

## **Variation in social norms and practices of social influences in different family and fertility cultures and specific political economies**

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### **Executive summary**

This report describes the results of the work conducted in the frame of WP5 which advances the scientific knowledge on the different fertility cultures coexisting in Europe and the way these cultural contexts influence individual fertility decision-making. The researchers of WP5 have written seven articles on this topic. Two of these articles are published; the remaining five are at various stages of advancement towards publication. The present report summarizes and discusses the results of these articles. After a brief review of the literature on the link between value change and low fertility in contemporary Europe, we present and discuss our results in three sections:

1. The emergence of a culture of childlessness
2. Changing gender roles and fertility decisions
3. When values do not fit practices: the uneven advance of social change.

### ***Literature***

The second demographic transition (SDT) theory is the most popular conceptual tool used by demographers to study the ideational factors of changing family behaviours in European countries since the late 1960s. The SDT narrative stipulates that in highly economically developed societies a new visions of life emerge among individuals, where personal fulfilment becomes paramount, and where forming a family, if still an important goal in life for most people, is not the *only* goal anymore. Empirical works show that the rise in cohabitation, extra marital births, and divorces which characterized European countries since the 1970s are closely linked to this shift in values.

But how useful is the SDT framework to understand below-replacement fertility in Europe? Recent works show that the diffusion of the SDT is closely connected to the delay in family formation which occurred for both men and women throughout Europe during the last four decades. However, the SDT framework seems to be of little help to understand the ideational factors contributing to low fertility levels in Europe. Indeed, the postponement of fertility (which went hand in hand with the shift towards post modern values) has not been automatically followed by a decrease in completed family sizes. A growing body of research shows that the lack of possibility for women to combine work and family is the main force behind women not having higher fertility in their thirties in low-fertility industrialized countries. These studies argue that the cause of very low fertility is women's unbalanced involvement in the public and private spheres, that is, women engaging in the labour market while still assuming the bulk of parental and domestic work in their family. These authors stress that government policies or market economies providing affordable collective childcare, short parental leave, or flexible work hours, have a positive effect on fertility because they help women reconcile paid work and family life. Women living in countries with a flexible economy or strong family policies can work when they have small children, as opposed to women living in countries devoid of them.

If below-replacement fertility in Europe seems to be explained by women's inability to combine work and family rather than by a shift towards post modern values, the latter cultural change helps understand the development of a culture of childlessness, which contributes to some extent the low fertility levels observed in the German-speaking countries of Europe. Existing studies show that the difficulties of reconciling family life and work, combined with a vision of childbearing as a road to personal fulfilment typical of the SDT, seem to have provoked a further cultural shift in these countries, where it became acceptable for women to envision a life without children.

## ***Objectives***

The aim of this set of articles is to advance the scientific understanding of the cultural contexts which shape, in Europe, couples' fertility intentions and realizations. Our analyses are all based on qualitative data, a series of comparable in-depth interviews conducted with mostly- middle class respondents in their late 20s and early 30s living in cities of seven European countries: Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Germany (East and West), Switzerland, France, Italy. All these countries feature

below-replacement fertility, except France; the nature of the constraints to childbearing varies across countries.

## **Results**

### **1. The emergence of a culture of voluntary childlessness**

Poland is the country in Europe which is the least advanced in the shift of values described by the SDT. All the Poles in our sample think children are very important, and they all want to have children some day. What is striking in the Polish sample is that many of the mentioned benefits of children are characteristic of a “modern” vision of childbearing, as opposed to a “post modern” vision of childbearing as a personal fulfilment. When talking about the benefits of having children the respondents often refer to the advantages of adopting a “normal”, socially sanctioned life course. An original finding from the study on the value of children in Poland is the importance of care and company in old age as one of the benefits of childbearing, rarely mentioned in the demographic literature on the benefits of childbearing, and which may become of prime importance in an aging society.

The analysis of the value of children has been performed so far only in Poland. It will be extended to other countries participating to WP5, among the most advanced in the SDT: France and Germany. Preliminary analyses show that in these two countries, children are highly valued, but on other grounds than in Poland: the normative benefits of child bearing (benefits of adopting a normal life course) are rarely mentioned. This comparative analysis will illustrate the fact that with the advance of post modernity, the value of children does not decrease, but that its nature changes.

The literature suggests that a culture of voluntary childlessness can emerge in countries who have already adopted a post modern vision of the benefits of child bearing. As can be expected in a country which just entered the SDT, we found a strong social pressure against childlessness in the Polish sample. Also as expected, we did not find any case of voluntary childlessness in France, a country well advanced in the SDT, but with a family policy supporting working mothers and many affordable childcare options. In the Western Germany and Italian samples, on the other hand, a number of women said they wanted to remain childless. Our analyses seem to indicate that women renounce to having children because they feel their place in social life is at stake. Employment and independence (if not power) are part of their identity and it is hard to give them up in the name of children. When they do give this part of their identity up, it is often because they give priority to their idea of having a family, but it is not without a sense of frustration. Those who want to stay childless

simply prioritize these two elements of a women's identity the other way round. Preliminary results also indicate that while many men wish to remain childless in West Germany, this is not the case in Italy. One direction to explain this outcome may be the high rate of divorce in West Germany and the gender biased regulations of it when children are involved. Men may not want to risk to have children they will end up seeing once in a while, and for which they will pay at a distance.

Further comparative analysis including Poland, France, Germany and Italy will be conducted to examine closely how the combination of post modern values of children (children as a way to personal fulfilment), combined with a lack of child care option and the necessity for women to stop working if they want children (and the prospect of losing one's child in case of divorce in countries with traditional divorce laws but high divorce rates), lead to the emergence of the acceptance of voluntary childlessness for women and men.

## **2. Changing gender roles and fertility decisions**

Although the group of WP5 researchers devoted some time to the question of the value of children and voluntary childlessness, it is striking that all of them devoted most of their attention to the link between changing gender roles and fertility decisions. Whatever the group of countries examined by the WP5 researchers, and the starting point of their investigation, all the analytical teams put forth the following three interrelated dimensions as the key individual level variables explaining fertility decision making in contemporary Europe:

- a) women's participation in the labour market: representations and practices
- b) men's implication in unpaid family work: representations and practices
- c) use of non maternal child care options: representations and practices

These three dimensions are different aspects of gender roles: is it women's role to engage in paid employment? Is it men's role to care for children and perform household chores? Is it women's role to take care of their children when they are small, or is it acceptable or even desirable that other adults (their fathers, other family members, or paid employees) take on that role? Our analyses show that the decision to have a child at a given point in time depends on each couple's answer to all these questions, as well as on their actual practices in these areas of life: women and men's involvement on the job market and in family work, and their plans to use non maternal child care.

Whatever the initial entry point, the researchers show that considerations about women's paid work, men's implications in family work and the possibility of using non maternal child care form together, in combination, the basis of the calculations of the benefits of having a child at a given point in time for couples. In Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and East Germany, like in West Germany and Italy, men's

implication in family care does not appear as a strong dimension of the child making equation. This result is understandable, in so far as gender roles are still mainly traditional in these countries; the lack of variation in men's participation to family work (men systematically not participating to domestic and educative tasks) renders this factor of fertility decision-making invisible there. In the opposite, in France, because most women with small children work and many of them work full time, men often contribute to family work, and the impact of their participation to family work on fertility decisions thus appears clearly. The only respondents who exhibit smaller fertility intentions in the French sample or who renounce to have all the children they initially wanted, are respondents who are in couples where women support a double burden, that is, couples where women have a paid employment and assume most of the family work.

The analyses performed in the frame of WP5 on the relation between gender roles (ideal and actual) and fertility decisions in different countries suggest important differences across social classes. In Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Eastern Germany, most women think that having a job is normal for a woman, but that having a career is incompatible with childrearing; they all choose to have a family instead of a career. However, women with particularly high educational levels seem to display a different pattern: they think that having a career and a family are not incompatible, and plan to have both. This analysis needs to be completed, and women's attitudes towards work related more systematically to their educational level, type of job and income, before firmer conclusions can be reached. In the analysis of gender roles in Italy and Bulgaria as well, the different ways the two partners share tasks, taking on more or less progressive or conservative gender role remains to be linked to the social status of the partners. The study on gender roles and fertility decisions in France and Germany already shows the expected social status differentials: upper class couples tend to adopt more progressive gender roles.

All the studies on gender roles and fertility decisions undertaken in WP5 show that the labour market options for men and women, as well as the child care options in different countries are of paramount importance to understand the way respondents envision and practice gender roles, that is, women's paid employment, men's participation to family work, and non parental child care.

