

THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC POLICIES ON THE TRENDS OF A FAMILY
AND FERTILITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The article deals with the impact of public policies on the trends of a family and fertility in the European Union. On the basis of European Commission documents and other official sources the state of a family and fertility in EU-27 Member States are analyzed. For that such indices are used: total fertility rates, mean ages of woman at childbirth, marriage and divorce rates, changing household structure index, abortion statistics. The causes and consequences of crisis phenomena and their reflection in public opinion are researched. Problems of contents, effectiveness, conceptual and practical aspects of appropriate public policies, and their role in coping with crisis effects are analyzed.

Keywords: сім'я, народжуваність, демографічна криза, криза інституту сім'ї, сімейна політика в Європейському Союзі.

Дерега В. В. Влияние государственной политики на семью и рождаемость в Европейском Союзе

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Introduction

Family, fertility, and demographic processes are extremely actual themes for a single state as well as intergovernmental formation like the European Union. These questions today elucidate in official documents, mass media, and are object of intent attention scholars, politicians, and the public at large.

This interest is explained high importance of demographic factors which in considerable degree determine stable and safe state development. From demographic characteristics of population all the spheres depend in fact: social, economic, political, and also genetic, medical and finally providing national security and statehood in general. Particular-

ly, deformation of one of the most important demographic indices – fertility leads to depopulation – reducing of population general quantity as a result of exceeding quantity died of were born quantity.

Analysis of recent research

State of a family and fertility, possibilities and instruments of public policy in this sphere were studied by scientists D.E.Bloom, L.Bovenberg, F.Billari, N.Botev, D.Canning, A.Cigno, I.Ehrlich, R.Fenge, J.Kim. H.-P.Kohler, G.Lazdane, W.Lutz, K.Nygren, F.Rosati, H.-W.Sinn, M.Werding, M.Zivkovic.

Analysis of demographic situation, adequacy its reflection through statistic indices attract the attention of many scientists, among which we can dis-

tinguish such as: A.Veber, P.Macdonald, T.Sobotka, A.Tyndik, S.Blum, S.Shcherbov and others.

Statement of research objectives

- to eliminate main aspects of condition of family and fertility in the European Union through comparison of statistic indices;
- to analyze the causes, interconnection and results of these processes and their estimation in public opinion;
- to determine the role of family and fertility factors in the public policy and its effectiveness.

Results

One of the main characters of demographic process in a whole and state of family is fertility. Fertility is measured by a number of rates, the most used of that is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), “this is the mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year” [1, p.28]. In other words, TFR describes the average number of birthed children in calculation on one woman.

For saving current population quantity, in conditions of low mortality, TFR should be equal to as

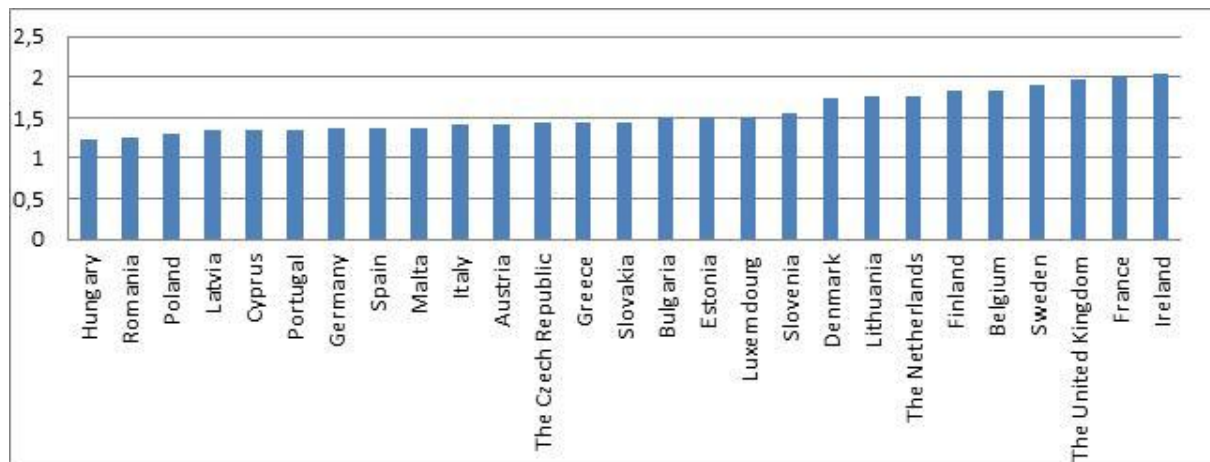
a minimum 2.1 children per one woman. Practically this means that for simple reproduction of population almost half of all families should have 3-4 children. If this rate is less, the population quantity will be descend since each next generation will be less than previous.

