

Framing the organisation of intimacy as a policy problem across Europe

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In the second half of the 20th Century, radical feminism introduced a focus in feminism on issues of intimacy and personal relationships, analysing the appropriation of women's sexuality and women's bodies and questioning heterosexuality as a socially institutionalised basis of male domination. Violence too was seen as a crucial basis of power of men over women, and marriage and families were seen as primary sites of male domination. Marxist feminism in the same period interpreted families rather as the locus of the unequal division of labour, accentuating either the appropriation of women's labour by their husbands, or stressing the benefits for capitalism in providing cheap labour or free care for its workers. Although more theoretical accounts of gender and power argue that issues of sexuality, labour and violence are closely related in constituting patriarchy or unequal gender relations in families (see Walby 1990, Connell 1987), these issues originate in feminist political paradigms that are divergent to a high degree, if only in their accents on what is most important. These various accents also have different implications for what is seen as appropriate for state intervention, ranging from redistribution measures to laws regulating behaviour.

Against this backdrop, this paper will describe and analyse various frames on the organisation of intimacy as a policy problem across Europe in the period 1995-2004. Starting by wondering how the issue of gender inequality has been framed when seen as connected to families and family policy, we are interested in finding out if there are differences in framing this problem. Based upon the hypothesis that we can expect to find differences in policies precisely because of existing differences in feminist paradigms, which could have influenced the used policy frames, we intend to describe these differences and shifts in them as precisely as possible, and discuss the impact of these differences. The material used for the paper is gathered within the context of the MAGEEQ project, a EU funded research comparing policy frames on gender equality in six European countries and the European Union. This paper uses material from a preliminary analysis of the European Union, the Netherlands, Austria and Greece. The period studied is 1995-2004.

Gender Equality Frames at EU level

Recent analyses of European Union family policies by Stratigaki and Duncan have produced interesting insights on the development of issues connecting gender equality and family policy. They differ in what they consider important accents and shifts in framing. In an impressive overview and

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analysis, Maria Stratigaki shows how a concept introduced to encourage gender equality in the labour market - what is known mostly under the label of 'reconciliation of work and family life' - gradually shifted meaning as it became incorporated in the European Employment Strategy of the 1990s. From an objective with a feminist potential it became purely a market-oriented objective. What her analysis shows is that, first of all, the concept of reconciling work and family has been addressing mainly the gendered division of labour, and not so much the gendered organisation of intimacy. The original goal was 'sharing', shifting later to the policy objective of 'reconciliation of work and family life'. "Sharing is a term associated with equality of women and men, defining a policy objective in the area of gender relations, whereas reconciliation is derived from labour market analysis and has a more economic orientation" (Stratigaki 2004:2). This main accent on the organisation of labour is a shift that has allowed accommodating a growing policy priority on the creation of employment.

Secondly, this shift towards the organisation of labour has involved a move away from a focus on gender equality towards a focus on reproducing and consolidating women's roles and responsibilities as primary care givers. In order to facilitate the participation of women on the labour market, its implementation often mainly consists of creating possibilities for women to combine care for children and paid labour, while it involves only minor options for stimulating fathers to take care of their children. This focus reproduces the norm that it is women's responsibility to take care of children, while this is optional for fathers. "This left the existing gender division of labour within families out of consideration and thus failed to challenge stereotyped gender relations (id. p. 19)".