France is the only country analyzed in the frame of WP5, with Eastern Germany, which provides affordable and abundant public or private non parental child care options for children under the age of three. French respondents approve of and use these non parental child care options, and have high fertility intentions and realizations. Eastern German respondents also have a positive outlook on external childcare, and there are little barriers to the work and family combination in that context.

Further analyses are needed to understand what prevents couples from having more children in the Eastern German case.

In the case of West Germany and Italy, the lack of affordable child care options and negative attitudes towards childcare means that women have to stop working to have a child until the latter goes to kinder garden, and to work part time when children go to school. Women more often consider not having children at all in these countries (especially in West Germany), or renounce having more than one child, to be able to go back to the labour market. In the Eastern European countries studied in the frame of WP5 (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland), the situation is close to that in West Germany and Italy (women are expected to stay at home when they have children, child care options are rare and negatively perceived), except that grand parents often provide childcare.

Altogether, our micro level analyses of fertility decision making in different political economies in Europe suggest that gender roles (ideal and actual, and regarding three aspects: women's paid employment, men's involvement in family work, non parental child care) are the key elements entering into couples' decisions to have a child at a given point in time. Our results confirm those of numerous studies which have linked the sub-replacement fertility trends observed in many industrialized countries to women's employment, the lack of affordable child care, and men's lack of involvement in family work (see literature).

However, our results are also original in two regards. First, we show that these different elements are all linked together: it is not women's paid employment alone, or the lack of childcare options alone, but women's paid work together with a lack of child care together with a lack of male family work, which explains below-replacement fertility. These different dimensions all matter, together, to understand why couples want fewer children and why they do not have all the children they had initially planned; none of these dimensions can be left out of the analysis of fertility decisions. Qualitative analysis is especially suited to identify seemingly separate parameters which are in fact linked together into producing a certain outcome; a comparative approach was necessary to spot the importance of some of these factors, which do not display variation at the national level (in particular childcare options and men's involvement in family work).

Our results are also original in that they underline that the different elements entering couples' decisions to have a child in contemporary Europe (women's employment, childcare options, men's implication in family work) are not only part of the structural reality (of the "hard facts") of every couple. Women's implication on the job market, men's share of work at home; and their reliance on non parental child care all result from, and feed into, the couples' visions of what a man should be and what a woman should be. In other words, to us, the cultural dimension of couple's fertility decisions, today in Europe, is, to a large extent, their vision of gender roles. This result is especially interesting in a scientific context where, up until recently, the shift towards post modern values was the only "cultural" shift taken into account in the reflexion on changing family behaviours. Our studies contribute to the understanding of changing gender roles as the cultural shift which matters to understand fertility outcomes in contemporary Europe.

### **3. When values do not fit practices: the uneven advance of social change**

Individuals' representations and practices are usually in line, because human beings have a psychological need to have a coherent approach to life. This is true for the phenomena we are discussing here. Individuals' visions of women's paid work usually match what they or their partner do for a living, their visions of male participation in family work often match what they or their partner does in the household, and the same can be said of non maternal childcare. When practices match representations, it is of course pointless to wonder whether the structural aspect (practices) or ideational elements (representations or values) of gender roles are at the root of fertility decisions.

Representations do not match practices sometimes, and this is especially the case in our samples concerning men's ideal implication in family work, and the actual share of family work they assume. The study on gender roles in Italy and Bulgaria examines with special care these occurrences of discordance. Although analyses have to be pushed further before firm conclusion can be reached, it seems that, in the case of these discordance between practices and attitudes, the actual division of tasks between partners regarding domestic and parental work matters more than the partners' desired or ideal division of tasks for fertility decisions. However, when the discrepancy arises from a momentary change in practices, ideal divisions of tasks are more closely connected to fertility decisions. The peculiar high frequency of dissonances between men's wished and actual implication in family work remains to be explained. The concept of the "stalled gender revolution" can, again, be of help here: women have gained power in the public sphere (employment, education), but not yet in the private (family) sphere. Men wishing to do more at home (if only they had time) (a change in

values when it comes to the divisions of tasks at home) make it more acceptable for women to have gained power in one sphere of social life, but to remain much more powerless in other sphere of life. The discrepancy between values and practices when it comes to sharing tasks at home helps women accept the larger discrepancy between their statuses in different areas of life: their overall level of dissonance is reduced by the wishful thinking (by men and women) that men should do more work at home.

Another point which attracted the attention of WP5 researchers are occurrences of discrepancy between social norms and structural conditions at times of social change. When structural conditions change, individuals could be expected to adjust their behaviors right away to the new conditions: that would be the economically rationale response. However, social scientists repeatedly observed that individuals do not adapt right away to new conditions, because they also follow social logics: norms often change more slowly than structural conditions, and “obsolete” values then hinder individuals in the adoption of the new behaviors for some time, until the values change themselves, and catch up with the innovation. The two articles the researchers of WP5 have published so far focus in fact on instances of such discrepancies between values and structural conditions at historical times of change.

« Our second original result points to the lasting nature of attitudes towards childcare and working mothers. While these attitudes seem to be shaped over decades by policy environments, they also seem to be slow to change. The homogeneity of attitudes towards child care and working mothers within each country is striking in this regard. The different sub-groups identified when analysing each country separately appear to be mere variations upon the same model when the two countries are compared side by side. Even couples with stay-at-home mothers in France believe in the benefits of organized day care, and even dual earner couples with children believe in the benefits of exclusively maternal care in Germany. Existing theories indicate that social groups where attitudes are very homogenous are characterized by strong social influence mechanisms working to maintain them; in such groups, new attitudes can emerge only slowly Negative representations of external childcare will prevent new policies promoting the combination of work and family from having an immediate effect in Germany, and further policy improvements will have little further impact in France. Taken together, our results suggest that shared attitudes towards childcare and the role of mothers, which are historically shaped by policy environments, and act as an intermediary variable between access to “non parental” child care and its use, are the reason why new policy measures or further policy improvements are not followed by immediate increases in fertility.” (Salles et al. 2010 : 1084-1085)

“All things considered, economic and institutional changes can explain fertility postponement in Poland, but we still do not understand what forces held back this process, at least initially. We believe that cultural background should be considered in that respect. While the economic and political system in Poland was transformed basically overnight, culture is more resistant to change. Scholars universally agree that the impact of ideational factors needs to be carefully considered when analysing reproductive behaviours.” (Mynarska 2009: 7).

The fact that norms tend to change more slowly than structural conditions is an argument suggesting that in the uneven progression of social change, structural conditions may be the horse and norms may be the carriage. But times when changes in norms lag behind changes in structural conditions

show that individuals act as much, or even more, according to their (socially inspired) visions of what is right than according to how much things costs them. In any case, an essential result arising from the analyses described in this report is that it seems pointless to study “values” on the one hand and “factual characteristics” on the other when it comes to fertility decisions, as many quantitative studies of fertility currently do. The concept of gender role is interesting in that regard, because practices and values can be considered simultaneously.

## Overview

This report<sup>1</sup> describes the results of the work conducted in the frame of WP5 which advances the scientific knowledge on the different fertility cultures coexisting in Europe and the way these cultural contexts influence individual fertility decision-making. The researchers of WP5 have written seven articles on this topic, listed below<sup>2</sup>. Two of these articles are published; the remaining five are at various stages of advancement towards publication.

Monika Mynarska. 2009a. Deadline for Parenthood: Fertility Postponement and Age Norms in Poland.” *European Journal of population*.

Anne Salles, Clémentine Rossier and Sara Brachet. 2010. « Understanding the long term effects of family policies on fertility: the diffusion of different family models in France and Germany”, *Demographic Research*, 22(34): 1057-1096.

Clémentine Rossier, Sara Brachet and Anne Salles. 2010. « Female emancipation, male domestication and fertility. The link between gender equality and fertility in France and Germany.” Draft submitted to *European Journal of Population*

Laura Bernardi, Arianna Caporali, Isabel Valarino, Atanas Atanasov, Zdravka Toneva, Sasha Todorova. 2008. “Work-family balance: gender role sets and fertility in Italy and Bulgaria.” Paper presented at the *Population Association of America annual meeting*, 2008.

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<sup>2</sup> We mention here only the articles already published in English, or communications which will be published in English. Two other papers by WP5 researchers have been accepted for publication in French; the results described in the French publications are the same as those described in the English publications.

Brachet S., A. Salles. « Rapports de genre et Intentions de fécondité : une comparaison France/Allemagne », paper presented at the seminar « Les enjeux démographiques en France et en Allemagne : réalités et conséquences », Université de Valenciennes et du Haut Cambrésis, 22 - 23 October 2009 (to be published as seminar proceedings).

