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CHILD ALLOWANCE IN UKRAINE AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT: THE IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES

This article covers the effectiveness of child assistance in Ukraine after its considerable increase in April 2005. The analysis is based on official statistics of the Ukrainian Committee for Statistics, survey data, and focus group interviews. The main periods of child assistance increase and also monthly-paid maternity assistance for three years after a child's birth from 2001 are shown. The attention is paid to the regulatory basis of this process.

The dynamics of the total fertility rate and child allowance increase in the period of 2001-2012 is compared. On the basis of the above and other data, the conclusions about interconnection between payments and childbearing activity in Ukraine are made. The author noted that the rise of fertility in recent years can be explained to a large extent by the impact of material aid as one of the main factors in decision-making.

The positive results of child assistance tied with the rise of fertility in Ukraine. Along with that, there are some negative aspects of providing sizeable payments in the light of low standards of living and impropriety of family policy limitation only to financial aid. The author underlined that only a complex multi-factor state political strategy which takes into account not only material but also many other agents (indirect and not fiscal) can give the expected result. Affordable housing, economic stability, decent wages, simplification of combining work and childrearing, and also strengthening of traditional family values by the means of informational policy are all necessary to provide effective family policy.

Keywords: state child allowance, childbearing, total fertility rate, family policy, the family policy's effectiveness.

Дерега В.В. Допомога при народженні дитини в Україні як політичний інструмент: вплив та висновки

У статті на основі даних Державної служби статистики України співставляється динаміка зростання державної допомоги по народженню дитини, починаючи з 2001 р., і сумарного показника народжуваності, також звертається увага на зміни показників розподілу народжених за порядком народження і коефіцієнтів народжуваності за віком матері. На основі цих та інших даних робляться висновки про вплив підвищення допомоги при народженні дитини на демографічну ситуацію в Україні, аналізуються позитивні і негативні аспекти цього впливу.

Ключові слова: державна допомога при народженні дитини, народжуваність, загальний коефіцієнт народжуваності, сімейна політика, ефективність сімейної політики.

Дерега В.В. Помощь при рождении ребенка в Украине как политический инструмент: влияние и выводы

В статье на основании данных Государственной службы статистики Украины сопоставляется динамика увеличения государственной помощи по рождению ребенка, начиная с 2001 г., и суммарного показателя рождаемости, также обращается внимание на изменения показателей рождаемости по порядку рождения и по возрасту матери. На основании этих и других данных формулируются выводы о влиянии повышения помощи при рождении ребенка на демографическую ситуацию в Украине, анализируются позитивные и негативные аспекты этого влияния.

Ключевые слова: государственная помощь при рождении ребенка, рождаемость, суммарный показатель рождаемости, семейная политика, эффективность семейной политики.

Introduction

Fertility is one of the most essential indicators of demographic processes. Fertility to a great extent affects family development directly since it determines an increase in the number of families

with children, their size, and also fertility influences age distribution of population indirectly.

Low fertility has become one of the characteristic features of the demographic reality. Although Ukraine is among those European states with the lowest total fertility rate (TFR), some recent tendencies especially in 2002-2008 may be considered as positive. Thus, positive dynamics of birth-rate against depopulation processes in the sphere of mortality, life expectancy, etc., certainly attracts everyone's attention.

In these conditions, there are a number of questions that logically arise: how effective such political instrument as financial aid is, whether child allowance stimulates childbearing, to what extent, and what perspectives of such impact are. In general, political influence on fertility may be diverse. In Ukraine child allowance which mostly consists of financial aid at birth has become the most significant instrument of influence. Thus, these problems are researched in the article.

Analysis of recent research

The results of the policy aimed to increase fertility in Ukraine were studied by the following scientists: S.Aksyonova, G.Gerasymenko, I.Gudzelyak, O.Kolomiets, B.Krimer, I.Kurylo, E.Libanova, Z. Palyan.