Over the past 50 years the level of fertility in European Union considerably declined. Under official data published in Demography Report of European Commission in 2010, in 2009, around 5.4 million children were born in the EU-27, compared to about 7.5 million at the beginning of the 1960s. The highest annual total for the EU-27 was recorded in 1964, with 7.7 million live births. Over the past 30 years, the total number of live births has been growing again, albeit moderately, after reaching a low in 2002 (less than 5 million live births) [1, p.28].

Fertility rate is greatly less than a simple level of population reproduction almost in all members of EU is equal to 1,6 for period of 2005-2011. Graph 1 shows the TFR in all EU Member States in 2010-2011. Low and lowest-low fertility rate was observed in Germany (1,36), Spain (1,36), Cyprus (1,35), Latvia (1,34), Hungary(1,23), Malta (1,38), Poland (1,3), Portugal (1,35), Romania (1,25).

Graph 1

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in EU-27, 2011



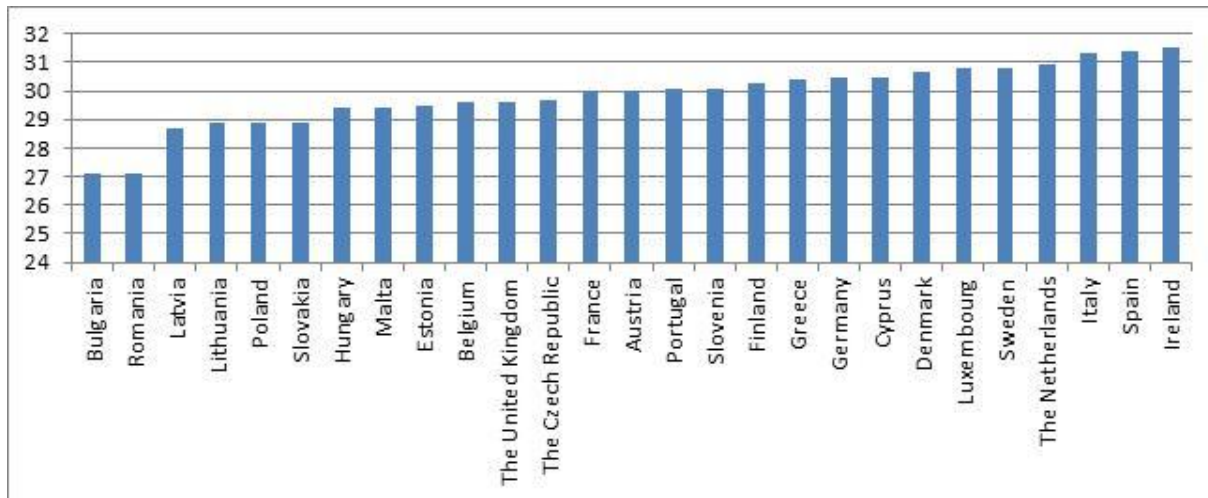
Source: Eurostat [4]

The essential feature of fertility in EU is the alteration of mean age of women at childbirth. In the past 30 years the mean age of woman at child-birth has been significantly postponed. Especially this index has grown in the countries which enter

the EU after 2004. As shown on Graph 2, the high-est ages at childbirth in 2010 were in Ireland, (31.2 years) and Italy (31.1 years). The lowest were in Bulgaria (26.6 years) and Romania (26.9 years).

Graph 2

Mean age of women at childbirth in the EU, 2011



Source: Eurostat [6]

Thus, fertility rates and rate of mean age of women at first birth attest that women have less children and in later age.