Brachet A., MT Letablier, A. Salles (June 2010). “Devenir parents en France et en Allemagne : normes, valeurs, représentation ». *Politiques sociales et familiales*, n° 100 (accepted).

Monika Mynarska. 2009b. "Values of children and the lowest-low fertility: the Polish case". Paper presented at the *IUSSP Population Conference*, Marrakesh 27 September - 2 October 2009.

Anna Matysiak and Monika Mynarska. 2009. "Women's attitudes towards competing careers: Can public policies increase fertility and women's labour force participation in Poland?" Paper presented at the *IUSSP Population Conference*, Marrakesh 27 September - 2 October 2009.

Monika Mynarska, Capporali, A., Dimitrova, E., Durst, J., Klaerner A. (2009). "Between economic necessity, professional aspirations and motherhood: Women's attitudes towards paid work in post-socialist countries". Paper presented at the *IUSSP Population Conference*, side meeting on "Reproductive decision-making in a macro-micro perspective (REPRO)", 27 September 2009

The present report summarizes and discusses the results of these articles. After a brief review of the literature on the link between value change and low fertility in contemporary Europe, and a description of our methodology, we present and discuss our results in three sections:

1. The emergence of a culture of childlessness
2. Changing gender roles and fertility decisions
3. When values do not fit practices: the uneven advance of social change.

## **Literature**

The second demographic transition (SDT) theory is the most popular conceptual tool used by demographers to study the ideational factors of changing family behaviours in European countries since the late 1960s (Sobotka 2008: 174-175). The SDT narrative stipulates that in highly economically developed societies a new visions of life emerge among individuals, where personal fulfilment becomes paramount, and where forming a family, if still an important goal in life for most people, is not the *only* goal anymore (for a description of the SDT theory, see Van de Kaa 1987, Lesthaeghe 1995, Van de Kaa 2001). Van de Kaa (1996: 425) describes the shift in values characteristic of the SDT as an “overwhelming preoccupation with self-fulfilment, personal freedom of choice, personal development and lifestyle, and emancipation.” The empirical works of Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa show that the rise in cohabitation, extra marital births, and divorces which characterized European countries since the 1970s are closely linked to this shift in values. These demographic studies find a strong echo in the field of sociology, where researchers have reflected on the advent of a post modern culture and on its impact on family behaviours (Inglehart 1990, Gidden 1992).

But how useful is the SDT framework to understand below-replacement fertility in Europe? Recent works (Liefbroer 2005, Sobotka 2004) show that the diffusion of the SDT is closely connected to the delay in family formation which occurred for both men and women throughout Europe during the last four decades. Young men and women, in the spirit of personal fulfilment, have been eager to pursue their studies, to establish themselves on the labour market, and to enjoy life while they are young, and have tended to postpone parenthood until the late 20s on average. A comparison between countries shows that the timing of first birth postponement is highly correlated with indicators of advancement into the SDT as measured with attitudinal data from the European Value Survey (Sobotka 2008a: 181). It is worth mentioning that the phenomenon of postponement seems to be currently coming to an end, at least in Western Europe: a number of countries have seen a slowing down or a stopping of the increase in the mean age at childbearing (Frejka and Sobotka, 2008).

However, the SDT framework seems to be of little help to understand the ideational factors contributing to low fertility levels in Europe (Coleman 2004). Indeed, the postponement of fertility (which went hand in hand with the shift towards post modern values) has not been automatically followed by a decrease in completed family sizes. Countries well advanced in the SDT, and in particular, the Nordic countries of Europe, have seen an increase in fertility rates at later reproductive ages, which have compensated for the decrease in fertility rates at younger ages (Sobotka 2008b).

A growing body of macro-level research shows that the lack of possibility for women to combine work and family is the main force behind women not having higher fertility in their thirties in some industrialized countries. These studies argue that the cause of very low fertility is women's unbalanced involvement in the public and private spheres, that is, women engaging in the labour market while still assuming the bulk of parental and domestic work in their family (Chesnais 1996, McDonald 2000). These authors stress that government policies or market economies providing affordable collective childcare, short and paid parental leave, or flexible work hours, have a positive effect on fertility because they help women reconcile paid work and family life. Women living in countries with a flexible economy or strong family policies can work when they have small children. In countries without a family-friendly institutional set-up women have to choose between having a job and having children, i.e. either renounce having a child in order to have a career or renounce having any more children in order to return to the labour market after stopping work because of a birth. Consistent with this theory, a number of researchers have pointed out the shift, at the aggregate level, from a negative to a positive correlation between female labour force participation, family policies or economies favourable to a work-family combination, and fertility trends since the 1980s (Rindfuss, Guzzo and Morgan 2003, Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004).

Men's lack of involvement in family work seems to be another factor contributing to low fertility. Miller Torr and Short (2004) were the first to ask: "what about task sharing between the two sexes at home? McDonald argued that women who value their involvement in individual-oriented institutions will seek to limit family-oriented demands; one way they do so is by decreasing fertility. [...] There is an alternative way to explore the fundamental idea behind McDonald's proposition. Within any given setting displaying relative gender equity in

individual-oriented institutions, we might expect fertility variation to be responsive to gender equity or inequity in the family” (p. 113). Exploring this dimension with a representative sample of dual earner families in the United States, a country with relatively high fertility levels compared to other industrialized countries, the authors find a U-shaped relationship between the share of domestic tasks and the probability of having a second child. Other studies have found the same relationship in other industrialized countries with relatively high fertility levels, as well as in countries with relatively low fertility levels. The impact of the gender division of domestic and parental tasks seems to be highest in countries without family policies that encourage women to work (Mills et al. 2008), although male involvement in family work is more widespread in countries with policies or markets more conducive to mothers’ labour force involvement.

If below-replacement fertility in Europe seems to be explained by women’s inability to combine work and family rather than by a shift towards post modern values, the latter cultural change helps understand the development of a culture of childlessness, which contributes to some extent the low fertility levels observed in the German-speaking countries of Europe. In all countries well advanced in the SDT, having children is seen more as a source of personal joy (Fokkema and Esveldt 2008), than as something that has to be done out of social obligation. In German-speaking countries of Europe, there is also a lack of affordable childcare options, so that women have to stop working when they have children (Dorbritz 2008). The difficulties of reconciling family life and work, combined with a vision of childbearing as a road to personal fulfilment typical of the SDT, seem to have provoked a further cultural shift in these countries, where it became acceptable for women to envision a life without children (Sobotka and Testa 2008). A lack of childcare options on its own, in countries less advanced in the SDT, does not render childlessness more acceptable, as is evident in the case of Italy for example, where most couples have at least one child (De Rose et al. 2008).

## ***Objectives***

The aim of this set of articles is to advance the scientific understanding of the cultural contexts which shape, in Europe, couples’ fertility intentions and realizations. Our analyses are all based on qualitative data, a series of comparable in-depth interviews conducted with mostly- middle class respondents in their late 20s and early 30s living in cities of seven European countries: Hungary,

Bulgaria, Poland, Germany (East and West), Switzerland, France, Italy. All these countries feature below-replacement fertility, except France; the nature of the constraints to childbearing varies across countries.

## ***Methods***

Researchers rarely undertake comparative qualitative analyses. Indeed, the collection and exploitation of qualitative bodies of data is very time consuming, and in the case of a comparative approach, the task is multiplied by the numbers of contexts studied. In this set of studies, we focused on middle class individuals at the average age of family formation in every country; the issues of early fertility, typical of lower class couples, and of very later fertility, typical of upper class individuals, are both left aside. This strategy helped us control for some within-country heterogeneity and reduced the number of interviews necessary to reach “saturation” in each country (saturation is the moment when new interviews do not yield new information). This focus enabled us to perform cross-country comparisons while still dealing with reasonable sample sizes.

Another challenge of comparative qualitative analysis is the issue of language. The translation of all the bodies of data collected is often too expensive to be envisioned: the simplest manner to perform this type of analysis is to work with all the researchers who have supervised data collection in their own country. However, it is often difficult to gather so much human resource and to keep alive a working group dispersed across several countries. In WP5, we are lucky to have gathered the researchers (or teams of researchers) who have collected the data in each country; the researchers of WP5 also knew each other prior to the present project, which helps in performing collaborative work at a distance.

During an initial meeting in September of 2008, the WP5 researchers proposed to explore the cultural dimensions of individual fertility decisions using different themes as entry points. Each researcher was in charge of the theme(s) she proposed. Researchers often first explored their theme with data from their own country, before approaching other researchers in the group to replicate the analysis in other countries. This process is still on-going: for example the study on the value of children in Poland will be replicated in other countries.