In the context of family policy research, the problems of fertility are analyzed in the works of such scholars as M.Kats, L.Kryvachuk, G.Kryshtal, L.Kulachok, L.Melnychuk, S.Nychyporenko, I.Semenets-Orlova, L.Slyusar, I.Chekhovska.

Fertility as an important factor of demographic processes and of socio-political situation is studied by the following scientists O.Kachan, Y.Turchyn, N.Prytsyuk, N.Ryngach, N.Stativka, V.Steshenko, I.Klochan and others.

Statement of research objectives

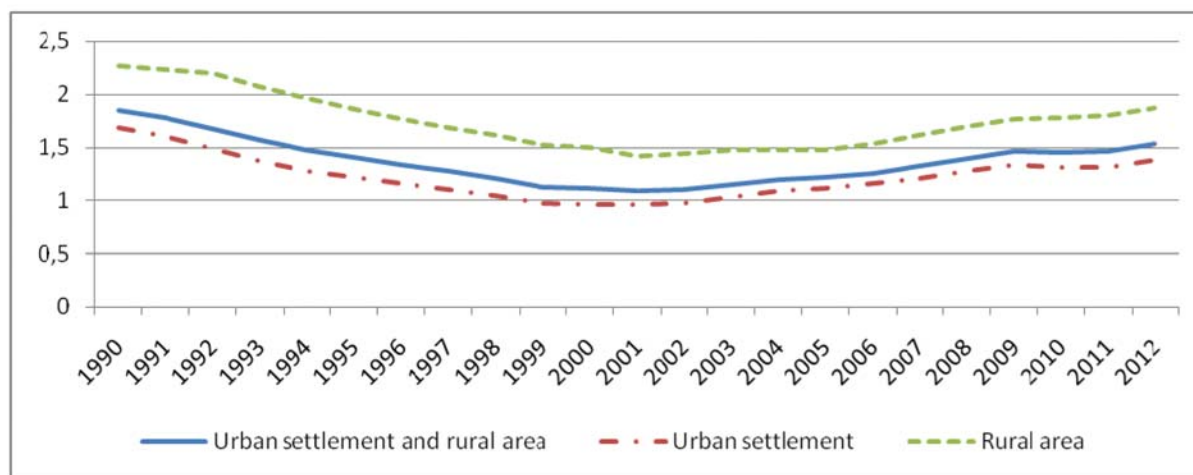
- to show the dynamics of child allowance rising and compare it with the change in total fertility rate since 2001;
- to study changes in some specific spheres of fertility change, such as fertility by birth order and age-specific fertility rates;
- to analyze the positive and negative aspects of payments impact on fertility in Ukraine.

Results

The decline of fertility in Ukraine occurred before 2001, as it is shown on Graph 1 drawing on the basis of the data from the Ukrainian Committee for Statistics. Total fertility rate (TFR) in 2001 year fell to the record low level - 1,085 [1]. This is still considered as a "lowest-low" fertility country, with a TFR under 1,3 [2, p.1148].

Graph 1.

Total Fertility Rate in Ukraine, 1990-2012



Source: [1]

Under such conditions, as a reaction to the demographic crisis, the family policy was formed in independent Ukraine. First of all, in the Constitution of Ukraine adopted in 1996 in article 51 it was stated that family, childhood, motherhood and parenthood are defended by the state [3]. This statement defined the attitude

towards family and has an important meaning in the view of appropriate state's obligation before an individual and society.

At a later time, the series of documents aimed to create a complete family policy were adopted. This is, in the first place, the Conception of Family Policy [4] adopted on 17.09.1999 «with

the aim of forming the main foundations of public family policy, providing proper conditions for comprehensive family development as a basis of society». In the Decree of Ukraine's President «On measures towards fertility stimulation in Ukraine» [5] № 5/2002 from 3 January, 2002 the priority directions of social policy are defined: improving of demographic situation, providing support to families with children and strengthening social security of motherhood and childhood.

