

1. FAMILY POLICY: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVES

1.2 Main objectives and policy drivers

i) Major concerns and the main objectives of family policy in your country at present. Objectives which are highest on the agenda. Objectives/goals set out explicitly in governmental programmes.

Austria

Main objectives: financial security for families; good surrounding conditions for families (measures concerning work-life balance, child care support).
Goals in the governmental programme: financial security for families; reduction of poverty (measures against family- and child-poverty); work-life balance management – encouraging fathers to accept the full scope and range of their role as fathers within the family; child care support.
Support for mothers and fathers who re-enter the labour market; giving (allowing) more flexibility (amendment to the child care allowance act).

Azerbaijan

The main objectives of family policy at the moment are special focus on young families and their problems (reproductive health, economic and social well being, assistance in combining family and professional life etc.), refugee and IDP families, economic and social well being of families in provinces, especially in rural zones, creating and developing child friendly communities, family planning issues. The following governmental programmes have been worked out to address these and other family related issues.
1999, February 16 Young Family Program: increase the role of the government in solving the problems of young families; tackling challenges caused by modern trends in the context of preserving positive family traditions and adjusting to the demands of the time; special focus on preparing young children to family life.
2004, 11 November State Program on Demography and development of population density: improving labour and economic conditions of young families; improving professional and household conditions of women in order to secure all provisions for birth of healthy and harmoniously developing children and strong families; developing reproductive health of families and family planning; social protection of women and children.
“Young people in Azerbaijan State Program for 2005-2009”: organisation of out of work time of young families; distribution of credits for young families for building or purchasing houses; conducting researches on social problems of young families.
2006, 15 September Plan of Action on Protection of Mother and Children Health: develop the capacity and improve the services rendered by regional maternity hospitals.
2006-2015 State Program on giving children from orphanages to families (de-institutionalisation) and alternative care.
2008-2015 State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development: reducing the poverty level of population by increasing their potential to earn income; conduct expertise of Family Code for improvement of family legislature; study of social economic factors that affect marriage age.

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Belgium

La communauté flamande

Mid 2004, the new Flemish Gvt. agreed two main objectives for its family policy: creating general conditions in support of families enabling them (1) to have the number of children they wish to have, and (2) to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life (“We willen een gezinsbeleid voeren dat de nodige randvoorwaarden invult, zodat mensen hun kinderwens kunnen waarmaken en ouders gemakkelijker werk en gezinszorg kunnen combineren”).

Moreover, there is a focused attention in support of households and families facing greater risks or burdens (e.g. poverty, single-parents, disabled children).

La région wallonne

Principaux objectifs :

Assurer l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes quelle que soit leur origine, faire progresser la cohésion sociale, s'inscrire dans une perspective d'amélioration continue du cadre de vie, concourir à la santé de tous.

Aider et soutenir les familles précarisées, favoriser l'autonomie des seniors et améliorer les soins, favoriser la conciliation de la vie privée et de la vie professionnelle, faire des personnes handicapées des citoyens intégrés dans la société, soutenir l'intégration des familles d'origine étrangère, garantir un logement décent pour tous, enseigner la citoyenneté.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ensuring special protection of a family, mother and child in accordance with the internationally accepted rights and fundamental freedoms, and as well protection of children without parental care and of persons of age who are incapacitated or not able to care about themselves.

Having in mind that the protection of families with children is an activity of special interest to society and whose goal is to provide approximately equal conditions for healthy and proper development of children and to provide assistance in realization of the family reproductive function, and having in mind that the financing of rights of families with children in BiH from the cantonal budget is accompanied with serious difficulties, this Ministry prepared the text of the Preliminary Draft Law on Protection of Families with Children. The text was prepared in accordance with the reform commitments and program activities for 2008.

This Preliminary Draft proposes introduction of financing of certain basic rights of families with children at the entity level as the only way to ensure access and standardization of these rights throughout FBiH, independently of a canton where beneficiary is a resident.

Bulgaria

Demographic policy and family policy are among the most important priorities of the Bulgarian Government Programme 2005-2009. On 22nd August 2006 the Council of Ministers adopted the National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020. For greater flexibility, the Strategy develops operative annual national action plans on demographic development. Bulgaria is one of the few countries in Europe and the first among the new European Union Member-States to develop a long-term demographic strategy. Its main goal is to emphasise not only on increasing birth rate but also on achieving high quality of human capital, of persons with their health condition, education, skills and knowledge. The Strategy places a special focus on families, responsible parenthood, and reconciliation of family and professional life which imposes the application of a complex of policies aimed at ensuring quality social environment for raising and educating children.

In medium and long term, the National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020 foresees measures aimed at establishing an environment that encourages birth rate and family support including:

- financial incentives for child birth and raising a child;
- reconciliation parenthood and career advancement;
- education, healthcare and social development for children;

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• reinforcing the family as a basic component of society and encouraging parents to raise children in a family environment.
The main goal of the child protection policy is the free and full personal development of the child through the active exercise of rights and improvement of the quality of life of all Bulgarian children.
Priority fields in the Government's child protection policy are defined in the National Child Strategy 2008-2018 and the annual National Programmes for Child Protection that are adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Strategy is an explicit expression of the dedication of the executive and legislative power to the improvement of the quality of life of Bulgarian children and their families. It envelops all fields of public life that have an impact on children's welfare.
Concrete priorities in the section on family environment are: development of measures for support to parents in cases of risk of the child being abandoned; development of social services in the community in support of children and families, in support of raising children in family environment, developing a network of attending social service forms of support for parents such as: parent' training, family consultations, profiled psychological consultations, etc; provision of services facilitating the preservation of personal contacts between the child and the parents in case of separation, etc.

Croatia

Demographic renewal with measures of prenatal and population policy, care for children, elderly and powerless persons, persons with special needs, and more equality in family and society.

Special care is addressed to the establishment of Family Centres, counselling and services, encouraging programs and projects of associations working for the benefit of children, young people, persons with disabilities and families and to development of non-institutional forms of care.

National Population Policy defined different measures in different fields of family life with main emphasize on population effects. The highest place on the agenda assumes measures referring to the growth of fertility rate.

Main objective emphasized in the Government document National Population Policy is: "rejuvenation and growth of population in Croatia."

National Policy for Promotion of Gender Equality is a fundamental strategic document of the Republic of Croatia, adopted with the aim of eliminating discrimination of women and establishing true gender equality by implementing equal opportunities policy for the period 2006-2010.

National Strategy for Protection against Family Violence from 2005 until 2007 set the following objectives: prevent violence in family in all its forms; attenuate consequences of committed domestic violence; work on the development of a multidisciplinary approach to victims of domestic violence; improve cooperation and harmonize the activities of authorized bodies; educate and sensitize experts and wider public to problems of domestic violence; ensure structure, organization and a sufficient number of professionals in authorized state bodies to deal with the issue of domestic violence; contribute to the realization of gender equality. Apart from the National Strategy, Rules of Procedure in Cases of Family Violence were adopted.