The reader is referred to the articles for a complete description of the seven bodies of data; all the data has been rendered anonymous. We adopted an inductive analytical approach, following the principles of “grounded theory”. From the data, we grouped individuals with similar practices or representations; by comparing these categories, we singled out the factors contributing to the phenomena of interest. Comparative qualitative analysis allows researchers to grasp factors of behaviours acting at the micro level of social reality (what distinguish one individual from another individual), as well as factors acting at the macro level (what distinguishes the individuals in one context from the individuals from another context). Also, qualitative analysis allows researchers to take into account individuals’ visions and the opportunities and constraints of their environments, which weight on the outcome of interest, and thus, to articulate the ideational and structural factors of the phenomenon under study.

## ***Results***

### **1. The emergence of a culture of voluntary childlessness**

Poland is the country in Europe which is the least advanced in the shift of values described by the SDT (Sobotka 2008 : 182). The Poles interviewed by Mynarska (2009b) (young, middle and upper class urban residents) all think children are very important, like all Europeans (Liefbroer and Fokkema 2008), and they all want to have children some day. What is striking in the Polish sample is that many of the mentioned benefits of children are characteristic of a “modern” vision of childbearing, as opposed to a “post modern” vision of childbearing as a personal fulfilment. When talking about the benefits of having children the respondents often refer to the advantages of adopting a “normal”, socially sanctioned life course (the four last categories of benefits described in Table 1 below). In other words, the benefits of children are still partly normatively-bound in the Polish sample.

Table 1: Values of children (Mynarska, 2009b: 23)

Category	Description	Examples
Positive feelings and emotions	Feelings of joy, happiness and love connected to childbearing.	<p><i>"I think that the child will bring a great deal of joy and happiness. I'm still not fully aware of this but I would be very happy."</i> W004, Male, 25, marr, childless</p> <p><i>"Plenty of joy, lots of joy that my child brings into our lives by his first steps, by his first words. This is simply beyond description."</i> W106, Fem, 27, marr, 1 child</p> <p><i>"Great feelings, another person to love – that is the biggest advantage which you can get, it seems to me like that."</i> W020, Fem, 27, marr, childless</p>
Protection against loneliness and emptiness	Child is a protection against loneliness, brings feeling of affiliation. Childless life is empty.	<p><i>"The future with children seems more positive, because we have family, we're together, we'll be the family forever, there will always be someone close. There won't be a situation in which someone will be left alone."</i> W025, Male, 30, cohab, childless</p> <p><i>"When I look at my parents, there's always 'full house' at their place (...) I know that I would miss it a lot [if I didn't have children]. Looking at my parents, as a role model, for that instance. I go and visit them often. I wouldn't like to be lonely. That's the worst thing that can happen to a person in his or her lifetime."</i> W019, Fem, 29, marr, childless</p>
Support in old age	Child as a source of help in old age: care, financial support, etc.	<p><i>"A child provides some kind of insurance; here it will sound very... hard that a child secures our old age. Still who will take care of you when you are old, if not your own son or daughter or even grandchildren? Who will look after you? The government? It's yet sounds silly but still this child offers us this security in the old age."</i> W026, Male, 32, marr, childless</p>
Heritage	A child is an heir to one's material as well as psychological heritage.	<p><i>"Because I assume that this is in our nature, that we need some kind of prolongation of ourselves."</i> W025, Fem, 29, cohab, childless</p> <p><i>"If I didn't have a child, who would I leave all my possessions to? I would like someone to inherit from me and also to get some values from me, that for sure, these would be the two main things."</i> W024, Fem, 24, cohab, childless</p>
Constitution of the family	Having a child defines a moment of creation of a (real) family.	<p><i>"A family is not 2, it is minimum +1 (...) only this is a family. We are still a couple with a piece of paper. And a family is 2+1."</i> WW009, Male, 25, marr, childless, 25, marr, childless</p> <p><i>"[With a child] we would become a family because now we are not family yet. I mean... No, although we should because it could turn out that we can't have children, touch wood, well and we would be a family too, it means we are the family but I don't feel it yet"</i> W020, Fem, 27, marr, childless</p>
Binding relationship	A child brings partners closer together, binds a relationship.	<p><i>"[A child] got us even closer together because there is something important in our lives. SOMEONE very important in our lives."</i> W107, Fem, 28, marr, 1 child</p> <p><i>"Having something more that joins us, having a child. The apple of our eyes that will bring us together, another link in the chain."</i> W018, Male, 26, marr, childless</p>
Adult status	A child gives the status of an adult, mature person.	<p><i>"Well I think [with becoming a parent] I would reach the level of a huge seriousness, I guess I can call it that. That's how I see it – it would be serious, leaving the youthful way of thinking behind."</i> W019, Male, 30, marr, childless</p> <p><i>"It seems to me that when I had a baby it would be different, they [my family] would see it more, that I'm an adult person already."</i> W911, Fem, 24, LAT, childless</p>

Another original finding from the study on the value of children in Poland is the importance of care and company in old age as one of the benefits of childbearing, rarely mentioned in the demographic literature on the benefits of childbearing, and which may become of prime importance in an aging society.

“Indeed, some interviewees explicitly say that, as they observe their parents’ lives, it does not appear to them that their parents have sources of joy other than their children. *“They [my parents] don’t lead a very interesting life now. They are getting more from us. More things happen in our lives than in theirs. With them... it’s always the same.” (W004, Fem, 25, marr, childless)*” (Mynarska, 2009b: 16)

The author thus concludes that there are two categories of values of children, which are crucial for the childbearing motivation in Poland: benefits connected to adopting “normal” life course (gaining the status of an adult, improving the relationship, and forming a family) and benefits that are activated only when parents are older (protection against loneliness in old age, support, inheritance of parents’ wealth and characteristics).

The analysis of the value of children has been performed so far only in Poland. It will be extended to other countries participating to WP5, countries which are among the most advanced in the SDT: France and Germany. In these two countries, children are highly valued, but on other grounds than in the Polish case: the normative benefits of child bearing (benefits of adopting a normal life course) are rarely mentioned. This comparative analysis will illustrate the fact that with the advance of post modernity, the value of children does not decrease, but that its nature changes: « having children ceases to be a normative-bound decision, and it is increasingly serves individual self-fulfillment and private joy” (Sobotka 2008: 177).

We stated in the literature review that a culture of voluntary childlessness can emerge in countries who have already adopted a post modern vision of the benefits of child bearing. As can be expected in a country which just entered the SDT, Mynarska (2009a: 13 – 14) found a strong social pressure against childlessness in her sample of Poles.

“A high regard for having children in the individual value system of Poles is clearly sustained also by social norms and a complex system of sanctions and rewards. Childlessness is clearly not an acceptable option here. In Polish society, everybody ought to become a parent and some examples of mechanisms of social control over this norm are presented in Table 3. It is striking that punishment for childlessness (even unintended!) can be as severe as being left by a partner.”

Table 3 Social pressure for having children: examples of the categories related to the mechanisms of social control

Name of category Examples	Description	Example
Social disapproval or pity (sanction)	Childless people are perceived as egoistic, strange and disturbed (when they do not want to have children) or unhappy and sad (when they cannot have children).	“She is somehow abnormal, degenerate; she doesn’t want to have children, horrible!” (Female, 24, childless) “I know two couples, of my parents’ age, who don’t have children. And this is really sad, depressing. I think such people become freaks” (Female, 29, childless)
Direct pressure from family	Family directly communicates encouragement to have children or disapproval for not having one.	“The parents, especially mine, are saying that we should have a baby. My mum says: I’m retired now, so I would have something to take care of after” (Female, 26, childless)
Loss of a partner (sanction)	Not wanting (or even not being able) to have a child is a sufficient reason for a partner to leave.	“If she didn’t want to [have children], I think... it would end up in breaking up” (Male, 28, childless) “If we tried all options and didn’t succeed [to have a child], if he wanted to leave, I would let him....” (Female, 29, childless)
Social exclusion (sanction)	Not having children is related to being an “outsider”: losing friends, being treated as a strange person.	“People around you set up their families, they are happy about their children, they have their problems... and you sit there on your own and it doesn’t concern you” (Female, 28, 1 child)
Childbearing—giving status of a mature person (positive reinforcement)	Childbearing is positively reinforced by giving a new social status to parents.	“They would look at me as a mature woman because I am over 18, but I think that in their opinion... I don’t know if they treat me completely as a child but surely not like a mature woman, maybe fifty-fifty. But when someone has a child (...) then it’s a symbol that she is a mother. So she is a responsible and mature person” (Female, 22, childless)

Also as expected in a country where policies support the work-family combination, we did not find any case of voluntary childlessness in France, a country well advanced in the SDT, but with a family policy supporting working mothers and many affordable childcare options. In the Western Germany and Italian samples, on the other hand, a number of women said they wanted to remain childless. The analyses on the West Germany sample (Salles et al. 2010, Rossier et al. 2010) show how individuals end up thinking that not having a child is acceptable, and even, the best solution for them. German respondents who do not wish to have children highly value children, like the other

respondents in the sample. They think children deserve the best, which means, in the case of Germany where there was until recently little formal child care options, that mothers have to sacrifice their personal and professional life for them. The following citation from a German respondent who does not want children illustrates this widely shared opinion in Germany.