Regardless of the declaration of shaping the family policy as a complex of actions, a purposeful strategy, child assistance at birth and allowance for three years after a child's birth have become the main instrument of fertility.

The normative base of these measures was adopted in 1992 as the Law of Ukraine "On State Aid to Families with Children" [6]. Based on the Constitution, this document established the level of material support for families with children through giving state financial aid taking into consideration the family structure, its incomes and the age of the children. According to the Law, such types of state aid for families with children are defined:

- 1) assistance at pregnancy and childbirth;
- 2) assistance at a child's birth;
- 2-1) assistance at a child's adoption;

3) assistance for three years after a child's birth;

4) assistance to children under guardianship or trusteeship;

5) assistance to single mothers.

Also in the Law it is stated that local authorities, enterprises, organizations, and association of citizens at their own expense can introduce additional sorts of aids and extra payments to the state aid for families with children.

The Law has increased the size of payments to different family categories since 2000. It is necessary to say that child assistance existed before, beginning in 1993, but the economic crisis and inflation nullified all social initiatives. Monetary benefits couldn't meet even minimum needs of families with children; in addition, the living wage in this period was fixed at the level which was lower than essential or realistic.

The combination of the demographic crisis and poverty of families with children have incited the search of solutions to the problems by increasing child birth allowance considerably.

Since 2001, when assistance at child birth was 180 hryvnias, the payments have been gradually growing. Table 1 illustrates the changing child birth allowance and aid for three years after a child's birth in 2002-2013.

Table 1.

The sizes of child allowance in 2002-2013 (some types)

Type of payments	01.01.2002	01.10.2002	01.01.2004	01.05.2004	01.01.2005	01.04.2005	01.04.2007	01.01.2008	01.01.2011	01.01.2012	01.01.2013
Monthly aid for three years after the birth of a child (hryvnia)	40	40	40	40	104	104	120	130	130	130	130
Child birth allowance (hryvnia)	200	320	684	725	1550	8497,6	8500	12240	18000	26790	29160
including the first child								12240	18000	26790	29160
including the second child								25000	37000	53580	58320
the third and each next one								50000	73500	107160	116640

Source: [23; 24, p. 125]

The first sizeable increase in the child birth allowance – ten times more than in the previous year, happened in 2005, after the Orange

Revolution and the new elite coming to power. Previously, it was broadly announced during the election campaign, and that was the first time

when the question of government child assistance became so politicized.

At that moment, the total sum of 8500 UAH was a very sizeable amount, and not only by Ukrainian standards, that was one of the most considerable child birth grants among the European countries.

In 2008 the next round of reforms in child birth allowance occurred and the most important innovation was the payments differentiation by order of a child's birth. In addition, payments were no longer made in lump sum but in fixed parts during a year or few years.

The aid was tied to the living wage instead of being a fixed sum at the end of 2009. In accordance to the Law "About Amendments in the Ukraine's Law "On State Aid to Families with Children" Concerning Child Birth Allowance" [7], which was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada on 17 November, 2009, child birth allowance would be given in the sum multiple to a certain amount of the living wage (as established on a child's birthday).

The next step was to increase these sums starting from 9 April, 2011 (the date of publication) when the amendments were made to the Law "About the State Aid to Families with Children" that child birth allowance would be in the sum multiple to 30 sizes of the living wage –

for the first child; multiple to 60 sizes of the living wage – for the second child; multiple to 120 sizes of the living wage – for the third and each next child.