New National Strategy for Protection against Family Violence for the period 2008 – 2010 was adopted.

National Plan of Activities for the Rights and Interests of Children for the period 2006 – 2012 was adopted with the following objectives: to improve the quality of satisfaction of children's needs in all areas (healthcare, education, protection from abuse and neglect, leisure and culture, social welfare, etc.); to improve the rights and improve the position of children; to define obligations, forms, manner and content of cooperation of authorized bodies and other factors which, as part of their work, participate in protection of rights and interests of children; to improve the partnership and harmonized action of authorized state bodies and civil society organizations; to institute better cooperation in implementation of measures in local communities; to include children in decision making referring to realization of children's rights and interests, etc.

National Program of Action for Youth adopted in 2002 set priority strategic goals for activities of all actors of youth policy in the period until 2008. The National Program is being drafted for the period 2009 – 2012.

In 2004, Action Program for Prevention of Violence among Children and Youth and the Rules of Procedure in Cases of Violence among Children and Youth.

The aim of the National Strategy of Equalization of Possibilities for Persons with Disabilities in the Period from 2007 until 2015 is to sensitize the society and adapt it with necessary changes in favour of equalization of possibilities of persons with disabilities, i.e. create conditions for their active participation and equal involvement in society, to honour their innate dignity and acknowledge their special interests, and prevent any kind of discrimination while strengthening all forms of social solidarity.

Cyprus

The main objectives of family policy that are high on the social agenda and are set out explicitly in governmental programmes are:

- supporting and strengthening families in order to enable them to effectively exercise their roles and responsibilities and balance their family and work responsibilities,
- protecting children, promoting their welfare and safeguarding their best interests,
- preventing the aggravation of conditions that might lead to family disruption, early school leaving, juvenile delinquency or social exclusion,
- safeguarding the right of families and individuals to a decent standard of living and maintaining their human dignity.

Programmes for the achievement of these goals include:

- Family support and preventive services, such as counselling and family guidance, as well as home-help, child day-care, services for older family members and persons with disabilities.
- Income maintenance through public assistance, with special provisions for single-parent families, families with four or more children, families at high risk of dissolution, children with disabilities (described under section 2.3), as well as child and family benefits (described under section 2.1).
- Child protection, including specialised services for families experiencing violence, services for children who must be taken into care, such as foster care and residential care, as well as counselling and other social work services aiming at improving conditions and facilitating the earliest possible return of the children to their own homes.

Czech Republic

General objectives:

For the creation and functioning of the families:

1. To create generally favourable social climate and conditions;
2. To remove barriers and social pressure which affect families and which endanger their functionality;
3. To promote and strengthen the cognizance of family values in the society and to adopt any necessary political measures to that end.

The goals of the Programme Declaration of the government:

1. To push through the change of the nature of social and legal protection of the children by preference of family care before institutional care.
2. To create conditions for the increased cohesiveness of the family and inter-generation solidarity in the tax and social system and to allow for greater flexibility of maternal and parental leave and to strengthen the role of the fathers in the care for the children; to push through more flexible employment relations and to motivate employers to employ parents bringing up children
3. To promote improvement of family-related services, including the care for children by non-parents.

The main goal is to offer choice to parents in harmonizing their professional and family life, without the state interfering into the autonomy of the family in decisions on the manner of ensuring care for the children. With regard to the emphasis on the interests of the child and the negative historical experience of the Czech public with the collective facilities for the care of children under 3 years of age the preferred services are those based on the individual care for the children.

At present time the priority of MLSA is to create legal environment which would allow functioning of informal services of child care on the individual basis which is similar to the German system of "day mothers" and to introduce fathers' leave in the extent of 1 week which could be taken in the first 6 months of the life of the child. Another priority is to promote creation of part-time employment opportunities through reduced social security insurance policies provided to the employers in instances where they employ parents for 0.75 normal time for parents with children under 10 years of age.

MLSA further prepares proposals for the introduction of tax relief for employers providing child care to their employees.

MLSA is in the process of preparation of a fundamental reform of the system of foster care, so that the preferred model is the NRP model which is based on the family principles.

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Denmark

Reconciliation of Family and Working life (parental leave, child care allowance, day-care institutions, extraordinary benefits to single parents).

Estonia

Programme of the Coalition for 2007-2011 sets the family and population policy as one of the main policy areas.

The programme of the Coalition stipulates that the main goal of the Governing Coalition is to achieve a positive population growth in Estonia through an increase in the birth rate, longer average life expectancy and improvement of the living standards.

During 2007-2011 the Government has planned several economic, legal, fiscal and education policy steps, including for example enable parents to stay with their small child, to value the role of fathers, encourage the birth of third and fourth children in families, enable children left without parental care to be raised in a family, establish national hobby school money, insure health risks of families with small children, improve notification of HIV, drug abuse, alcoholism, smoking, traffic hooliganism, unhealthy nutrition and sedentary lifestyles etc.

Finland

The main objectives are the well being of children and families by securing equal opportunities for all children for a healthy and safe growth. This encompasses universal services for families with children, securing adequate income and housing for families, promoting the reconciliation of work and family life, and support for parenting. The child's best interests must be taken into account in decision-making and activities.

According to government's program the government is committed to alleviating the social and psychological problems of children, young people and families and averting social exclusion. The position of poor families with children will be alleviated and social differences mitigated by improving the financial position of such families. A policy programme aimed at the well being of children, young people and families is initiated.

France

Acting for a better balance between working and family life, particularly by developing and diversifying child care provision;
Creating a step-parent's status in order to assist the normal procedures of day-to-day life and to safeguard in the interests of all concerned the undeniable bonds of affection formed between children and adults;
Developing policy in support of adoption and adapting it to the recent developments of the international situation with the greatest transparency towards families and institutions;
Strengthening the child welfare apparatus, for instance by possessing a better knowledge of the realities nationwide, to be gained in particular by actuating the monitors of childhood in danger at département level called for by the law on child welfare of 5 March 2007;
Enhancing protection for children in respect of the media, particularly by barring access to the child pornography sites present on the Internet;
Recalling the importance of the family and consolidating its fundamental role as regards upbringing, education and solidarity; ensuring its stability and full development.

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Germany

The Federal Government's family policy focuses on sustainability. Families need a need a good balance of targeted financial support, a good infrastructure and time for children and families.

Families are supported by measures to

- improve the reconciliation of work and family life (especially through parental leave, initiatives such as "Local alliances for the family", the "Family as a success factor" corporate programme),
- expand and create a good infrastructure (especially through the expansion of child support facilities, multi-generational centres, initiatives to provide services supporting families)
- and provide financial instrument (including, in particular, the parental benefits introduced from 1 January 2007, child benefit, child supplement, maintenance advance, housing benefit, payments under the Federal Educational Assistance Act, tax regulations and various other services).