*“And I also think, if somebody decides to have children, for me it’s either children or a career. Both together, that doesn’t fit. There is always something or somebody who doesn’t get their share. And then I think that it shouldn’t be the child who is disadvantaged but the career. And then, well, I think that if somebody decides to have children, and when later they are at school or in kindergarten, and that then if you have the time when they are away, you could go to work, but when the child comes back from school or from kindergarten at midday, I have to be there. I really think that I am that old-fashioned. That really is my opinion. In my opinion it is a bad thing to give the child the whole day long to a nanny or to an au-pair girl or to kindergarten; everything really must be organized. I don’t need to have a child, if I’m unable to take care of it. It’s me who is responsible for bringing up the child, and not any kindergarten teacher or a childminder or an au-pair girl or the grandma or what not. This is my job, that is, mine and that of my partner. And I think, I don’t know, somehow real bad. These women who want to fulfil themselves, but who also want to have children...”* (Salles et al. 2010 : 1073)

Respondents who do not want a child think that is noble for a woman to make sacrifices for her children, but wish personally to stay childless because they think these sacrifices would be too much for them.

“Maika and Nadia have no children, do not want any and are in equalitarian couple relationships. Nadia is not yet living with her partner but describes their task sharing as balanced, while Maika thinks she and her partner share tasks 50-50. [...] These two women are not particularly career-oriented. But they wish to have time for leisure (especially Nadia, who writes short stories, paints and takes photos) and for themselves. They underline the importance for them of being “free” and “independent”; the couple is the sphere in which they invest most emotionally. They share with the rest of the German sample a traditional view of parenting work: they think that if there is a child, it is up to the mother to look after it for at least the first three years of its life. The cost of a child is therefore high for these women, and even too high as far as they personally are concerned. Both these women have their high school certificates, Nadia also received professional training and Maika has five years’ higher education.” (Rossier et al. 2010 p. 19)

Although wishing to remain childless is not very frequent yet in Italy, as compared to Germany (Italy is less advanced in the shift of values towards post modernity), the Italian respondents who do not want children exhibit a reasoning similar to that observed among their German counterparts.

“She is uncertain about her fertility intentions because she is unsure about sacrificing her career for childbearing. For her having children is a responsibility and would necessarily require a switch of attention from work towards childcare. *Having a child is something serious, I would have to renounce something that I am doing right now, so as to realise my dreams, and I would not like to do so.* (Np16\_1910dg0, Ede p.9) (Bernardi et al. 2008 : 20).

The analyses of the West German and Italian samples were not focused on the topic of voluntary childlessness and the number of cases is small. Nevertheless, our analyses seem to indicate that women renounce to having children because they feel their place in social life is at stake, as if the old social integration pattern characterizing women's life course, having husband and children, does not work any more. Employment and independence (if not power) are part of their identity and it is hard to give them up in the name of children. When they do give this part of their identity up, it is often because they give priority to their idea of having a family, but it is not without a sense of frustration. Those who want to stay childless simply prioritize these two elements of a women's identity the other way round.

By why would men renounce to having children, since nobody asks them to give up part of their identity when they have children? Preliminary results indicate that while many men wish to remain childless in West Germany, this is not the case in Italy. One direction to explain this outcome may be the high rate of divorce in West Germany and the gender biased regulations of it when children are involved. Men may not want to risk to have children they will end up seeing once in a while, and for which they will pay at a distance.

Further comparative analysis including Poland, France, Germany and Italy will be conducted to examine closely how the combination of post modern values of children (children as a way to personal fulfilment), combined with a lack of child care option and the necessity for women to stop working if they want children (and the prospect of losing one's child in case of divorce in countries with traditional divorce laws but high divorce rates), lead to the emergence of the acceptance of voluntary childlessness for women and men.

## **2. Changing gender roles and fertility decisions**

Although the group of WP5 researchers devoted some time to the question of the value of children and voluntary childlessness, it is striking that all of them devoted most of their attention to the link between changing gender roles and fertility decisions. Whatever the group of countries examined by the WP5 researchers, and the starting point of their investigation, all the analytical teams put forth the following three interrelated dimensions as the key individual level variables explaining fertility decision making in contemporary Europe:

- a) women's participation in the labour market: representations and practices
- b) men's implication in unpaid family work: representations and practices

c) use of non maternal child care options: representations and practices

These three dimensions are different aspects of gender roles: is it women's role to engage in paid employment? Is it men's role to care for children and perform household chores? Is it women's role to take care of their children when they are small, or is it acceptable or even desirable that other adults (their fathers, other family members, or paid employees) take on that role? Our analyses show that the decision to have a child at a given point in time depends on each couple's answer to all these questions, as well as on their actual practices in these areas of life: women and men's involvement on the job market and in family work, and their plans to use non maternal child care.

A system of meanings and practices on gender roles

The WP5 researchers explored this issue using different entry points. All aspects of gender roles which matter for fertility decisions (women's paid work, men's family work, non maternal child care) taken together were the starting point of some analyses (Bernardi et al. 2008, Rossier et al. 2010). In other analyses, the close circular links between individuals' representations and practices concerning women's paid work, men's family work, and non maternal child care emerged rather from the data analysis (Salles et al 2010, Mynarska 2009, Matysiak and Mynarska 2009.)

“We wanted to assess how respondents related the gender role set (ideal, actual or expected) to their childbearing intentions and behavior [...] The specific combinations of men's and women's roles in a couple are what we define couples' role sets here. We particularly concentrate on combination of men and women roles as providers (paid labor) as carers (unpaid labor being childcare) and as household carer (unpaid labor as housework chores). (Bernardi et al. 2008: p. 3 - 4)

“What meaning does paid work have for women? Does the meaning they attach to work influence their fertility intentions?” (Mynarska et al. 2009: p. 4)

«We [work on] the relationship between (a) policy and market conditions that help women combine work and family, (b) individuals' class affiliation, (c) their propensity to adopt progressive gender roles and (d) the impact of these choices on their fertility intentions and behaviour.” (Rossier et al. 2010: 1)

“In this paper, we explore the long-term impact of policy environments promoting the combination of work and family on individuals' representations of working mothers and external childcare, and the link between these representations, use of childcare, and fertility intentions and behaviours.” (Salles et al. 2010: 1059)

Whatever the initial entry point, the researchers show that considerations about women's paid work, men's implications in family work and the possibility of using non maternal child care form together, in combination, the basis of the calculations of the benefits of having a child at a given point in time

for couples. The following illustrations show how, in the different samples, these three key dimensions of gender roles (ideal and actual) are the elements couples take into account, in combination, when they think about having a child.

“[In Italy] once they reach a certain stage of their lives, women have to take decisions and chose whether to focus on their profession or to build up a family. The latter choice implies full responsibility for children and partner. In [Maria’s] eyes there is no possible reconciliation between family and working lives. *One may opt for paid labor, being an independent woman, and having a career; or one may opt for forming a family. I decided to have a family.* (Np28\_3005dv1, Maria, p.20). She perceives as fair the circumstance that she manages childcare and housework alone. Her husband is the only one working outside home and contributing to family income. As long as she stays at home, she cannot claim her partners’ participation in housework chores. She is expecting to hire a housekeeper, as soon as she will start working again.” (Bernardi et al. 2008: 14.)