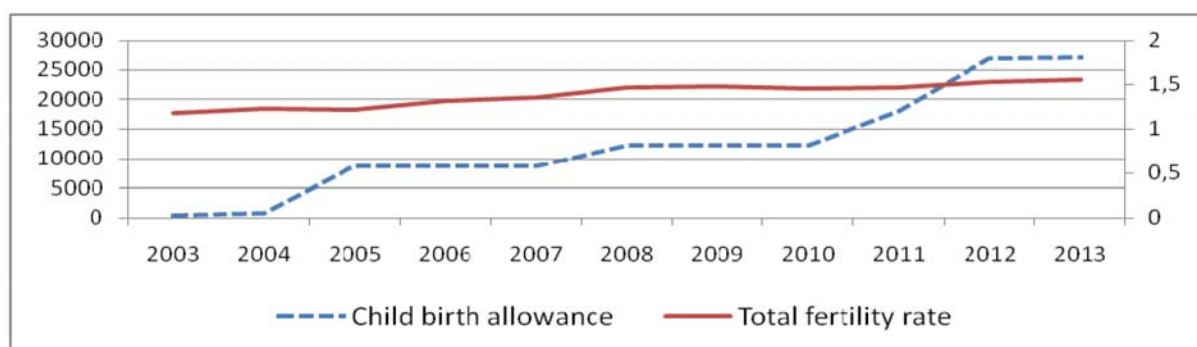
The payment was made in lump sum ten-fold as much as the living wage at a child's birth, and the rest of the assistance for the first child paid during the next 24 months, for the second child – 48 months, for the third and each next one – 72 months in equal parts. Child birth allowance calculated in the amount of the living wages for children under the age of 6, as established on the birthday of a child.

Thus, besides the regular increase in the allowance, it was extended in time, and as a result it became the average between a single child birth grant and a system of prolonged facilitation to families with children. This transformation can be considered as an important stage in child allowance development.

Now, as the living wage is permanently rising, the size of the child allowance is also growing. So, on 1 March, 2014 the payment for the first child was 30960 UAH, for the second child – 61920, for the third and each next child – 123830 [8]. Thereby, the child birth allowance is quite considerable and exceeds the minimum wage which on 1 January, 2014 amounted to 1218,00 UAH [9].

Graph 2.

Total fertility rate and child birth allowance, 2003-2013



Source: [1; 22; 23]

Graph 2 shows how the total fertility rate changed in comparison with the increase of the child birth assistance. Certain impact of aid on fertility tendency exists, of course. The most appreciable rise of the TFR occurred in the period between establishing the sizeable child birth allowance in 2005 and the economic crisis of 2008-2009. After that the trend of the TFR increase was replaced with stabilization on its previous level for some time – 2009-2011, and from the second half

of 2011 again the growth of fertility is observed. In 2012 the TFR comes to 1,531, and this is the best coefficient since 1993 [1]. At the same time the mortality rate in 2012 in Ukraine was the lowest since 1990.

To some extent, for a certain period, the fertility rise can be explained by the compensation effect after the socio-economic crisis of the 1990s. But, in any case by the mid-2000s the compensation potential had exhausted.

Thus, the continuation of the TFR increase in recent years can be accounted for more comprehensive realization of reproductive decision-making, the environment for this realization was improved by the benefits stated above.

At the same time, for the thorough analysis of the new policy effectiveness it is important to study the results of the sociological survey, that is: how the answers to the question divided: “Did the establishment of sizeable one-time child birth allowance impact your plans as for the number of children in the family?”

As a result of special investigation conducted in April, 2008 by the Institute of Demography and Social Researches [10], the answers showed that this impact is not so important: 86,7 % of the respondents gave the answer “no” and only 13,3 % replied „yes”. Among those who gave the affirmative answer, 32,4 % have already given birth to a child after the benefits were introduced, 10,1 % expect the birth of a child this year, 8,5 % plan to give birth to a child the next year, 35,5 %