Simon Duncan's analysis of the development of EU policy on 'the reconciliation of work and family life' focuses on another policy frame that interferes with gender equality, what he calls the 'demographic time bomb discourse'. In his analysis, going back to the beginning of gender equality policies, the main finding is that the policies of the European Union have never been the outcome of concerns for gender equality only. Rather, the central theme has been demography. The main reason for higher wages for women in France, according to Duncan, ultimately was French natalism, rationalised by the (gendered) equality principles of 1789, and the importance of national gender contracts to competing national political economies (Duncan 2002: 307). Duncan argues that in the 1990s the "increasing influence of a parallel policy discourse that had been bubbling along during the 1980s- the demographic time bomb- politically exposed the limitations of equal opportunities at work policy" (Duncan 2002:309). Various policy problems such as ageing of the population, low fertility, and the need for a flexible work force could be addressed by reconciliation. The gender (equality) discourse could then fit into and exploit this agenda, given further impetus in the mid 1990s by the accession of Finland and Sweden who had to deliver to their home constituencies (Duncan 2002:311). Duncan concludes that, even if the dominant theme in the EU is not gender equality but a competitive economy, the debates on the demographic time bomb and on flexible labour have moved gender equality centre stage, if only because gender equality is seen as necessary to achieve success in these fields. Simon Duncan (2002:310) identifies two sets of policy responses to what is perceived as the 'demographic time bomb'. Firstly, negative and descriptive measures, such as redefining women as child bearers in traditional households; and positive and supportive policies, such as changing structures so that women and men can both have a life and have babies. The latter discourse, he claims, became prominent on the EU agenda via 'reconciling employment and family life' at the accession of Sweden and Finland in 1994, actually aiming at a redistribution of work and status between women and men, or changing the gender contract. (Duncan 2002:307).

What does the analysis within the MAGEEQ project contribute to these findings? Within MAGEEQ, we analysed key texts on gender equality and intimacy in connection to labour issues (such as the Council Recommendation on Child Care, the Directive on Parental Leave and on Part-time

Work), as well as the general texts on equal opportunities (programmes 1996 and 2000). Moreover, we looked at some of the scarce texts that are explicitly about family policy (such as the EP resolution on the protection of families and children), and a text from the European Observatory on Family Matters, a multi-disciplinary expert network established upon request of the European Commission. Finally, we studied one speech of the latest commissioner, Anna Diamantopoulou, on the subject of family policies. This last text can give some idea in what direction ideas on family matters are evolving at the EU level (see appendix for list of texts analysed so far).

Looking first at the various actors involved it is striking that on the subject of 'reconciliation' it has been the social partners rather than the member states that are the actors constructing the directives on child care, parental leave and part time work. The conclusions from the MAGEEQ analysis are very much in line with Stratigaki and Duncan that 'reconciliation' policies are mainly introduced for labour market reasons, and that the policy framing on families in connection to gender (in)equality is locating the problem in the division of labour. What becomes clear from our analysis, is that there are no actors at the EU level that focus on inequalities within families and more specifically on gender inequalities in families as a problem in itself. Within the EU gender equality programmes the focus is still almost exclusively on issues connected to the gendered division of labour. Both at the EU level and at the level of national states, family life is presented as a private matter that should not be subject to state intervention.

In the texts analysed, the gender norms incorporated in the texts are always – as Stratigaki points out – that caring is women's duty. In the texts on family policy, moreover, a more traditional model of the family, in which heterosexual families are the norm, can be detected. Even if many other causes of changes in families are mentioned, this model sees the new roles that women play in society (such as working) as endangering family life and children and as potentially contributing to problems such as criminality, through what is called the 'loss of the caretaking roles of families'. Also, the changing gender roles are seen as related to low fertility, and hence as connected to the demographic problem in the EU. This relationship between low fertility, various problems and changes in gender roles is rather weak, but present nevertheless. Both ways of framing the policy problem in terms of the organisation of intimacy lead to pleas for 'reconciliation' to mitigate the negative effects of changes in gender relations. This double motive can be expected to have contributed to the success of 'reconciliation'.

Our analysis shows that underneath measures that are seen as part of gender equality policies counterproductive and contradictory frames can be detected. Within gender equality policies we find frames that reinforce gender stereotypes on caring, and that present change in gender relations as problematic. This is all the more striking because in many texts gender inequality is hardly ever mentioned as a problem, except when the texts are explicitly about gender equality. While a range of solutions and measures such as more child care services or more active involvement of fathers is indeed mentioned, a closer look shows that mainly more rhetorical texts, such as speeches, accentuate more transformative elements, such as the importance of more active fathers, or the need for workplaces that are more responsive to family life. It seems that the more 'real' measures are more easily compatible with frames that include traditional gender roles.