These measures are systematically evaluated in terms of transparency and effectiveness.

Greece

As it was reported in question 1.1 (ii), the reconciliation of work and family life has a central place in the family policy. Particular emphasis in the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection is given in the employment of members of family and particularly women that constitute an unexploited reservoir of workforce. At the same time, emphasis is also given in structures of care of children and the elderly. This policy aims in the increase of employment, in the reduction of poverty and social exclusion and particularly the children's poverty, as well as in the promotion of equal treatment.

For the evaluation of policies, there are three fixed individual quantitative indicators in the frame of National Report of Strategy on the Social Protection and the Social Integration 2006-2008 that is connected with the main objective of the reduction of poverty:

The first indicator concerns the depth of poverty and the objective is placed to 20% for the year 2010 (23.9% in 2005/Source: EU-SILC/EUROSTAT).

The second indicator concerns the school leak and the objective is placed to limit it under 10% until the year 2010, so as to face the reproduction of poverty (15.9% in 2006/Source: Research Workforce/EUROSTAT).

The third indicator refers to the increase of employment where for the year 2010 the objective is set to the achievement of a rate of employment up to 64.1% (61% in 2006/Source: Workforce/EUROSTAT). In order for this objective to be achieved, a substantial increase in the rate of employment of women and mothers will be required.

The constitution of the National Fund of Social Cohesion is expected to contribute to the reduction of poverty: the objective is set to the reduction of poverty danger rate from 20% to 15%, within the next five years period (Causative Report that preceded the Law 3631/08). This will be achieved via targeted policies based on social criteria, such as lone parent families, unemployed or retired with low pensions.

Hungary

There is a governmental programme, which aims to reduce child poverty. As a part of this programme, the most important goal of the family policy is the reduction of child poverty.

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Iceland

In 1997, the Icelandic parliament, Alþingi, passed a resolution on both the formulation of an official family policy as well as measures to be implemented that would strengthen the position of the family (Alþingistiðindi 1997-98 A: 1230). Parliament formally recognized the need for explicit public family policy with this resolution (Júliúsdóttir 2001).

The principal premises of this family policy are that the family is the cornerstone of Icelandic society and a source of human values that shall be reinforced and protected regardless of the type of family structure. The policy shall primarily take into account the following three principles:

- That the welfare of the family is based upon equality between men and women and on shared responsibility for the tasks within it
- That the family is the setting for emotional ties
- That family life provides individuals, especially children, with security and the opportunity to develop their qualities to the utmost" (Alþingistiðindi 1997-98 A: 1230).

A special council, the Family Council, was appointed in 1998 by the Minister of Social Affairs. The Family Council has worked closely with the municipalities, since the resolution decrees that all municipalities are to form an explicit family policy (Júliúsdóttir and Sigfúsdóttir 2001).

The main objectives regarding for gender equality were set out in a plan in 2004. The primary objective is gender equality in the labour market and in the public sector. The role of equal opportunities officers was to be defined. The effectiveness of the implementation of the plan was to be evaluated.

In 2007 the Icelandic parliament approved a resolution on a four year action plan to improve the situation of children and young persons. It is intended, among other things, to improve the financial position of families by raising the rate of child-benefits for low-income families, lengthening maternity and paternity leave and strengthening general preventive measures. Emphasis is placed on children with mental and developmental disorders, chronically ill children as well as young persons with behavioural and substance-abuse problems.

Ireland

Families and family life are of fundamental importance for individuals and society generally. The main objectives of family policy are to support and strengthen all family types through the delivery of high quality supports and to foster a supportive community environment for families in partnership with the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.

More specially objectives as set out in government programmes relate to :

- providing income and other supports to vulnerable families at risk of poverty and social exclusion e.g. lone parent families, larger families,
- reduction of child poverty,
- modernising the system of social protection to reflect changing family structures and roles within the family,
- reconciliation of work and family life, particularly in light of the increased labour force participation of women and gender equity objectives,
- meeting the challenge of caring for and supporting older members of families, particularly with the ageing of the population
- providing family support services.

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Italy

The following is a short summary of the most recent initiatives in this field.

- the creation of a National Family Fund to finance specific family policies. The available funds are equal to 210 million Euros, which add to the initial allocation of 13 million Euros, for a total investment of 643 million Euros in the 2007-2009 period.

Among the activities financed by the fund, we mention, among others:

- funds for non self-sufficiency, for the stay or return to their homes of non self-sufficient persons;
- funds guaranteed for loans to families with newborn children in 2009-2010-2011;
- funds guaranteed for interest loans to families with children born with rare diseases;
- special nursery programmes (see below)
- funds for testing new forms of aid to families (tariff reductions, family guidance centres, further training for social workers)
- the National Conference on Family (www.conferenzanazionale sullafamiglia.it), which took place in May 2007, with the participation of 3.000 people and 10 working groups. This Conference focused on some important aspects of parenthood support policies and on the issues raised by Recommendation 19/2006. The Conclusions of the Conference represent the basis for the elaboration – currently underway – of the National Family Plan.

Furthermore, the central Government, the Regions and the local authorities signed an agreement for the implementation of an Extraordinary Plan to increase social, educational services and pre-schools across the national territory. The main goals of this plan, which was allocated 604 million Euros in three years, are to reduce the serious disparities existing between the Northern and the Southern regions of the country and to improve the national system of services to meet European standards, in line with the goal of the Lisbon strategy to reach at least a 33% coverage of the population under 3 years of age by 2010. In particular, for children aged 2-3, the Government pledged to fund 2,000 projects for the increase in pre-schools (the so-called “spring sections”). This is an important service to individuals, families and the community in general. The collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for Social Solidarity and the Ministry for Family Policies has been fundamental to achieve this aim, showing that positive parenting involves different responsibilities and institutions which are all equally important.

This innovative agreement improves services and it initiates the process for the definition of the essential levels of services in this very delicate and strategic sector. Furthermore, it strengthens the collaboration between the State, the Regions and the Municipalities with the aim to fully implement children's rights.

- the State, the Regions and the local authorities signed some important agreements also in other sectors: the lowering of tariffs and costs of utilities (electricity, water, gas, etc.) for the families with four or more children; the reorganization of family guidance centres, aimed at improving the effectiveness of social measures in favour of families; the recognition and qualification of the work of family assistants. To fund these three measures a total amount of approximately 100 million Euros has been allocated.

- specific measures are undertaken to promote the flexibility of working hours in order to reconcile work and family life and the participation of women in the labour market. These measures entail the financing of positive action plans (art. 9 of the Law no. 53/2000). The strengthening of such policies also requires a reform of the law on parental leave, in order to help parents deal with the costs linked to the growth and education of their children, in such a way to guarantee equal opportunities for all minors.