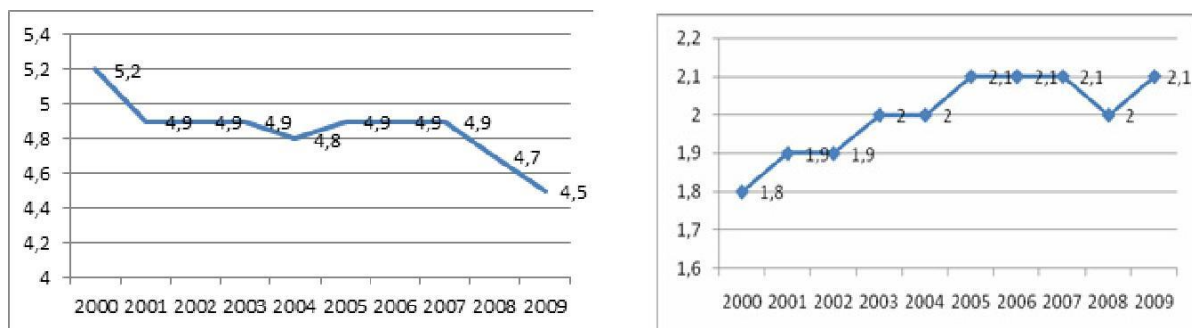
These processes are accompanied by significant statistics of abortions. More than one million two hundred thousand (1.207.646) abortions were carried out in the EU-27, per year. While in the “old” countries (the EU-15) the number of abortions has increased by 70.000 abortions per year (8.3% increase) over 1998-2008. Each fifth pregnancy finished by abortion (18,5 %). Because of it during the year are lost population equivalent to population of Malta or Luxembourg put together or all population of Slovenia or Cyprus [7, p.5-6]. Such quantity of abortions is equal to deficiency of childbirth and means that abortions is the main cause of mortality in Europe.

Consequently, it is impossible to agree with the strategy of the Parliamentary Assembly which invites the member states of the Council of Europe to: “decriminalize abortion, if they have not already done so”; “guarantee women’s effective exercise of their right to abortion and lift restrictions which hinder, de jure or de facto, access to safe abortion” (Resolution PACE № 1607 (2008) [7]. From these statements follows that the fight “for the right to abortion” today in the EU is more priority than measures aimed to destruction this phenomenon.

The ratio of marriage rate to divorce rate has an important meaning for characteristic of family condition and public policy forming. It is observed that the quantity of marriages is decreasing and the quantity of divorces is increasing (Graph 1).

Graph 1

Marriage and divorce rates in the EU, 2000-2009



Source: Eurostat: [8]

Since 1970, the crude marriage rate in the EU-27 has declined by 38 % (from 7.9 per 1000 inhabitants in 1970 to 4.9 in 2007). In 2009 the crude marriage rate among the EU-27 Member States was highest in Cyprus (7.9 per 1000 inhabitants) and Poland (6.6). At the other end of the scale, the lowest crude marriage rates were reported by Slovenia (3.2) and Bulgaria (3.4) [1, c.68].

At the same time, marriages have become less stable, as indicated by the rise in the crude divorce rate, from 0.9 per 1000 inhabitants in 1970 to 2.1 in 2007 [1, p.68]. Non-marital relationships («cohabitation», «marriage de facto», «consensual union») are becoming more and more widespread.

Along with rise of unregistered marriage the number of births outside marriage is increasing. In many countries the majority of live births are now outside marriage. So in 2011 in Estonia 59.7 % of live births occurred outside marriage, in Bulgaria - 56.1%, in France – 55% , in Slovenia – 56.8%, in Sweden – 54.3% [10]. Approximately each third child is born outside marriage. In whole extra-marital births have been increasing in almost every country in EU-27.

Significant change occurs in the size of family and household. Part of households which consist of only one person is increasing to 27,7 %. More than 54 millions of Europeans live singly, more and more households without children – 67 %, and only 17 % of families have two or more children [9].

At the present time the trends of demographic processes are the components of demographic crisis and depopulation as turn into the threat to the very existence of European nations. Therefore completely appropriate attention and anxiety paid to this problem by public, scholars, government etc.