Family Policy in Austria, Greece and the Netherlands

The Netherlands

In 1995, the Christian-Democratic Party proposed a separate minister of Family Affairs to emphasise the role of the family as a counter-weight to the increasing individualisation in society. Although a minister's portfolio was not established at that time, the request did stimulate public and political

debates on the family, resulting in a policy note entitled Position and Function of the Family (1996). Even though the family policy file was closed in 1997, family policy issues are still addressed in many other areas of policy making and legislation, ranging from emancipation to youth policy, from marriage and adoption rights for same-sex partners to family formation and reunion conditions for migrants, and from conflict regulation in cases of divorce to conditions for parental access.

When family policy is connected to emancipation policy the concentration is specifically on matters of labour and care. The major legislative and policy initiatives in the field of labour and care were initiated by coalition governments of right wing and social democratic parties (Purple Cabinets) from 1994 to 2002. In 1994, the Project Group Redistribution Unpaid Labour (1993-1996) – installed by the preceding cabinet Lubbers II - assigned a Committee on Future Scenario's for Redistribution of Unpaid Labour to the task of developing "four scenarios on the organisation of care, and in relation to that on the organisation of paid labour". In July 1996, this committee published its final report, promoting the so-called 'combination scenario'² (supported by the Social and Economic Council 1996). Formally embraced by the Dutch government in its mid term policy plan 'Opportunities for Combining: Labour, Care, and Economic Independence' (1997), the combination scenario formed a source of inspiration for the legal adjustments and policy measures prepared and adopted in the succeeding years.

The Labour and Care Act – for which the preliminary lines were sketched in the policy note Towards a New Balance between Labour and Care (March 1999) and the succeeding Cabinet Paper (September 1999) - unites a range of new and existing arrangements facilitating the combination of labour and care. The first part, the Act Adjustment Working Hours (WAA 2000), provides in the legal right to structurally reduce or extend working hours, among others in view of caring tasks. The subsequent parts (2001) concern the legal right to several forms of leave: pregnancy and delivery leave (16 weeks, 100% salary), adoption leave (4 weeks for each parent, 100% salary), calamity leave and other forms of short term leave (2 days or more, maintaining salary), and parental leave (unpaid, maximum period 6 months). The act also provides in a provisional right to short term care leave (illness of close relatives, 70% salary, maximum 10 days), and in a financial compensation for career interruption (max 40% of minimum wage, conditions: one year in service, substitution by social benefit-taker, labour-invalid, or re-integrating person). The Act Basic Provision Child Care (WbK) - proposed to parliament in 2002 and meant to be part of the Labour and Care Act as well - has been subject to fierce public and political debates concerning its expected financial impact. The Act, providing in a government subsidy to parents for childcare expenses with the aim of substituting the current supply-oriented subsidies by a demand-oriented approach, is expected to be in force in 2005.

In addition to these legal provisions, several policy initiatives have been developed. The first Purple Cabinet (a cabinet of right wing and social democrats) installed a Daily Routine Committee (November 1996 to April 1998), which linked the combination scenario to issues of time and spatial planning³. This approach was elaborated and concretised in the Stimulation Measure Daily Routine (1999-2003) set up by the second Purple Cabinet. The measure consisted of a Subsidy Arrangement (facilitating 140 experiments by municipalities, provincial states, companies, and NGOs, smoothening the combination of labour and care), a Project Bureau, and a Steering Group (responsible for advising on future policies). The experiments were grouped in 6 themes: cooperation facilities (education, child care, and leisure time facilities), local social policy, personal services, spatial planning, rural areas, and work/life balance in organisations. In 2001, an additional Committee Daily Routine Arrangements

² This scenario involves solving the problem of organizing care by creating opportunities and facilities for all citizens to combine paid labour with care.