“Stefania [...] [an Italian respondent] has got a University degree and is part time employed. She is planning to have her first child soon and to keep on working. She justifies her willingness to maintain her job because she has invested a lot in her education. A mother worker is good also for the upbringing of the child: she has a greater “mental stability” than housewife mothers. She is the only one responsible for housework; her partner is the only one having a full time paid labour outside home. She does not dare ask him for greater help. She is satisfied because he helps a bit and does it “for” her, where and when she does not manage. While she does not wish a greater participation of her husband in housework, she expects him to participate in childcare, as soon as the child there are planning to have will be born. She would not like to be obliged to rely on unknown baby-sitters, nor to ask grand-parents for help. To her eyes, for children’s well-being it is necessary to their fathers’ presence in their growing u: *I would not like that my child has too many people as examples in life (...) This is why I would not like to rely too much on the grandparents. I would like that only me and my partner take care of our child.* (Nb04\_1210dg0, Stefania, p.9).” (Bernardi et al. 2008: 15)

“[A certain number of French] couples share domestic and parental work fairly equally between the sexes. The two partners have roughly the same socio-economic status. What is striking with the women in these couples is that they do not mention or talk about equality and make no demands in that regard, because equality is the reality of their lives. They do not see having “lots” of children as a threat to their future career, their minds are at ease about the division of labour. Camille and her husband are both school teachers. They already have two children and want a third. Asked whether this will be a change, she says: *I don’t know, it would be more work. What I see is that I and my husband share all the work at home, it’s not like in my parents’ day. We do the housework, the meals and the shopping according to which of us is available. Yes, a third would be more work and that’s why we want to wait until the children are bigger, a little more independent. But ... it would make a bigger family.*” (Rossier et al. 2010: 11-12).

“Among the French childless respondents, only one woman, Elise, plans to take parental leave. Elise is ready to give up a lot when they decide to have a child. She likes her job (she is a pharmacist), but gender equality does not seem very important to her. She imagines a family where the mother’s and the father’s roles are clearly differentiated: the father represents authority and the mother affection and care. She explains that this specialization is natural, because “*there are some tasks that men are not able to do*”. However, Elise would not like to stop working totally, neither would she accept to do all the housework.” (Salles et al. 2010: 1078)

“In [the West German] mindset, where women are the primary care givers of their children, and work a few hours a week, during school hours, to provide a back-up income to the family or to earn some pocket money, men are seen as the main providers of the family income. This fact is underlined by many respondents (Katrin, Paul, Jürgen, Martin): “*When all is said and done, he must be able to provide for his family*” (Martin). Several women establish a link between the fact that they could not have children and the income of their husband or partner.” (Salles et al. 2010: 1071)

In Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and East Germany, like in West Germany and Italy, men's implication in family care does not appear as a strong dimension of the child making equation, as illustrated by this quote from Poland, where the respondent considers all possible options for childcare arrangements but never mentions the role of her partner.

*"If the child is good and healthy, maybe we will have to send it to the crèche, if my mum cannot look after it [for health reasons] and we can't manage financially. Because we would not manage with one salary (...) We couldn't afford for one of us to quit a job. It would be really tough for us, and a child – these are expenses. And I think that there might be a need to send a child to the crèche. Unless... well, A. [husband's] mum still works part-time, she's already retired, but she has additional work part-time. Maybe she would quit?" (W026, Fem, 29, marr, childless) (Mynarska et al. 2009: 15)*

This result is understandable, in so far as gender roles are still mainly traditional in these countries (it is worth noting here that the Italian sample was recruited in a region which is especially conservative in terms of gender roles); the lack of variation in men's participation to family work (men systematically not participating to domestic and educative tasks) renders this factor of fertility decision-making invisible there.

In the opposite, in France, because most women with small children work and many of them work full time, men often contribute to family work, and the impact of their participation to family work on fertility decisions thus appears clearly. The only respondents who exhibit smaller fertility intentions in the French sample or who renounce to have all the children they initially wanted, are respondents who are in couples where women support a double burden, that is, couples where women have a paid employment and assume most of the family work.

*"Six French respondents fall into this group [of the double burden]. Of course they present different degrees of inequality in the division of labour, depending on how far the man is involved in family work and how far the woman is involved in paid work. The most unequal case is that of Sandrine [...]. For my own sake I needed to work. Financially it makes a difference too, but it's true it's mainly my choice. Staying at home was impossible. Already by the end of three months [of maternity leave]... I just had to go out. I'm not made for staying at home. Describing her day, she uses irony to express her discontent: Let's say when I leave work I fetch the little one and until he's in bed I don't have a moment for myself. I don't know ... do you have children? But my beloved husband of course, when he gets in from work at half past seven it's the little one's bathtime but he can't do it, obviously, he's just got in, he's tired. So there you are, but that's the only thing, because on the other hand I do like to do it myself. Q: And at the weekend? R: At weekends there's the computer! Doesn't have an easy life, my better half doesn't. he? But it's not something we row about. There's worse things in life. We're not the sort to row. There's worse things. Well, sometimes I'm in a bad mood, but I wait for it to go So for Sandrine the task sharing is unequal in that she does far more parental and domestic work than her partner although she has a more*

enviable job than her partner (their salaries are similar but Sandrine works for a major corporation, which has many advantages, and does “*more interesting*” things than him). Her professional assets and her higher educational level have not brought her greater negotiating power in the couple as regards family work. As a result, the child represents a real cost for her. She does not know whether she wants a second, saying she is “*selfishly fine with just one child*”.” (Rossier et al. 2010: 10).

### Social status differences and gender roles

Social status differentials combine with gender roles expectations and practices to shape fertility decisions. The literature on this topic can be summarized as follows.

“Class affiliation shapes individual preferences in combination with gender role expectations. Women with less chance of succeeding in the labour market are more eager to specialize in family work, where they have a better chance of reaping some benefits (see for example the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy among impoverished classes in the U.S.). The same is not true of lower class men, who, being denied social status in the class hierarchy (which, because it deploys itself in the occupational sphere, concerns men more than women), rely on gender inequality to maintain some form of advantage and are therefore more attached to traditional male roles; they have a stronger preference for paid work and little inclination for family work. Both these mechanisms explain why, in the slow transformation of gender relations, upper class men and women are usually the first to adopt roles previously reserved exclusively to the other sex.” (Rossier et al. 2010: 5).

The analyses performed in the frame of WP5 on the relation between gender roles (ideal and actual) and fertility decisions in different countries suggest indeed important differences across social classes, although the evidence is here somewhat limited because of the focus of our samples on the middle class.

In Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Eastern Germany, most women think that having a job is normal for a woman, but that having a career is incompatible with childrearing; they all choose to have a family instead of a career. However, women with particularly high educational levels seem to display a different pattern: they think that having a career and a family are not incompatible, and plan to have both.

“The results we have presented so far clearly indicate that the women in our study treat employment as something normal and natural, but in the vast majority of cases they attach little importance to professional career as such [and think that a career is incompatible with childrearing]. There are, however, a few interviewees that are interested in pursuing some career. Nevertheless, they all emphasise that they do not want to do it at the expense of family and children. They believe they are able to combine career and motherhood. In the Hungarian sample, there are 3 women (out of the 20) who consider work as professional career. Two of them were working on their PhD degree at the time of the interview, the other one was an art college student. All of them crave for “*establishing their own place*” in their profession, which, interestingly, they can easily see as reconcilable with their future

childcare duties. [...] However, even the most work-oriented, professionally successful Hungarian respondents are longing for establishing their own family, which they cannot imagine without children. In [Poland], we find cases of women, who postpone their career aspirations until “*after a child*”. In particular, four respondents explicitly say that they’d rather stay in a stable, although not too satisfactory job before they enter motherhood and search for something better, more ambitious after a child is born. They clearly do not see problems in combining the two things. [...] We came across a somewhat similar opinion in Bulgarian sample. A woman says: *S011f: “...for me the financial aspect (of a certain job) is very important. It is not important at all if I start building a career NOW or do it later. For me, this time is not lost... Only the financial result is important (laugh)...”* (Mynarska et al. 2009: 13)

This analysis needs to be completed, and women’s attitudes towards work related more systematically to their educational level, type of job and income, before firmer conclusions can be reached. In the analysis of gender roles in Italy and Bulgaria as well, the different ways the two partners share tasks, taking on more or less progressive or conservative gender roles (see Table 1 below), remains to be linked to the social status of the partners.

**Table 1: Typologies of ideal couple role sets in Italy and Bulgaria**

Paid work and caregiver roles	Division of housework	
	<i>Equal</i>	<i>Unequal</i>
<i>Woman caregiver</i>	Moderate Single Burden shared housework <i>Napoli-3</i> <i>Sofia-1</i>	Single Burden – Traditional <i>Napoli -16</i> <i>Sofia-2</i>
<i>Working woman caregiver</i>	Moderate Double Burden shared housework <i>Napoli -7</i> <i>Sofia - 8</i>	Double Burden <i>Napoli - 11</i> <i>Sofia -1</i>
<i>Working partners caregivers</i>	Shared Double Burden <i>Napoli -10</i> <i>Sofia - 6</i>	Moderate Double Burden shared care <i>Napoli -8</i> <i>Sofia - 3</i>
<i>Shared bilateral duties with unpaid assistance provided by the parents of the partners</i>	Both partners work and share the housework equally <i>Napoli -x</i> <i>Sofia - 2</i>	Both partners work and share the housework, but one of them does more of the housework than the other <i>Napoli -x</i> <i>Sofia - 2</i>

The study on gender roles and fertility decisions in France and Germany shows the expected social status differentials: upper class couples tend to adopt more progressive gender roles, as is evident in the table displayed below.