Hans-Werner Sinn, the well-known economist and President of Ifo Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich, notes that “Nothing is more important for Europe’s future than the question of whether the continent will be able to solve its demographic crisis and if so how? If we do not find an adequate solution, Europe will not have a future, and then being able to solve all the other problems will not matter very much” [12, p.1]. The other experts point that “the bigger beast that threatens Europe’s solvency is the demographic and entitlements crisis. While a lot is known about Europe’s aging population, the scale of the problem and its urgency are not well understood” [13]; “Europe is caught in the icy grip of a demographic winter” [22].

All the aspects of demographic processes cause a lot of problems for European societies and demand for adequate policy forming. Consequently, very important on the present stage are at first analysis of reasons and, secondly, outcomes of crisis phenomena for EU members.

Thus, one of the causes in fertility decreasing is free-will childlessness. Such ideas have become widespread and attractive. As H.-W.Sinn noted, “the DINK family – double income, no kids – is even more popular among an increasing number of young couples: Life is better with two incomes and no children than with one income and three children... But when the DINK generation itself grows old, it will hope in vain to emulate their parents’ pensioner lifestyle because there will be too few contributors to finance their pensions” [12, p.1-2].

One of the greatly social dangerous after-effects of low fertility rates, along with population reduction in whole, is decrease of children and youth quantity. This leads to extension of comparative part of aged persons, in other words, total ageing of population. This process is intensified by a decline in the number of birth or, in more positive terms, a general increase in overall life expectancy.

An “ageing” population structure determines whole series problems for societies, first of all social and economic. From economic point of view, increase the number of retirees lead to growth of pensioner payments, social service and health protection expenditures, necessity of enlargement gerontological institutions, care services network and other ageing-related expenditures.

From social point of view, integration of aged persons in society is complex and demands, on the one hand, employment providing and, on the other hand, solution of psychological problems – loneliness and saving active living style, so called “active ageing”.

All of that stipulates pressure on capable people from whose directly depend contribution to pension funds and at the expense of that, in fact, will be supplied aged persons employment. The quantity of laboring reduces: each next generation less than previous. In contrary, the quantity of older people will increase considerably, since the post-war baby-boom generation reaches retirement.

Diminution on household size also makes deeper this problem. Part of aged persons who live with their own families, constantly lessens.

This means that aged members of family as a rule

don't live with their children or grandchildren, and young family members less and less ready to take upon themselves care responsibilities of relatives. Thus, family as social institute parted by generations and doesn't able to providing care of own aged members.

This tendency of family members disconnect is very disadvantageous for in particular for aged persons. As K. Brooks noted, "old age poverty is a growing phenomenon in the Western world, especially for women who live longer and typically have much smaller pension pots than men at retirement" [13].

All of that, along with rash increase of extramarital births, change in ratio marriages and divorces in favor of the last attest about crisis of family institute in whole.

As for causes of demographic crisis, today even in official documents noted that are value. Thus in Demography Report of European Commission noted: "changing value systems contributed to lower fertility rates and an increase in the number of childless couples" [1, p.73]; "changing social perceptions of the role of marriage and greater fragility of relationships have resulted in more extramarital births, including to lone parents, or in childlessness" [1, p.2]. These changes mean alteration in attitude of society towards to marriage, family, child bearing, general devaluation of family values. Family traditional values which expressed in integrity complete family with both parents – man and woman, birth of children, strong connection between generations, replaced by inverse values – individualism, emancipation of personality from family, idealization of comfort and consumerism, rejection of altruism.

This stipulate crisis of family which characterized separation of ages, nuclearization of family, the increasing childlessness, single life, monoparenting and other tendencies.

Value causes of crisis stipulate low effectiveness of socio-economic actions in this sphere, and also that which straight directed at fertility.

These actions are very diverse and include financial support for families through benefits, allowances, grants or benefit supplements, service provision, maternity and parental leaves, protection of mothers in the work place and others.

In spite of methodological variety there are doubts about their effectiveness, and this is confirmed by the results of many researches. Thus, for example, as showed data analysis of 16 OECD countries for the twenty years period, there are

nothing impossible to raise fertility rate to 1,5 (in countries with the lowest-low fertility – TFR=1,3 and lower), while to achieve the level of simple re-production is practically impossible [18, c. 167].