- the National Observatory on Family is being reorganized and its role will be to provide technical and scientific support for the formulation of family policies.

- the “Friend of the Family” award has been created with the aim to promote best practices and to support the initiatives taken in favour of families by local bodies and undertakings with economic contributions.

- the National Observatory on childhood and adolescence and the National Documentation and Analysis Centre for childhood and adolescence, which drafts the National Action Plan for childhood, will be reorganized in collaboration with the Ministry for Social Solidarity.

- as regards maternal and parental leave, the Finance Act 2008 equalizes the treatment of adoptive and foster parents to the one of biological parents.

- measures have been taken to provide income support to families with children through the reform of IRPEF (personal income tax) allowances and child benefits. This made it possible to extend benefits to income brackets which were previously excluded.

- among the efforts made to build an integrated system of childhood services, it is important to underline the creation of the so-called “spring sections” for children aged 2-3, which represent a “bridge” between the crèche and the pre-school. The “spring

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sections" are intended to meet the demand of Italian families for high-quality child care services. In order to guarantee the best quality of services, the Government decided that these new services must first be authorized by Municipalities, which thus play an important role in this field.

Latvia

The Latvian National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 has defined the following tasks in order to support families with children and encourage an increase in the birth rate:

- 1) to increase state aid to families during the child-rearing period in conformity with the needs and the age of the children;
- 2) to encourage development of a network of pre-school educational institutions and alternative child-care services;
- 3) to create a family-friendly working environment and in this area to promote co-operation with social partners – the employers;
- 4) to develop support and social service systems for families with children and to ensure a suitable infrastructure;
- 5) to develop a family-type care system for orphans and children without parental care (foster families, adoption, promotion of guardianship);

6) to create a state support system for promoting accessible housing to families with children.

In the area Ministry's of Welfare responsibility the most actual objectives of family policy at present are:

- facilitating the demographic situation in Latvia (raising the level of birth rate) by using the fiscal methods – increasing amounts of state social benefits for families with children;
- improvement of life quality for families with children, raising the amount of state family benefit, taking into account the growth of GDP, thereby gradually raising the amount of state support for families;
- increase of state support in the form of cash payments for families with disabled children by raising the amount of additional payment to the family state benefit for disabled child.

These objectives are defined in the Ministry's of Welfare Strategy of actions in 2007-2009, approved by the Cabinet of Minister in 16 of October 2007. Also the Plan of urgent tasks of the Cabinet of Ministers headed by Ivars Godmanis (from 20 December 2007 to 14 April 2008) predicts to increase amount of the state family benefit and supplement to the state family benefit for disabled child, Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers predicts to improve the accessibility of services for persons with functional disabilities, including disabled children.

Lithuania

On 5 September 2007 Strategy of National Demographic Policy (family welfare) was passed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The main objectives are - to promote youth employment, increase job flexicurity and childcare facilities for families with caring responsibilities, to provide psychological assistance for families who are in crisis in order to reduce violence within families and to improve assistance for the families in order to stimulate them to have more babies.

Luxembourg

L'objet de la politique familiale est avant tout de maintenir la justice et l'égalité des conditions de vie entre familles et également par rapport aux autres ménages que ce soit par des transferts sociaux mais aussi par l'offre de toute une panoplie de services.

- 1) Le présent Gouvernement s'est particulièrement attaché à une meilleure Conciliation de la vie familiale et de la vie professionnelle: [extrait]: "Il est convenu de soutenir l'offre en place et d'accorder des soutiens financiers pour la création de crèches privées et de structures de prise en charge par les entreprises (crèches d'entreprise). Dans ce contexte, les modalités de financement entre l'Etat et les communes seront à refixer."
- 2) Aussi le Gouvernement vient d'introduire (mars 2009) un système de "chèque-service accueil" que les communes offrent aux parents selon leur situations familiales et financière valant pour la prise en charge d'heures d'accueil dans des structures (maisons relais, crèches, foyers de jours, garderies et internats primaires)
- 3) Par ailleurs, par la loi du 30 novembre 2007 portant réglementation de l'activité d'assistance parentale institue un système

d'accueil au foyer familial des enfants pour une durée limitée à 3 semaines.
4) La législation relative au congé parentale a été modifiée et codifiée dans le cadre de la loi du 13 mai 2008 portant introduction d'un statut unique (art. Art. L. 234-42 à L. 234-48 du Code de Travail - Loi du 22 décembre 2006)
Pour les enfants adoptés voir congé d'accueil (Art. L. 234-55 à L. 234-57 du Code de travail)
5) de même le congé pour raisons familiales a été réformé par la loi du 13 mai 2008 (Art. L. 234-49 à L. 234-54 du Code de travail)

En ce qui concerne les services

"Il est retenu d'accentuer les efforts en vue d'une extension des services pour enfants à besoins spécifiques, notamment l'extension des capacités d'accueil dans les internats socio-familiaux et dans les centres d'accueil.

Les partenaires conviennent de réorganiser l'aide sociale à l'enfance en difficulté.

Dans ce contexte les partenaires entendent agir préventivement et réfléchissent sur l'introduction du principe d'incitation à l'égard des parents pour qu'ils participent aux cours et séances de formation, de consultation et de médiation familiale organisés dans le cadre d'une « école des parents ». «La législation luxembourgeoise, notamment le principe du droit éducatif conjoint, sera revue à la lumière des dispositions de la Convention Internationale des Droits de l'Enfant".

L'effort du Gouvernement s'est également concentré à créer de nouvelles structures d'accueil pour enfants notamment au niveau des crèches et garderies qui ont pu être agréés soit 196 structures dont 2053 places en institutions publiques et 1015 places en institutions privées. Fin 2008, la capacité totale s'élève à 240 foyers, crèches et garderies comprenant au total 5.600 places (2.230 institutions publiques (comprenant 622 salariés) et 2.357 en institutions privées et 1.013 places dans des institutions dépendantes d'entreprises).

A ce il convient d'ajouter l'institutionnalisation des maisons relais au niveau communal. Il s'agit d'un foyer de jour flexible ouvert aux enfants à partir de 3 mois jusqu'à l'âge de 12 ans en pratique, 6e année de l'école primaire. Ces structures ont des obligations comme :

- la restauration des usagers comprenant le repas de midi et des collations intermédiaires ;
- la surveillance des usagers, des prestations d'animation et des activités à caractère socio-éducatif ;
- l'accompagnement des usagers pour la réalisation des devoirs à domicile.

Le nombre de communes disposant fin 2008 d'une MRE s'élève à 106. Les 10 communes restantes prévoient la mise en place d'une MRE au courant de l'année 2009.

