culpepper, Peter A. Hall, Bruno Palier (eds.), *Changing France : the politics that markets make*, Basingstoke (New York): Palgrave Macmillan.

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- HOLLAND, J. (forthcoming 2007) "Inventing adulthoods: Making the most of what you have", in Helve, H. and Bynner, J. (eds) *Youth and Social Capitals: Constellations, cultures and identities*, London: the Tufnell Press.
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- MASSON, J. (2006) "The Climbié Inquiry context and critique" *Journal of Law and Society*, 33, 221-243
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- MASSON, J. (2006) "Securing a relationship between children and their carers - trial and error in England" in Kamenova, T. and Todorova, V. (eds) *Family Law and the Well-being of children* by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences pp63-91.
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