Researches show that positive effect is achieved but only in minor degree so that very often can not achieve even the level of simple reproduction of population.

It should be noted that there was not much attention paid to the problems of low fertility. As P. Macdonald pointed out, for a long time in the 1970s and the 1980s in Europe it was believed that the problem is going to take care of itself, with compensation of the "tempo" effect (the postponement of births) [19, c.487]. More than that, measures of stimulation fertility were associated with fascism and eugenics [20, c. 1991]. Meanwhile, lowest-low fertility during more than 20 years has caused considerable damage to age structure of many EU countries.

Demographic imbalance determines changes in attitudes to policy aimed to rising of fertility. In light of the dramatic decline of birth rates, more and more governments are reconsidering their position. As the United Nations system for monitoring government perceptions and policies on population have shown, between 1996 and 2003, the proportion of governments in Europe that perceive their fertility levels as too low has increased by one third, and those that perceive their rate of population growth as too low have almost doubled. The proportion of governments that have declared that they are putting in place policies to raise fertility levels and rates of population growth has increased respectively by twenty five, and by over fifty percent [15].

The consciousness of family value occurs and this is reflected in documents. A recently adopted Resolution by the Council of Europe "Investing in family cohesion as a development factor in times of crisis" states that, "The Parliamentary Assembly recognises the force that the family represents in meeting life's challenges and considers that the family unit is a fundamental element to aid in the economic recovery, especially during times of adversity and change" [22].

A Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation calls for member States to "support regional and local policies to strengthen public services in order to bring about a truly family-friendly society and to develop intergenerational relationships within families," [22] thus recognizing the fundamental value of the family unit.

However, in forming of family policy definite conceptual contradiction exists. On the one hand, under threat of demographic collapse more and more recognized necessity of pronatal actions aimed to rise of birth rates. On the other hand, such strategy as well as support of traditional family values is incompatible with gender policy. Thus, Adviser of United Nations Population Fund Niko-lai Botev pointed out that: «there are objections that prenatal measures can stand against achievements in the field of gender equality, as increased fertility could interfere with the educational opportunities and career aspirations of women and might confine them to the traditional family roles [15, p.6-7].

In other words, gender policy gains such as active part of women in socio-political, equality rights of men and women etc. conflict with setting aim of fertility rising, which include back to traditional norms, rejection of listed trends and principal reevaluation of social priorities.

Conclusions

1. State of a family and fertility in the European Union is characterized by such tendencies: low and lowest-low fertility rates; postponement of childbearing to a later age; a rise in birth outside marriage and lone parents; dissemination of free-will childlessness; decreasing of the number of marriages and increasing of the number of divorces; widening of cohabitation, non-marital relationships; the decline in average family and household size, increase the proportion of single-person households; population ageing; considerable increase of migration contribution to population growth. These features points to depopulation process, demographic crisis and crisis of family

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institute. The elements of crisis are interconnected, because of objective laws of demographic processes passing.

2. Indicated tendencies affect all spheres of society, and are threatening from socio-economic point of view and even for the very existence of European nations. One of the methods of coping with crisis is forming of effective family policy which would determined demographic factors and aimed to overcoming negative phenomena and strengthening of traditional family. The important condition of success such policy is consciousness proved causes of crisis, which connected with de-valuation of traditional family values which climb down to the other living priorities, what made conditional upon a series of psychological and socio-economic factors.

3. On the practical level the impact of public policies on the trends of a family and fertility appears in the raise of expenses on social sphere in a whole, and particularly in enlargement service for families with children, different kinds of payments, and guarantees of employment to parents etc. However, the results of research show that effectiveness of such methods stay insufficient. This means that only socio-economic actions can't decide all problems in this sphere. Roots of solution are also mainly in moral and value aspects.

On the conceptual level the impact of demographic factors on public policies manifest in assigning of family priorities in European Union normative documents and also rise in support of prenatal actions on official level. In fact, policy aimed to development of traditional family values could correspond to this, but its realization is in conflict with gender policy now.

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