Loi du 16 décembre 2008 relative à l'aide à l'enfance et à la famille a institué notamment un Office national de l'enfance dépendant du Ministère de la Famille pour venir en aide à tout enfant en détresse pour:

- évaluer individuellement les ressources et les difficultés d'enfants, de jeunes adultes et de familles dont la situation est considérée comme critique par des acteurs des domaines psychosocial, scolaire, médical ou judiciaire;
- organiser des séances de concertation familiale et institutionnelle pour faire participer les enfants, les jeunes adultes, les parents, les prestataires anciens et futurs à l'élaboration de projets d'intervention socio-éducative et psychosociale;
- motiver l'enfant et ses parents ou représentants légaux à souscrire aux projets élaborés dans l'intérêt supérieur de l'enfant;
- valider, le cas échéant, pour ces enfants ou jeunes adultes et leurs familles, des projets d'intervention socioéducative et psychosociale;
- désigner, dans le cadre de tout projet d'intervention socio-éducative et psychosociale, un prestataire chargé, au bénéfice de l'enfant, du jeune adulte et de leur famille, d'une mission d'orientation, de coordination et d'évaluation des mesures;
- assurer le suivi des mesures d'accueil socio-éducatif et veiller à la réévaluation régulière des enfants concernés;
- dresser chaque semestre la liste des enfants vivant au Luxembourg qui, aux dates du 1er avril et du 1er octobre, sont accueillis ou placés en institution ou en famille d'accueil au Luxembourg ou à l'étranger.

Malta

The role of the family as the main foundation of society inspires the Government to continuously take part in this sector through policies that sustain the family, and through services that help and sustain the family. This is being done in order that Maltese families will be able to provide a healthy environment.

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Moldova

Not mentioned/not applicable.

Monaco

Politique sociale d'aide à la famille.

Montenegro

Children protection (custody, adoption, accommodation)
Family protection (sustentation)
Adults protection (parenthood)

Netherlands

The main objectives set out in the 2007-2011 plan of the Interministerial Programme for Youth and Families are to:
1) focus more on the key role families play in promoting children's development; 2) allocate more resources to prevention and early intervention; 3) emphasise that all members of society are responsible for putting a stop to undesirable and detrimental situations in which children are involved.

There are five main policy aims: for all children in the Netherlands to (1) grow up healthily and also (2) safely; (3) make a positive contribution to society; (4) develop their talents and have fun; and (5) be well prepared for the future.

A substantial number of goals were identified.

(1) All local authorities should have at least one Youth and Family Centre by 2011 for parents, children and young people (up to the age of 23), able to deal with all questions or problems related to bringing up the children and growing up. This is based on the principle 'one child, one family, one support programme, one support team'. Electronic systems are currently being put in place to further prevention and promote inter-agency working (electronic child database, register of children at risk).

(2) The introduction of a means-tested child allowance (in addition to current child benefit, which is not means-tested);

(3) Greater focus on the well-being of divorcing parents through the introduction of a parenting plan (an agreement between the parents about their parenting arrangements).

(4) Promoting a healthy lifestyle (to combat obesity and other problems).

(5) Increase participation in society (through the introduction of not-for-profit placements for example).

(6) Help create more child-friendly environments, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

(7) Child services should provide effective help and support to children and families in need more rapidly (reduce waiting lists, refer more quickly).

(8) Extend existing databases of effective interventions and instruments.

(9) National roll-out of guidelines that will help prevent child abuse (RAAK).

(10) The introduction of a national network of campuses offering training and job skills to young people with no immediate prospects of gaining a qualification or job.

(11) A 10% reduction in juvenile crime.

(12) Ensure that professionals working with children and families in need are confronted with less red tape.

(13) Ensure that youth policy reaches all children equally (including children and young people belonging to ethnic minorities).

(14) Ensure that early years education reaches all children who have deficient language skills or are at risk of lagging behind.

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Norway

In the program of the government for 2005-2009:

1. Access to childcare for a reasonable price for all families wanting this for their children (1-6-years). The last estimates (1.1.2008) reveal a shortage of only 3-5000 places in the country as a whole. A new law will then give the family a right to day-care, like in Sweden.
2. Strengthening the father's role as a parent, in different ways; especially when it comes to parental rights connected with a birth in the family, and when the parents are divorced/move apart. That include prolonged fathers quota in parental leave etc.
3. Strengthen the follow-up of families with disabled children (new Anti-discrimination Act).
4. Combat children's poverty through focusing on parent's income and public support measures.

Poland

System of family benefits is aimed to partly cover the expenses of maintaining a child. Special attention is given to lone parents and large families, which get additional benefits financed from the state budget. Local authorities also take care of children placed out of their families (in foster families or orphanages). Initiatives undertaken at the local level are supported by the state budget.

Portugal

The main family policy objectives defined by the present government (Socialist party, in government since 2005) and explicitly set out in their first governmental programme focused on: 1) the reconciliation of work and family life (an objective which from the start was strongly linked to the objective of supporting dual earner families through the expansion of service provision and the quality of provision); 2) promoting gender equality; 3) improving economic support for families, in particular for the more vulnerable families (families with handicapped children, lone parent families, large families, immigrant families; elderly persons with low pensions); and 4) fighting poverty and social exclusion. Other objectives, such as liberalizing abortion, combating domestic violence and promoting the protection of children were also emphasized (a new law on abortion has been approved, following a national referendum in 2007).

Pro-natalist objectives were not emphasized at the outset but they have emerged gradually over the last two years (in the context of a sharp drop in fertility rates, of the liberalization of abortion, as well as pressure from centre-right wing parties for more governmental policies related to this issue). As a result, the objectives which have been highest on the agenda in 2007/2008 have been threefold: pro-natalist objectives (sometimes referred to in governmental documents as the "national strategy to promote birth"), expansion of service provision objectives (both for child care and for the care of elderly dependent persons); and objectives related to economic support for families and the struggle against poverty.

1. Reconciliation policy measures for child and elderly care have been mainly focused on the development of services. The PS Governmental programme also envisages alterations to the leave scheme system (the main idea being to introduce an increase in fully compensated leave – for example, by adding one month to the present fully-compensated four-month leave/15-day Daddy leave - that would be dependent on the promotion of more gender equality in leave). In May 2008 a new proposal was presented by the government and is still in discussion (see answer to question 3.3 iii). It establishes strong linkages between changes in the leave system and the introduction of more gender equality.

a) The emphasis on service provision for children has two major concerns: an increase in coverage rates, on the one hand, and the extension of opening hours, on the other hand. Therefore, there is an ongoing program (PARES) that gives priority to the expansion of crèches (the goal is to move from the present 23 per cent coverage rate for children under age 3 up to 33 per cent by 2009) and to the expansion of pre-school nurseries (the goal is to move from the present 77 per cent coverage rate up to 90 per cent in 2010, with 100% coverage rate for five year olds by 2009), within the Solidarity Network (Private Institutions for Social Solidarity). There is also the Program PAIES that aims to set up 5750 new places in crèches (pre-school nurseries), by supporting profitable private