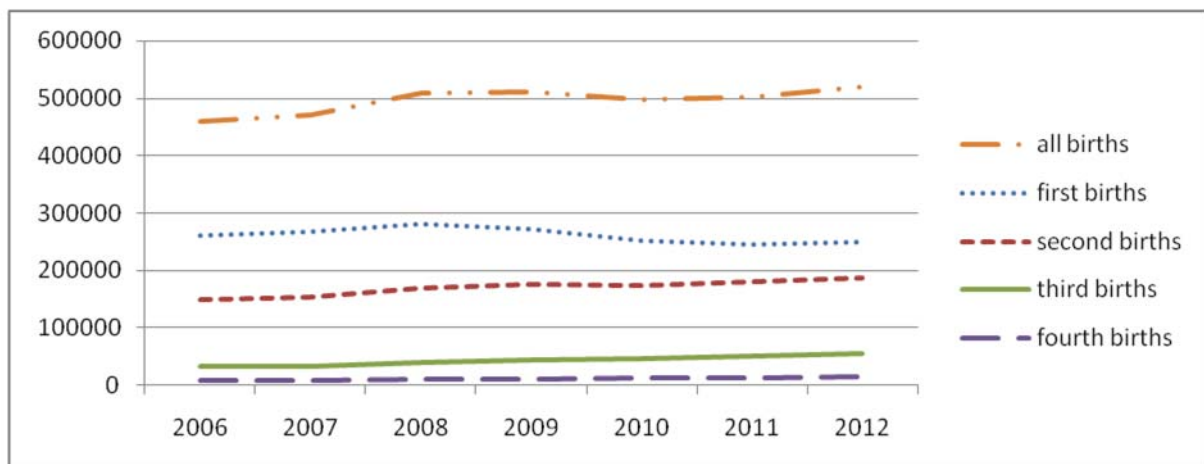
plan to give birth to a child two or three years later.

The analysis shows that the increase in the one-time aid has had an obvious effect on the second births. Among respondents with two children, who recognized the impact of this activity on their own reproductive plans, those who gave birth to a child after the introduction of the aid dominate. Among respondents with one child the majority (45 %) plan to give birth to a child 2-3 years later, one third recognized that they gave birth to a child after the increase in payments.

Graph 3 shows that the part of second and third births is increasing, and also, but to a lesser extent, of fourth births. The growth of the third and the next birth is the most noticeable after 2008, exactly in the time of the financial and economic crisis. Also this is the time after the differentiation of grant by birth order, according to which the material assistance for the following children increased considerably. This means that the child birth allowance facilitated the realization of reproductive plans.

Graph 3.

Fertility by birth order, 2006-2012



Source: [11, p. 338; 12, p. 348; 13, p. 345; 14, p. 339; 15, p. 339]

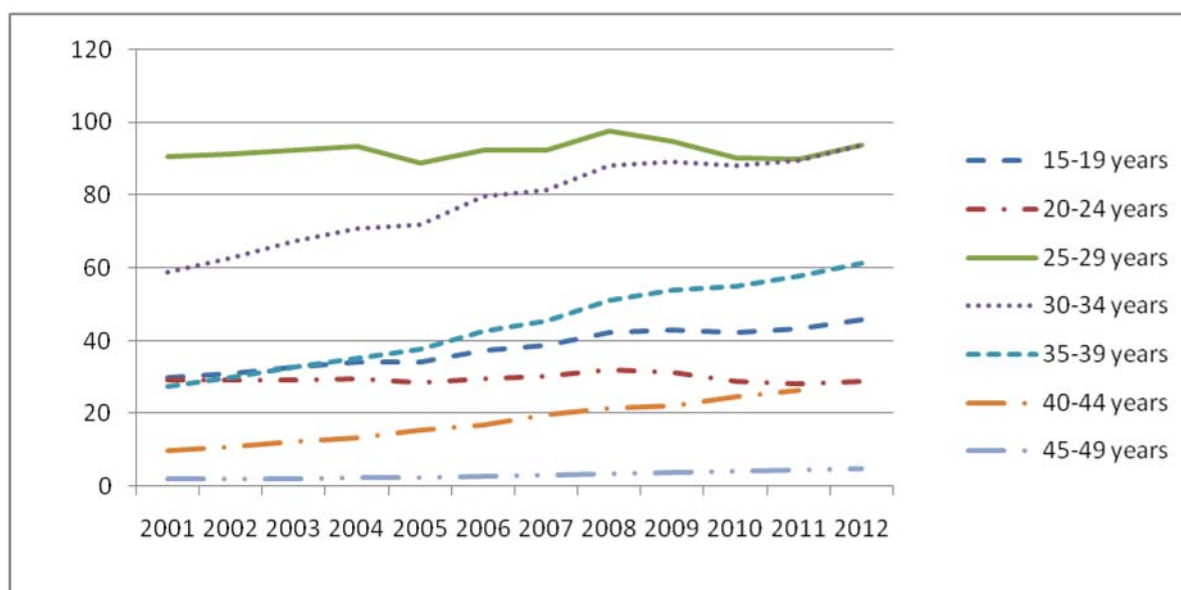
The increase in the number of the second, the third, and the fourth, etc. child births is a positive trend and corresponds to one of the most important goals of the family policy – to increase the birth number per one woman. As a result of the demographic research these children are crucial for the population reproduction – families with two children do not fulfill this function.

