

Draft Resolution: Reforming Family Policy

Adopted at the YEPP Council in Madrid, Spain on 29 September, 2012

Introduction: Family is central in YEPP's vision of a better Europe for the future. In 2012 Europe's reality includes a reverse population pyramid and sandwich generation caring for both parents and children concurrently; prevalence of alternative family structures; high immigration and related childbirth; and increased numbers of women in the work force. Policy responses are required to address these changing realities and ensure that family values remain central in Europe.

Recognising:

- That reforming family policy requires deep consideration, perhaps more crucial now than ever before, because the economic crisis is forcing member states to make tough choices which may have negative consequences for families.
- That if the social model of Europe is to continue effectively it must be balanced with developing citizens' personal economic responsibility and prioritising family policies which enable participation in the labor market and child birth.
- That the fertility rate in the EU27 has been below the 2.1 replacement rate for at least the last 10 years and that the rate itself decreased to 1.59 in 2009, in the most recent data¹.
- That the rate of births outside marriage in the EU27 has increased to 37.29 % (2009) of live births while divorce rates have reached just under 50 % of all marriages (2008).² These statistics confirm that non-traditional family structures such as: children out of marriage, lone-parenthood, same-sex parenthood, marital breakdown, and divorce are increasing. The failure to include these family structures in policy leaves a growing numbers of children and parents without equal financial and legal support.
- Academic work which attributes these demographic trends to economic, judicial, societal, and professional pressures and which state that fewer children are to the detriment of Europe's economic growth.³
- That family policy across Europe is varied, culturally based, and a member state competence. It is, therefore, the responsibility of member states to reform their family policies in response to these facts.

Acknowledging:

- That caring for a parent or child is an economic commitment for individuals and families which may be eased by diversified care and cash policies, a supportive legal framework, and the possibility of full time work which promotes a flexible work – care life balance.⁴
- That there has been a “general increase in female economic participation”⁵ and, being out of the home, consequences for the family require revision of policy. These revisions must

¹Eurostat:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdde220&plugin=1>.

²Eurostat:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00018&plugin=1>.
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00013&plugin=1>.
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Marriage_and_divorce_statistics.

³1) Millar, J. and Warman, A., 1996. Family obligations in Europe. Research Report. London: Family Policy Studies Centre. 2) Slaughter, Anne-Marie, 2012. “Why women still can't have it all”. The Atlantic Magazine.

⁴ “Americans Having Fewer Babies Crimping Consumer Spending” Matthews, Steve. Bloomberg News, August 21, 2012.

ensuring women and men's equal economic independence and rights as well as equal opportunities and support for them to care for a family.

- That based on the costs of living and of having children, many couples require two salaries.
- That men and women pursue longer education before work and longer retirement after work due to longer life expectancy, effecting less years of work in total. Therefore, a disruption in a career due to family responsibilities, for *either* gender, may cause magnified harms to an individuals' work prospects, pension rights, or unemployment benefits. Supportive family policies could not only ensure continued participation, but also smooth reentry into the work force, neutralising factors which can prevent childbearing and harm careers.
- That more flexible employer rules, attitudes, and use of technology aimed towards combining family and work might enable young people to have families at the same time as contributing to the work force, two sometimes conflicting objectives of vital importance: to enable demographic and economic growth.
- That mandating extra benefits for single parents or parents of large families will ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for all children.
- That mandating paternity and maternity leave, sick leaves, and work flexibility for parents may contribute to greater equality amongst the genders and better family cohesion. This in turn, will help citizens overcome old-fashioned breadwinner / dependent roles and taboos.⁶
- The following drawbacks to existing policy frameworks which prevent coherent and effective family benefits:
 - Member states do not uniformly recognise different family life styles or definitions which complicates working with the existing family constellations in the population. As a result, many parents and children suffer from this lack of legal recognition.
 - As family policy is a member state competence, reforms must balance a respect for cultural difference and individuals' rights to privacy and autonomy while assuming political responsibility for the demographic and economic welfare of populations.
 - That with regard to pursuing the above goals, it is important to guarantee and respect the personal choice and own responsibility of the parents in implementing all the required measures.

YEPP calls on:

European Member States to give financial support per child. Parents are free to allocate this budget; some will spend it on child care services, others will choose to take care of the children themselves and consider the financial support as compensation for the loss of potential income.

- European member states to encourage childcare providers to increase the number of men working in childcare.
- European member states to encourage employers, in cooperation with unions and employment organisations, to establish supportive work regulations with flexible working hours and working locations for parents, and leaves of absence for childbirth and child sickness.
- European member states to offer reimbursements for private day care when a child is pronounced sick with a contagious illness by a doctor and cannot attend standard daycare or incentivize workplaces to give the parents the opportunity to take leave to care for the children.
- European member states to determine and offer gender-blind tax benefits to parents.

⁵ International Labour Office: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_elm/---trends/documents/publication/wcms_123835.pdf.

⁶COFACE: http://coface-eu.org/en/upload/07_Publications/MenFamiliesBrochureEN.pdf.

- European member states to offer parents financial supplements in a graduated point system dependent on lone / double parenthood and number of children.
- European member states, for the health and wellbeing of children, to legally recognise the legal responsible caregiver for every child so that they may claim available benefits.
- European member states to offer free public education to children until the completion of secondary education and, thereafter, to offer loans and scholarships to students and financial support to institutions for university education.
- European member states should establish mechanism to provide university education for people from all layers of society.
- European member states and European Institutions to educate citizens through information campaigns about what benefits are available to them. Further European member states must clearly define policy objectives both for the benefit of children and for the benefit of parents and regularly collect concerns / feedback about these policies.