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initiatives:

Another important measure was the recent introduction of compulsory after-school activities until 17.30 (from 15.30 to 17.30) in all pre-schools and primary schools, thus establishing an obligatory 8-hour opening day as well as incentives for the provision of child care before and after opening hours for families who need these services. The Ministry of Education has recently announced its intention to introduce this model for the 10-12 age group. The government has also announced more benefits for companies who have crèches in order to support their employees.

b) Service provision for dependent elderly people and disabled persons is also high on the agenda. The PARES programme establishes a goal of a 10 per cent increase (in available places) in all types of existing services for elderly persons: residential care, day care centres and home-based care services. Another important measure was the recent implementation of the National Network for Continued Care. It has two main objectives: the setting up of places in "back-up" hospitals where elderly persons can convalesce or have access to temporary permanent care and the improvement of the articulation between the different services supporting dependent elderly persons.

c) In relation to persons with disabilities the goal is to increase the number of available places in Residential Care and in Occupational Activities Centres' by 10 - 30 per cent.

2. The promotion of an increase in birth rates and of more economic support for families are two other objectives which have been high on family policy agenda since Portugal reached its lowest fertility rate ever in 2006 (1.36). Several financial benefits for families with children have been introduced and presented in the context of a pro-natalist policy:

a) The introduction of pre-natal family benefits for pregnant women (as from the third month of pregnancy).

b) The increase in family benefits after the birth of a second and subsequent children (the benefit is doubled for children between age 1 and 3 in households with 2 children and tripled in households with 3 children)

c) Pregnant women who have never paid insurance contributions are now entitled to a social maternity benefit (325 euro per month during four months)

d) Financial support for couples with fertility problems who decide to ask for medically assisted procreation ("Procriação Medicamentada Assistida")

e) Tax deductions (IRS) for parents with children below 3 have been doubled: 80% of the national minimum wage (instead of 40%) will be deductible.

f) There is an ongoing governmental proposal to relieve taxes (e.g. Contributions for Social Security System) for persons under 35 years of age.

3. The struggle against poverty has been mainly directed toward old age pensioners (+ 65 years old) with the introduction of an extra cash benefit (the "solidarity supplement for the elderly" – CSI for those who have pensions below 4800 euro per year, in order to guarantee that no pensioner receives less than 400 Euros per month). Those who benefit from the CSI can, also, have additional benefits for health care spending, through reimbursement on the purchase of medicines (50% of the price not assumed by the State) glasses and lens (75% of the expenditure, up to 100 Euros for each period of 2 years) and removable dental prostheses (75% of expenditure reimbursed on purchase and repair, up to 250 Euros, for each period of 3 years).

Lone parents and immigrant families were also a privileged target of governmental measures to combat poverty. Family benefits for lone parents were increased by 20 per cent. And immigrant families with temporary residence permits ("Autorizações de permanência"), previously excluded from the family benefit system, are now entitled to family benefits.

Romania

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Russian Federation

The main directions of the family policy in the Russian Federation are approved by the Decree № 712 of the President of the Russian Federation of May 14, 1996.

According to the Decree the main directions of the state family policy are as follows:

creating conditions to eliminate negative tendencies and to stabilize financial situation in Russian families, to reduce poverty and to increase assistance to labour non-efficient family member;
providing employees, having children, favourable conditions to reconcile labour activity and family responsibilities;
cardinal improvement of family health protection;
strengthening assistance to family in upbringing children.

The aim of the state family policy is to provide by the state necessary conditions for realization by families their functions and to increase families' quality of life.

All mentioned directions of the family policy are realized in parallel and do not compete with each other.

The further development of the family policy is accepted by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation № 1351 of October 9, 2007 “On Approval of the Conception of the Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation to the Year 2025.”

In the Conception the following main goals of demographic policy are pointed out:

- declining maternal mortality and infant mortality not less than twofold, strengthening reproductive health of population, health of children and juvenile;
- increasing birth rate (growing total fertility rate 1.5 times) due to second and next births in families;
- strengthening the family institute, reviving and serving moral and spiritual principles of family relationship.

The solving the tasks on declining maternal and infant mortality, strengthening reproductive health of population, health of children and juvenile includes the following:

- raising availability and quality of unpaid medical services for women in the period of pregnancy and birth and for their newborn children due to development of perinatal technologies, which decline risks of unfavourable pregnancy and birth outcome,
- strengthening technical, material and staff support of motherhood and childhood services, development of high-technological medical services for women in the period of pregnancy and birth and for newborn children,
- securing availability and raising quality of medical services for reviving reproductive health, including subsidiary reproductive technologies, reducing the share of working places with hard, harmful and dangerous labour conditions in the aim of reproductive health preservation,
- prophylaxis and early diagnostics of health state abnormalities of children and juveniles, securing availability of primary health

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care, specialized medical aid, including high-technological medical services for children, development of rehabilitation services for children and juveniles, restorative medicine, strengthening preventive actions against alcoholism, smoking, undesirable pregnancy,

- developing the system of medical services for children and juveniles in educational institutions, organizing qualitative hot nourishment for schoolchildren and students of primary professional education institutions, including unpaid nourishment for children from low-income families, obligation of physical training exercises in all types of educational institutions.

The strengthening state support to families with children, including support to families in upbringing children, embraces the following:

- developing the child allowances system (including regular revision and indexation of their amounts taking into account the inflation rate);
- strengthening the role of additional measures of state support to families with children by providing maternal (family) capital, expansion in this connection the market of educational services for children and scales of available house-building for families with children;
- creating mechanisms of additional support of lone-parents families, low-income families, having many children, families, upbringing children left parental care, families, having disabled children, including changes in the amount of tax deduction for working parents depending on the family income and the number of children, forming the government order on providing social services for families with children by institutions of various legal and organization forms;
- satisfying family requirements in preschool education services on the base of development of all kinds preschool educational institutions (state, private), raising availability and quality of their services, also due to establishment of standards for provided services, stimulating development of flexible forms of services for children's care and upbringing regardless the age of children; producing in urban and rural areas favourable environment for families with children, making suitable demands to town-planning solutions, to social and transport infrastructure;
- creating conditions to raise accommodation availability for families with children, first of all for young families with children due to mortgage lending development, new credit instruments application, expansion of available house-building suitable to the requirements of families, simultaneous building of social infrastructure objects necessary for families with children; realizing regional programs on providing young families with accommodation, elaborating the system of additional measures, aiming at provision of needing low-income citizens having children with habitation, including measures of settling families with children from unadapted and dilapidated habitations;
- developing the system of addressed assistance in housing payments depending the family composition and its financial situation; realizing the complex of measures on assistance employment of women with small children to secure the reconciliation of parental and family responsibilities with professional activity, including:
- creating for women after maternity leave and child caring leave conditions contributing their return to professional activity, organizing the system of raising the level of their skill and professional retraining in accordance with labour market demand;
- widening the application of flexible form of employment (including home working, part time working), which allows the reconciliation of professional activity and family responsibilities;
- elaborating special programs permitting women to get new professions in situations of their conversion (dismissal) from working places with hard and harmful labour conditions to new working places.