The reproductive activity of women from older age groups has become a peculiar feature of the total fertility rate. The TFR has changed more

significantly in the age groups of 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, as shown in Graph 4.

In the age group from 30 to 34 years, the amount of births for 1000 women increased from 27,6 in 2001 to 61,9 in 2012, in the age group of 35 - 39 years – from 9,8 in 2002 to 26,4 in 2012, in the age group 40 -44 years – from 1,9 in 2002 to 5,1 in 2012 [1]. It is essential that in these age groups, to a greater extent, the increase in fertility occurred due to the second and next births.

Age-specific fertility rates, 2001-2012



Source: [1]

In general, we can state that shortly after the child birth allowance introduction and its increase, positive changes in the dynamics and structure of fertility took place. The rise in payments fostered the support and growth of fertility in 2004-2012: in 2004 the TFR amounted to 1,211, but in 2012 – 1,531 [1]. The fertility intensity increased, the part of high-order births has also raised in the general structure of fertility. These trends have softened the population decline in Ukraine at present.

To be more precise about changes in birth calendars of the current generation will only be possible after the reproductive activity of the generation is complete entirely.

To fully evaluate the impact of policy it is necessary to analyze its results from different points of view, including negative ones.

Attention should be paid to the trend of increasing fertility in marginal families, since 2005 (from the moment of the considerable increase in payments) [16], who spend the money on their own needs as parents don't work and the allowance is very often the only source of income for such families. This situation to a greater extent appears in the poorest regions of Ukraine, in the first place - Zakarpattya (characterized by population growth but high unemployment), in addition the part of first births is decreasing there [17]. In social security institutions (in particular, in orphanages) a new category of children has appeared recently – children from families without

means of subsistence [17]; parents have sent their children to orphanage system and have denied any responsibility. The increase in the number of adopted children and children sent to foster homes is accompanied by the rise of orphans and children without parental custody in the total size of children population [18], and what is more, the dominant part of refusals refers to children over three years old.

Some Ukrainian researchers speculate that the current system marginalizes families with children, strengthening parasitical attitudes; this way is not only hopeless but also socially irresponsible and dangerous as it causes parasitism and factually corrupts marginal parents [16]. B.Perelli-Harris pointed that some Ukrainians also worry that this assistance will only be used by people with lesser means, thus stimulating fertility only among the lesser educated population [2, p. 1169].

Although the state assistance is an important part of fertility stimulation, it is unfair to narrow the family policy down only to this direction.

Fertility researchers speculate that the mere increase in the financial aid cannot reverse the population decline, and this opinion is confirmed by the results of many investigations. For example, as the data analysis of 16 OECD countries for the twenty years period showed, it is absolutely possible to raise the fertility rate to 1,5 (in countries with the lowest-low fertility – TFR=1,3 and lower), while it is almost impossible to reach

the level of simple reproduction [19, c. 167]. The research shows that the positive effect is achieved but only to a minor extent so the level of simple reproduction of population cannot be achieved in many cases.

The Ukrainian experience also confirms these conclusions. That's why it is so important to develop a family policy as a complex strategy, which includes different trends.