“As the literature suggests, the propensity of either partner to adopt a progressive division of tasks is related to social class affiliation, upper class individuals being more prone to do so (last column of Table 1). Social class seems to matter less in the German sample (where most respondents belong to the same [social] category). This result may be related either to the lack of affordable non-parental childcare options in that country, or to the lesser social diversity in the German sample.” (Rossier et al. p. 20)

**Table 1. Couples' division of tasks, fertility intentions and outcomes, France and Germany**

Type	France	Germany	Social class
<b>Traditional couples</b>	Want 3 children or more (2 respondents)	Want 2 children* (3 respondents)	Lower to middle class
<b>Dual burden couples (women are employed part or full time, men engage little in family work)</b>	Want 2 children or more, some revising down of intentions after the first birth (6 respondents)	Mostly want 2 children, some downward revision of intentions after first birth (21 respondents**)	Lower to upper class
<b>Equalitarian couples where both put an emphasis on the non-family sphere</b>	Want 1 or 2 children (3 respondents)	Want 0 children (2 respondents)	Middle to upper class
<b>Equalitarian couples where men and women combine family work and paid work</b>	Want 2 or 3 children (6 respondents)	Want 2 children (2 respondents***)	Middle to upper class
<p>* The atypical case of Arno (who wants 1 or 2 children) is not included here  ** Three of the 21 respondents classified here in the “dual burden” category actually lie somewhere between the “dual burden” and “traditional” categories; these couples want 3 children.  *** One of these two respondents actually lies somewhere between the last two types.</p>			

The following citations from the French sample contrast the traditional gender role arrangement common among lower class couples to the progressive gender roles characteristics of many middle and upper class couples.

*“Of course, she didn’t want to work because she had no qualifications and then they (the children) were young. For the moment we will wait until they are older or there is another child, we are on stand-by. At the moment she doesn’t work. I am a fireman and I look after the children at the same time, it is not so easy because sometimes I get called out on a job, sometimes you have two or three seconds to eat. We are managing at the moment. We shall wait and see” (Eric, fireman). (Salles et al. 2010 : 1082)*

*“As the arrival of the child often implies new constraints, [some couples] have found an arrangement based on the father’s participation. For example, Marie’s partner covers the child care hours in the morning and in the evening (Marie is a policewoman). Sammy (computer manager) has to leave work earlier to pick up his children from the child care centre. These respondents experience, to different degrees, equal parenthood, which means almost equal investment for both parents and almost no role specialization. “I think that there is nothing that... What could I do alone with the children that Nico has never done? No I see absolutely nothing. Because whether it is cooking, painting, some Plasticine, or reading a story before they go to bed or having the bath, or working in the garden... all these things that I do, he does too” (Camille, teacher) (Salles et al. 2010 : 1077)*

#### Different political economies and gender roles

All the studies on gender roles and fertility decisions undertaken in WP5 show that the labour market options for men and women, as well as the child care options in different countries are of paramount

importance to understand the way respondents envision and practice gender roles, that is, women's paid employment, men's participation to family work, and non parental child care.

France is the only country analyzed in the frame of WP5, with Eastern Germany, which provides affordable and abundant public or private non parental child care options for children under the age of three. French respondents approve of and use these non parental child care options, and have high fertility intentions and realizations.

“All [French] respondents believe in the combination of work and family: to them, it is possible and even preferable for mothers with young children to remain at work. They believe that mothers' professional situation can easily be combined with family responsibilities. *“I want to stay employed and since the two (maternity and employment) can be combined, I just want to stay employed”* (Karine). However, most women are ready to make some professional changes in order to spend more time at home, like taking up part time work.” (Salles et al. 2010: 1076).

Eastern German respondents also have a positive outlook on external childcare, and there are little barriers to the work and family combination in that context.

“In the Eastern German case, a crèche is fully accepted or – to put in another way – it is not questioned and alternatives are not sought. One woman even says that going to crèche very early is good for the *“social development”* of the child.” (Mynarska et al. 2009: 15-16)

Further analyses are needed to understand what prevents couples from having more children in the Eastern German case.

In the case of West Germany and Italy, the lack of affordable child care options and negative attitudes towards childcare means that women have to stop working to have a child until the latter goes to kinder garden, and to work part time when children go to school. Women more often consider not having children at all in these countries (especially in West Germany), or renounce having more than one child, to be able to go back to the labour market.

“Irina, a 35-years-old married State prosecutor, in maternity leave at the time of the interview, has got a daughter. She is willing to keep her career despite her project to have a second child soon. She is aware of the difficulties she will encounter in conciliating childcare with her working ambitions. She stresses the lack of state childcare facilities in Italy, that make working women's' fulfilment of fertility intentions conditional on purchasing external childcare.” (Bernardi et al. 2008:18)

In the Eastern European countries studied in the frame of WP5 (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland), the situation is close to that in West Germany and Italy (women are expected to stay at home when they have children, child care options are rare and negatively perceived), except that grand parents often provide childcare.

“In the Bulgarian and Hungarian samples, women quite commonly declare that they wish to stay at home and take care after a child, until a kid reaches the age of three and is big enough to go to kindergarten. [...] Bulgarian and Hungarian respondents do not consider putting their children to a crèche. In Hungarian sample only two women (out of 20) consider such an option. In Bulgarian case, no interviewee mentions that she approves or plans to place her child in a day care before a child is three years old. They underline that the mother should take care of the child when it is very small. A Hungarian respondent articulates her surprise about the different “culture” of childcare in some other countries: *“I have friends in France and Australia. They told me that they can spend maximum 3 months at home with their baby than they have to go back to work. I can’t even imagine how they manage that...A complete stranger brings up their kids?! ...All my readings are against it...They all argue for staying home with your baby as long as you can...”* (B 008) p. 14 If, for any reason (mostly financial aspects are mentioned here), a woman needs to come back to work earlier and also at the stage when a child is big enough to be put into a kindergarten, the respondents count on support from their families of origin. Grandmothers appear to be an important source of help in this respect. *S101f: Some people do not approve the grandmother’s involvement in childcare but I think that it is good for the child to communicate with many people. I would place my child in the kindergarten. Even I dream to set up my own kindergarten – this is my dream. I would combine two things – the care of my child and work. “S008f: I can rely on my mother for the care of the child.../in combination with the kindergarten option/”“Desy: I would take advantage of the availability of two grandmothers or may be I can hire a baby-sitter... The role of grandparents is [also] crucial in the Polish case, where, however, situation looks slightly different. Grandmothers are expected to help with a childcare from the very early stage: when a child is half a year or one year old already. This is the moment, when the respondents usually plan to come back to work.* (Mynarska et al. 2009: 15)

“In Bulgaria, it is frequently the case that the young couple shares housing with the parents of one of the partners. This is especially prevalent in small towns and villages. Such living arrangements are part of a deeply rooted tradition—the expectation that the young couple takes care of the elderly parents, especially if one of the parents is deceased. In such cases, this expectation is understood as something natural that goes without saying. Conversely, such living arrangements also suggests that the older parents take care of their grandchildren and do most of the housework, while the young partners are at work.” (Bernardi et al. 2008 : 7)

The role of the job market is mentioned in two cases in our analyses. In West Germany, respondents’ sometimes regret that the job market is not more conducive to men’s engagement in family work.

“Some men wish their employer and company culture would allow them to work more flexible hours so that they could give more time to their children: *That as a father I could say in my company: “I am a father, it is closing time for kindergarten”.* *That is why flexible working hours and possibilities for working at home etc. are necessary. The State must help families, in particular in the professional field.*” (Stefan)” (Rossier et al. 2010: 17)

In the case of Poland, women do not often engage in part-time jobs because of the low level of salaries; they thus sometimes see having their own business as a way of reconciling work and family.