The solving the tasks on strengthening the family institute, reviving and serving moral and spiritual principles of family relationship includes the following:

- developing the system of consultative and psychological assistance to the family in the aim of creation of favourable intra-family climate, prevention of family troubles, social rehabilitation of families and children in difficult situations, preparation and complex accompaniment of families upbringing children left without parental care;
- propaganda of value of the family with a number children and various forms of family accommodation for children left parental care, in the aim of forming in the society the positive image of the family with stable legally registered marriage of the spouses, having a number of children or upbringing children left parental care;
- realizing the complex of measures to further reduction on the number of untimely pregnancy delivering (abortions);
- higher parental obligations to provide appropriate level of life and development for children;
- establishing the specialized system of children rights protection, including further developing of the ombudsmen institution in the subjects (regions) of the Russian Federation, implementing to the activity of executive authority bodies and judicial bodies temporary technologies of infringement prevention, children rights protection, social rehabilitation and further integration to the society of minor law infringers and children in difficult situations.

The pointed goals are in realization in the framework of the priority national projects under patronage of the President of the Russian Federation, such as "Health Protection", "Habitation", "Development of the Agroindustrial Complex", the Federal Target Programs (ex. "The Children of Russia"), by Federal Law adoption (concerning the issues of allowances indexation, development of children trusteeship and guardianship institutions, adopted in 2008, etc.).

The Order of the Government of the Russian Federation of February, 14th 2008 No. 170-r approved the Schedule of arrangements to realize in the period 2008-2010 the provisions of the Conception of Population Policy. Along with chapters devoted to different aspects of the realization of the population policy, this plan contains following chapters:

- on improving the quality of the medical help provided for mother and child during the pregnancy and the birth,
- on developing the social assistance system to support the family in the time of giving birth and upbringing children,

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- on preventing family troubles and social orphanage, on assuring child's rights and legitimate interests protection,
- on assistance the employment of persons with children under 3 years,
- on strengthening the family institute, on propagating family values.
In order to activate the attention to the family, the year 2008 was declared in Russia as the "Year of the Family" by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation.
By the decree of the President of the Russian Federation of Mai 13, 2008 No. 775 the decoration "Parental Glory" is instituted. The socially responsible parents, who have given birth and brought up at least four children, are to be honoured by the decoration. Adoptive parents are also to be honoured.

Serbia

1. The main objectives of the family policy in Serbia are promotion of the quality of life of an individual and family defined in the Government strategic documents. Established activities are focused on creation of the conditions and environment in which the family will be nexus of the society and to the conditions for good quality life of every citizen. They should contribute to provision of social conditions for life in the family that is stable internally, socially secure, enabling inclusion into world of work and creation of all its members according to their abilities. Those who bring up their children and care for elderly and handicapped members are not to feel prejudice, disability or discrimination. Explicitly set goals, among others, are defined in the Pronatalist Strategy, National Action Plan for Children, National Strategy on Ageing, Social Welfare Development Strategy, PRSP.

Slovakia

The Government of the SR already approved the State Family Policy Concept in 1996 and adopted basic strategic objectives, including: the achievement of the relative economic independence of families as a base for their civil independence and application of their responsibility and choice of their own future, the successfulness of families as regards the implementation of their functions, stability and social quality of marital and parental relations within the meaning of equality and social division of family roles, the creation of optimal conditions for the self-reproduction of society, the adoption of measures allowing the consistent application of the principle of choice, respectively compatibility upon the parent's decision-making for parental leave.

In 2004, the running reforms and changes of social and economic circumstances required the supplementation of such strategic objectives by new long-term objectives, including: tackling the demographic challenge regarding the ageing of the population, reduction of the risk of poverty in families and the creation of a base for long-term competitiveness through the development of human resources. The state family policy was particularly updated in the areas of policy concerning employment, education, housing and legal protection of family members.

The reform process currently running in Slovakia has direct impact on families that are therefore exposed to a variety of social and economic changes. Support to families upon the fulfilment of their functions still remains as forming the basic priority in the area of the implementation of family policy.

The main objective of the Programme Declaration of the Government of the SR in the area of socio-legal protection of children and family is to enforce legislative changes in the area of socio-legal protection of children in order to increase the efficiency of the protection of rights and legally protected interests of children and to prefer the care in biological family before foster care.

The partial objectives in the area of socio-legal protection of children and social curatorship include the prevention of crisis and problematic situations in families, the solution of issues related to children with problematic behaviour and behavioural disorders, prevention of the child's exemption from the personal care of its parents if personal care by its parents is not possible, the provision of foster care and the humanization of conditions related to the execution of court decisions in facilities.

In the area of family policy, the current Government of the SR considers the active support of families with emphasis on young families and the creation of conditions for their establishment to be the basic obligation to be provided by the state.

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Slovenia

In accordance with the Resolution on the Principles of Family Policy, family policy measures are carried out in economic and fiscal area by direct payment of family benefits that supplement or replace the family's income, by revenue reallocation for the benefit of families within tax policy and by special credit policy; in the area of social services and other activities (general and personal), which provide services supporting the functioning of a family or partly take over some of its functions; in the employment area by creating labour market conditions that allow both parents to coordinate their family and professional obligations; in the area of housing economy by specific housing provision programmes and other types of assistance.

Spain

During the past years there has been an effort from the different administrations to implement ways to face the challenges presented by socio-demographic changes and family protection. This includes improving economic family benefits; recognition of new rights in relation to Family Law and Labour rights; extending the offer for services of support for families, especially services for children under three, care for old people and people with disabilities.

Gender equality is one of the main objectives in Spain in order to facilitate and enlarge men's involvement in daily family life and also to diminish as much as possible violence related to gender.

Explicitly we may point out the following:

- the new birth grant of 2.500 € for every new born or adopted child as from the 1st of June 2007 onwards. Regulated by law (Law 30/2007)
- the new Law for Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Attention to dependent people (Law 39/2006 of December 14th) which includes in the system the participation of the Autonomous Communities and the Local Authorities.
- the new Law for effective equality between men and women (Law 3/2007 of March 22nd).

Sweden

The family is the fundamental unit in society. Our security and sense of coherence are established in childhood, in one's own family. Within the family unit, a profound human need can be met: to be seen and be irreplaceable. In a small group such as that formed by a family, the members have the chance to find love, care and understanding, but also to face demands and take responsibility. A modern family policy must recognise that families are different, have different needs and wishes, and are of equal worth.