It is important to bear in mind that changing values and belief systems is one of the most significant factors of fertility increase and demographic crisis. Value causes of crisis stipulate low effectiveness of socio-economic actions in this sphere, as well as those aimed at fertility.

Thus, special attention should be paid to strengthening of family values largely extent by the means of informational policy. It is essential to create awareness of the need of family, marriage, motherhood and fatherhood, child bearing in social and individual consciousness, it is also essential to provide opportunity for a sufficient income and decent upbringing of children. Family values should be understood as historically formed social ideas about a family, the necessity of marriage registration and necessity of stable marriage relationships; the value of child birth and upbringing in the family with both parents; faithfulness and respect for each member of family; priority of marriage as opposed to divorce.

There are foundations for development of this sphere. In Ukrainian society the value of family and trust in it stay high. According to the data of Sociology Institute of the National Science Academy, family wins the most trust among all social institutes. Trust index to it in the survey of 2008 amounted to 4,6 %, at the same time the index of trust to church – 3,5 %, to colleagues – 3,5 %, to mass media – 2,9 %, militia – 2,4 %, government – 2,4 % [20, p.19].

Respectful attitude towards family and its values has always been one of the main features of Ukrainian mentality. Under the results of international comparative sociological research in 24 European countries in 2005, Ukrainians take the second place (average score 4,48) concerning the statement that “family must be the main priority in life of both men and women”. Among Europeans higher value of family life is only shared by Hungarians (average score 4,62) [20, p.19]. Therefore, public family policy can be oriented to preserving and intensification of traditional family values in Ukraine.

One of the problems, which should be solved, is combining family and work responsibilities. This is a common issue even for the European countries with the demographic crisis. As it is stated in the Demography Report of European Commission, the reconciliation of paid work and family commitments is crucial policy area to boost economic growth and achieve greater social cohesion. People with caring responsibilities still lack adequate support and suitable arrangements for combining their different responsibilities [21, p.6]. Thus, it is necessary to develop such trends of family policy, as introduction of flexible working hours, a possibility of part-time employment for parents with small children; the satisfaction of needs in childcare facilities; favouring the employers who establish family-oriented management, and in general, family policy should be formed in unity with employment policy.

Also, the crucial role is played by housing policies. In spite of the fact that the majority of households own a property, its size does not always comply with the current legislation. 10,5 % of households has floor space less then 7,5 m² per person, the other 31,1 % - from 7,5 m² to 13,65 m² [20, p.87]. Many young couples with one child can cope with small living quarters by sharing resources with their parents; but couples may feel that sharing a one or two-bedroom apartment with their parents and two children is unfeasible [2, p.1171].

Conclusions

The analysis conducted has shown that the child birth allowance, which has been considerably increased since 2005, is stipulated by depopulation factors and has pronatalist orientation. Its positive effect consists in the clearly seen increase in fertility in this period – by 2012 the total fertility rate in Ukraine reached 1,531. There is an impact on the second and the next births (to a large extent in older age group of women). This is should be also considered as a positive trend, because of the exceptional role of high-order births for reproduction of population. Certain improvement in this sphere enables one to speak of certain mitigation of the demographical crisis. At the same time it occurs not only as a consequence of cash payments, but also as a result of other factors.

Along with the positive results there are some negative consequences associated with the significant amount of payments against low wages and other unfavorable socio-economic indicators. The problem is the current system intensifies

dependent moods, leads to fertility increase in dysfunctional families, so called “marginal” groups of society.

The state child birth allowance is not and should not be the only method of influence on the fertility and demographic situation in general. Childcare after the government assistance, and appropriate upbringing, are not less important than the one-time aid, even a significant one.

It is necessary to provide a complex public policy which should include informational policy aimed at strengthening traditional family values; the solving problem of unaffordable housing for families with children; living standards improvement; special employment and fiscal strategies for parents with children; simplification of combining work and childrearing, and other additional indirect non-financial methods.

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