³ The idea behind this is that time and space arrangements such as opening hours of shops and schools, location of homes, work and services are crucial in facilitating the combination of paid labour and care in daily life. This idea is rooted in feminist geography analyzing monofunctional spatial planning as male dominance.

was installed, focusing specifically on the mutual attuning of education, childcare and spare time facilities. Currently the successor of the Stimulation Measure - the Project Daily Routine – is running (initiated by the previous cabinet, Balkenende I and financed through EU-EQUAL), though the parliament is still waiting for the Cabinet Reaction to the advices of the Steering Group Daily Routine (2003) and the Commission Daily Routine Arrangements (2002)

In its Mid Term Policy Plan on Emancipation (2000) the second Purple Cabinet announced the resolution to prepare an Inventory Course of Life⁴, partly inspired by external recommendations and reports. The Inventory, published in January 2002, presents a range of policy options to facilitate the combination of roles in work, education, and care in different stages of life by adjusting the social security system. After a period of silence (cabinet Balkenende I), the current cabinet is preparing a so-called Course of Life Arrangement, which basically consists of a salary saving scheme for employees that allows for long-term leave. In autumn 2003, the cabinet decided to postpone the launch of the arrangement from January 2004 to January 2006, along with the introduction of a new fiscal system (Tax Plan 2004, including plans to abolish early pension arrangements). The government aims for an agreement with the social partners on the arrangement before April 2004. There are signs that the social partners are inclined increasingly to interpret the Course of Life Arrangement as a sabbatical opportunity for leisure or study, rather than as an arrangement for facilitating daily care. A heated topic of debate concerns the question whether or not a proposal for a separate long term leave act that provides in a legal right to long term leave should be sent to the parliament (proposal drafted by Purple Cabinet II). Employer organisations prefer to incorporate long term leave in the Course of Life Arrangement, implying that employees would need to come to an agreement with their employers. In February 2004, the government decided positively on sending a separate act proposal to parliament.

Next to these various legal and policy measures targeting ‘reconciliation’ of work and family life by women and men, the Dutch government has paid some specific attention to gender stereotypes. Especially stereotypes about and among men in the family have been (re)set on the emancipation policy agenda by the previous cabinet Balkenende I. In February 2003, the Secretary of State on Emancipation and Family Affairs (a short lived post that was re-transferred to the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment after a few months) launched the project Men in the Leading Role. The project consists of a study entitled Working Fathers, Caring Men (still to be published) and a multi-media campaign called Who Does What, including a TV-campaign and a digital discussion forum⁵. Stereotypes also were discussed in the digital forum To men’s/women’s advantage⁶, on which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment invited women and men to “share their opinion on future priorities of the Dutch emancipation policy” (January 2003). The main recommendations were presented in a brochure (June 2003), followed by a report with final conclusions in January 2004.

Austria

The 1990s were the period of growth, consolidation and expansion of women’s politics in Austria. In 1990, due to the logistics of the new coalition in government, the state secretary for general women’s issues was restructured to become the “Federal Ministry of Women’s Affairs”, and the ministry was allotted its own budget. The minister’s status also expanded. The minister had a cross-sectional responsibility for women’s issues and was actively taking part in the debates on family policy.

⁴ This idea is based upon – although seldom attributed to – a feminist analysis by Jeanne de Bruijn, professor in feminist policies in Amsterdam, that shows that problems citizens have in combining paid labour and care arise during specific periods in the course of their lives (de Bruijn 1993).

⁵ www.wiedoetwat.nl

⁶ www.mannenwordenerbetervan.nl / www.vrouwenwordenerbetervan.nl

Up to the year 2000 Austria was governed by a coalition government of SPÖ and ÖVP. In September 1999, the country elected a new parliament, and the right-wing FPÖ formed a coalition with the ÖVP. The new government claimed 'new politics' for Austria. In February 2000, the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs was dissolved. Women's issues were relocated, becoming a part of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family and Generations. The male Minister of Social Affairs and Generations established a 'men's section' within the ministry in 2000. One of the goals of the section is to support fathers' rights towards their children in the case of divorce.

In September 2002, the coalition between FPÖ and ÖVP broke up, but in April 2003 the ÖVP formed a coalition again with the now weaker FPÖ. The new government again shifted the women's agenda, from the ministry of social affairs to the ministry of health and women. The ministry for social affairs still has the agenda for families under a FPÖ state secretary. In accord with the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Austrian Council of Ministers implemented structures and measures of gender mainstreaming in July 2000. Austria claims to apply a dual-track approach in equality policies; that is implementing gender mainstreaming as a method to reveal the structural obstacles against the active participation of women in all spheres of society and sensitising policy makers regarding gender differences while at the same time continuing affirmative action for women. Feminist critiques however show that positive action and funding of women's projects are cut down, sometimes legitimised referring to gender mainstreaming (see the dissolution of the Federal Women's Ministry).