The Government wants the aim of family policy to be to strengthen parents' power over their lives and increase families' freedom of choice. Family policy should make it easier for parents to combine working life with family life through improving both parents' opportunities to take part in working life and take care of their children when they are small. The conditions for gender equality should be improved. The Government wants to increase families' freedom of choice by reducing national political control.

Diversity in childcare should be increased by greater variation among service providers. The expertise of the staff should be valued higher and their ideas, commitment and entrepreneurship set free. The educational role of preschool should be strengthened in pace with the development of children so as to make use of their natural curiosity and their desire to learn.

Beginning in 2008, the new Government changed the objective of financial family policy. The new goal is that financial family policy is to contribute to better opportunities for good financial living standards for all families with children. The previous goal was that the differences between the financial positions of families with and without children were to be reduced, within the framework of general welfare.

The new Government considers that the previous goal had a much too narrow focus on the relative differences in financial standards between households with and without children. These two groups show very large internal differences in financial standards. A relative goal for family policy thus did not take account of the actual standard of living of all families with children, only that of the group as a whole. Nor did it indicate whether the actual standard of living for the entire group was reasonable. The possibilities of achieving relative distribution goals also tend to vary with the business cycle. In general, it is easier to achieve a relative distribution goal in an economic downturn when the situation for households without children as a group deteriorates. The Government considers that these qualities were not desirable in a goal for financial family policy.

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The Government's new goal therefore takes a broader approach. It primarily focuses on the actual financial living standards that families with children have. The most important source of income for families with children is paid employment, which means that unemployment is a common cause of a poor financial situation. Financial family policy is to be designed so as to facilitate a combination of work and family life. In this way, conditions for gender equality are also created.

The new goal means that family policy will work for all families with children. A modern family policy must recognise that families are different, have different needs and wishes, and are of equal worth. Therefore choice and flexibility are important. Family policy should respect the choices made by individual families and, as far as possible, concentrate on providing support, not exercising control.

The new proposed goal is based on a clear child's perspective, in that it is about the opportunities of all parents to meet the needs of their children. The policy should be designed so that children in financially vulnerable households receive support. But it also concerns supporting families with children who are sick or disabled.

Another important aspect of the new goal is that family policy is to contribute to giving all families with children better opportunities for good financial living standards. Emphasising the enabling conditions rather than the outcome means a certain acceptance for the outcome not always being exactly the same for all families. A disparity in outcome, for example as regards income, can depend on different conditions, but it can also depend on the fact that the families have made different priorities and choices which, in turn, produce different financial consequences. In this context the Government has pointed out that with the previous goal, there was no limit as to how large the differences between families with children could be without this necessarily having an impact on the goal fulfilment. Unlike this, the new goal thus explicitly aims at improving the opportunities for good financial living standards for all families with children. Creating positive opportunities for work is the most important measure to give all families with children the opportunity for good financial living standards.

In the Government's view, the new goal focuses more on the individual family's financial circumstances and opportunities than on redistribution between two large, anonymous groups. It is also important to point out that the financial family policy is only one part of the Government's overall family policy. Much of the support to families with children is in the form of publicly financed services, such as maternity and child health care, dental care, preschool and school-age childcare.

In addition, besides financial support, there are also other public systems in the form of transfers, taxes and subsidies that have a major impact on the financial situation of families with children. Of vital importance for the financial prosperity of households is economic development. The new Government therefore wants financial family policy to be seen in a broader context in which different policy areas together allow opportunities to improve financial living standards for families with children.

Lower tax on household services, lower tax in certain service sectors, the opportunity for new start jobs in the public sector and continued efforts to stimulate women's entrepreneurship will strengthen and broaden the labour market for women. The new gender equality bonus will increase the prospects of a gender-equal use of parental insurance and of women returning to work during a child's first year of life. The option of reducing the workload at home, through household services and later a childcare voucher system, will make it possible to reduce women's unpaid double workload, which is good both for women's career opportunities and for the family's various needs.

Individual case studies also lend support to the idea that the gainful employment of women – which is endorsed by Sweden's family policy – and the ensuing income opportunities, help create the right conditions for men and women to have the children they want. By international standards, Swedish family care and support services provide very extensive support to families with children and therefore have a positive influence on the material conditions for having children.

The Government has also adopted a policy for the rights of the child, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The objective of this policy area is that children and young people be respected and given opportunities for security and the right to participation and influence in all decisions that concern them. The best interests of the child are to be the principles guiding all decision making and no child may be discriminated against. Children and young people are to be allowed to develop at their own pace.

Financial policy for families is divided into three programme areas:

- insurance
- means-tested allowances, and
- general grants

The insurance programme area includes parental insurance, child's pension, child survivor's benefit and pension rights for childcare years. The needs-tested allowances programme area includes housing allowance, maintenance support and care allowance for disabled children. The general allowances programme comprises child allowances and grants towards the costs of intercountry adoptions.

Council of Europe Family Policy Database

www.coe.int/familypolicy/database



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Traditionally the services provided by the Swedish social security system have been universally available. This still applies to support to families with children. Sweden has a generous system of parental insurance, comprehensive school and child day-care. The majority of families with children in Sweden have two incomes. Most lone parents are gainfully employed. Benefits that encourage work and make work possible thus tend to be more important than the level of child allowance. This must be borne in mind when comparisons are made with countries where there are more families living on a single income.

Switzerland

Le Gouvernement a pour objectif de mener une politique familiale active, visant avant tout une meilleure intégration des personnes qui restent au foyer pour s'occuper des enfants. Deux catégories de mesures s'inscrivent au premier plan:

- améliorer la sécurité économique des familles, essentiellement par le biais des allocations familiales et de l'imposition des familles, et
- permettre aux familles de mieux concilier vie familiale et activité professionnelle, notamment en introduisant un véritable congé payé de maternité, en améliorant l'offre d'accueil extra-familial et en harmonisant les horaires scolaires.

Turkey

Our main objectives of family policy are carrying out social services related to women, family, children and disabled people to solve the problems of family. Social services and family support services are of the highest importance regarding the family policy. These main objectives are pointed in 60th governmental programme.

Ukraine

Main objectives of family policy in Ukraine are:

- the revision of family legislation;
- the strengthening the lawful, moral and material bases of the family life;
- the implementation of lawful, psychological, pedagogical, organizational and procedural system for the creation of best social and economic conditions for children;
- the increase the economic activities and independence of family, the development of social welfare, first of all for families with children;
- the creation the system for youth education that'll take marriage.

United Kingdom

In 1999, the Government declared a commitment to halve child poverty by 2010 and eliminate it by 2020.

Two other major policy objectives are to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups and to support parents in their parenting role.

Government policies seek to encourage fathers to play a more active role in their children's lives.

Sustainability of care for older people in an ageing population is also a significant policy concern.