*“In the Polish sample, we find women, who started or want to start their own business because it makes childcare easier. Moreover, in the Polish sample as much as one third of the women say that they could consider being self-employed what would allow them to work at home or to have flexible working hours. They give this solution as an alternative to being “only a housewife”. Q: And what if your husband’s business was beneficial enough, so that you don’t have to work? A: No, no, I would work anyway. There is no such option that I would just sit at home. Absolutely. Well, if he really earned a lot, he could help me start my own small-business, but I would not sit at home and cook dinners. No, no, no.” (W023) “I would not like to spend my whole life at home, to be a housewife (...) Maybe we could start our own business? One can work from home, too.” (W003)” (Mynarska et al. 2009: 17)*

Altogether, our micro level analyses of fertility decision making in different political economies in Europe suggest that gender roles (ideal and actual, and regarding three aspects: women’s paid employment, men’s involvement in family work, non parental child care) are the key elements entering into couples’ decisions to have a child at a given point in time. Our results confirm those of numerous studies which have linked the sub-replacement fertility trends observed in many industrialized countries to women’s employment, the lack of affordable child care, and men’s lack of involvement in family work (see literature).

However, our results are also original in two regards. First, we show that these different elements are all linked together: it is not women’s paid employment alone, or the lack of childcare options alone, but women’s paid work together with a lack of child care together with a lack of male family work, which explains below-replacement fertility. These different dimensions all matter, together, to understand why couples want fewer children and why they do not have all the children they had initially planned; none of these dimensions can be left out of the analysis of fertility decisions. Qualitative analysis is especially suited to identify seemingly separate parameters which are in fact linked together into producing a certain outcome; a comparative approach was necessary to spot the importance of some of these factors, which do not display variation at the national level (in particular childcare options and men’s involvement in family work).

Our results are also original in that they underline that the different elements entering couples' decisions to have a child in contemporary Europe (women's employment, childcare options, men's implication in family work) are not only part of the structural reality ("hard facts") of every couple. Women's implication on the job market, men's share of work at home; and their reliance on non parental child care all result from, and feed into, the couples' visions of what a man should be and what a woman should be. In other words, to us, the cultural dimension of couple's fertility decisions, today in Europe, is, to a large extent, their vision of gender roles. This result is especially interesting in a scientific context where, up until recently, the shift towards post modern values was the only "cultural" shift taken into account in the reflexion on changing family behaviours. Several authors have stressed recently that a "gender revolution" is underlying the Second Demographic Transition, and that below replacement fertility has more to do with an incomplete gender revolution than with the spread of a vision of life where personal fulfilment is paramount (Sobotka 2008a, Lesthaeghe 2010). Our studies contribute to the understanding of changing gender roles as the cultural shift which matters to understand fertility outcomes in contemporary Europe.

### **3. When values do not fit practices: the uneven advance of social change**

Individuals' representations and practices are usually in line, because human beings have a psychological need to have a coherent approach to life. This is true for the phenomena we are discussing here. Individuals' visions of women's paid work usually match what they or their partner do for a living, their visions of male participation in family work often match what they or their partner does in the household, and the same can be said of non maternal childcare.

This is very clear for example in the case of women's attitudes towards work in Eastern European countries. Most women have worked in the labour market there since decades, but usually in low paying and low level positions, women still assuming most domestic work. Accordingly, paid work there is seen as a normal and desirable part of life for women, although a career is seen as detrimental to a woman's family.

“To women in these countries, work is seen as something natural for women. For our respondents “working is self-evident” (Eastern Germany), “normal and natural” (Bulgaria and Poland), it is an “important component of a balanced life” (in terms of work-family balance, Hungary) or “a central element of the women’s identities” (Bulgaria).” [...] Women universally treat work as something unquestionable in their life. Moreover, we notice that while they wish for a good and interesting job, they emphasise that they are not “*career-oriented*”. There seems to be a clear distinction is made between “a job” and “a career”. (Mynarska et al. 2009: 10)

When practices match representations, it is of course pointless to wonder whether the structural aspect (practices) or ideational elements (representations or values) of gender roles are at the root of fertility decisions.

Representations do not match practices sometimes, and this is especially the case in our samples concerning men’s ideal implication in family work, and the actual share of family work they assume. Bernardi et al. (2008) study with special care these occurrences of discordance.

« Due to the demands of their respective jobs, there could be discrepancies between what the partners believe is a just division of the housework and what happens in practice, i.e., the woman assuming all or most of the household duties. For instance [...] This is the case of the Bulgarian couple S\_115f and S\_115m. They have one seven-year-old child. The husband works as an international driver. As such, he is often away from home for two weeks or more at a time. He shares: “In the last two years, my wife has been doing all the housework and has entirely assumed the care for our child. This is because I changed my job. Last night, I came home at 11 pm and I will be home today and tomorrow. On Monday, it starts all over again... I have almost no opportunities to stay home for longer.” (Bernardi et al. 2008: 9)

“Many of the [German] men have a rather contradictory discourse. They say they are open to paternity leave, but reject the idea in their own case (because of the financial situation or pressure from their employer, etc.). They want to play an active part in their child’s education but do not participate in childcare. They mention a change in the status of fathers but continue to think it is the mother’s job to look after the children. In other words, the men in this group theoretically defend a more equalitarian distribution of roles between man and women, but in practice advocate a fairly traditional division of roles.” (Rossier et al. 2010: 17)

Although analyses have to be pushed further before firm conclusion can be reached, it seems that, in the case of these discordance between practices and attitudes, the actual division of tasks between partners regarding domestic and parental work matters more than the partners ‘ desired or ideal division of tasks for fertility decisions. However, when the discrepancy arises from a momentary change in practices, ideal divisions of tasks are more closely connected to fertility decisions.

The peculiar high frequency of dissonances between men's wished and actual implication in family work remains to be explained. The concept of the "stalled gender revolution" can, again, be of help here: women have gained power in the public sphere (employment, education), but not yet in the private (family) sphere. Men wishing to do more at home (if only they had time) (a change in values when it comes to the divisions of tasks at home) make it more acceptable for women to have gained power in one sphere of social life, but to remain much more powerless in other sphere of life. The discrepancy between values and practices when it comes to sharing tasks at home helps women accept the larger discrepancy between their statuses in different areas of life: their overall level of dissonance is reduced by the wishful thinking (by men and women) that men should do more work at home.

Another point which attracted the attention of WP5 researchers are occurrences of discrepancy between social norms and structural conditions at times of social change. When structural conditions change, individuals could be expected to adjust their behaviors right away to the new conditions: that would be the economically rationale response. However, social scientists repeatedly observed that individuals do not adapt right away to new conditions, because they also follow social logics: norms often change more slowly than structural conditions, and "obsolete" values then hinder individuals in the adoption of the new behaviors for some time, until the values change themselves, and catch up with the innovation (Rossier and Bernardi 2009).

The two articles the researchers of WP5 have published so far focus in fact on instances of such discrepancies between values and structural conditions at historical times of change.

« Our second original result points to the lasting nature of attitudes towards childcare and working mothers. While these attitudes seem to be shaped over decades by policy environments, they also seem to be slow to change. The homogeneity of attitudes towards child care and working mothers within each country is striking in this regard. The different sub-groups identified when analysing each country separately appear to be mere variations upon the same model when the two countries are compared side by side. Even couples with stay-at-home mothers in France believe in the benefits of organized day care, and even dual earner couples with children believe in the benefits of exclusively maternal care in Germany. Existing theories indicate that social groups where attitudes are very homogenous are characterized by strong social influence mechanisms working to maintain them; in such groups, new attitudes can emerge only slowly Negative representations of external childcare will prevent new policies promoting the combination of work and family from having an immediate effect in Germany, and further policy improvements will have little further impact in France. Taken together, our results suggest that shared attitudes towards childcare and the role of mothers, which are historically shaped by policy environments, and act as an intermediary variable between access to "non parental" child care and its use, are the reason why new policy measures or further policy improvements are not followed by immediate increases in fertility." (Salles et al. 2010 : 1084-1085)

“All things considered, economic and institutional changes can explain fertility postponement in Poland, but we still do not understand what forces held back this process, at least initially. We believe that cultural background should be considered in that respect. While the economic and political system in Poland was transformed basically overnight, culture is more resistant to change. Scholars universally agree that the impact of ideational factors needs to be carefully considered when analysing reproductive behaviours.” (Mynarska 2009: 7).

The fact that norms tend to change more slowly than structural conditions is an argument suggesting that in the uneven progression of social change, structural conditions may be the horse and norms may be the carriage. But times when changes in norms lag behind changes in structural conditions show that individuals act as much, or even more, according to their (socially inspired) visions of what is right than according to how much things costs them. In any case, an essential result arising from the analyses described in this report is that it seems pointless to study “values” on the one hand and “factual characteristics” on the other when it comes to fertility decisions, as many quantitative studies of fertility currently do. The concept of gender role is interesting in that regard, because practices and values can be considered simultaneously.

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