Family policy is located in a specific ministry (2004: Ministry for Social Security and Generations). Family policy is perceived as a 'conservative' issue. While the SPÖ claimed that family policy must be social policy (i.e. a policy to reduce social gaps between richer and poorer families), the ÖVP always claimed that family policy must be seen as a specific policy to support families – regardless of family income. Moreover, the parties differ in their perception of working mothers. While SPÖ's political goal has been to integrate all women, including mothers, into the labour force and to establish public childcare facilities, the ÖVP stresses the necessity of childcare within the family. But ÖVP changed its policy towards working mothers in the late nineties and now also is in favour of the adult breadwinner model, still at the same time encouraging mothers to stay at home with their children. 'Choice' became the metaphor for this new policy, leaving mothers alone with the burden to reconcile work and childcare. The ÖVP's political standpoint is strengthened by its new coalition partner in government, the FPÖ, who has similar views on the issue.

In 1990 the Parental Leave Act (Eltern-Karenzurlaubsgesetz) opened the possibility for fathers and mothers to take parental leave (up to 2 years). Since 1993 the Parental Leave Act guarantees the right to part time work right after the birth of the child instead of parental leave. As the ratio of fathers who went on parental leave was rather poor, the law again was changed in 1997. This reform links six months of the whole parental leave to the participation of both parents. Nevertheless, the participation of fathers is still around 1%. Significantly, this amendment discriminated against single mothers who don't have the chance to share parental leave with a partner and who only can go on leave for 18 months.

Austria is a country that – compared to other European countries – transfers a big amount of money directly to families (like birth allowances and family allowance for children until the age of 27). In 1999 the first part of a 'family policy package' was enacted by the grand SPÖ/ÖVP coalition. The package raised the fiscal support for families, especially for multi-children families. It also flexibilised the parental leave regulations: Three months of parental leave could be postponed until the child's 7th birthday. The father now has an individual right to go on parental leave, and parental leave can be divided two times between the mother and the father. In 2000 the second part of the 'family package' came in force. It again raised the amount of family allowance.

Although some of the characteristics of the Austrian gender regime and the male breadwinner – female caregiver model changed in the last decade (related to increasing female labour participation, change of family structures, high rates of single mothers in Europe and the rise of levels of female education), the perception of the division of labour in families did not change significantly in the opinion of the public and of (conservative) law makers. Austria still has big hierarchies in wages and a strong gendered division of labour. Although the female employment rates were rising (due to part-time work) the gender gaps in the labour market have increased, women have higher unemployment rates, the gender-hierarchical segregation is strong and there is a big wage gap (Leitner 2001: 157ff.). Also the parental leave regulations gave incentives to women to stay at home with their children, resulting in problems to return to their workplace (Leitner 2001: 162).

In the mid 1990s, after Austria's accession to the European Union, the SPÖ/ÖVP government started austerity policies and welfare state retrenchment. At the same time ideas of restoring family values arose. The Women's Minister opposed the policies of the conservative Family Minister. Since then family policy has been one of the hot issues in Austrian politics and has been debated extensively in the media. Since 1998, the ÖVP has repeatedly suggested to embody a stronger protection of the family by amending the Austrian constitution.

In 1996 the government launched a program to create more child care facilities (600 Mio ATS for 1997, 1998 and 1999). In the same year, the Women's Minister Helga Konrad, started an initiative called 'Fifty-Fifty' ('Halbe-Halbe'). According to this initiative, men and women should share house- and care work evenly. For a short period gender stereotypes were a policy target. A shift occurred as the new ÖVP/FPÖ government wanted to enhance care work and to create incentives for childcare at home. The FPÖ had started this campaign earlier in the federal province of Carinthia, where Jörg Haider was governor, arguing that women should have the choice between waged labour and domestic childcare. The FPÖ therefore suggested to introduce the so called "children's cheque" (Kinderscheck). According to this model, all mothers receive a certain amount of money to either buy public childcare or stay at home with their children and take the money as wage for childcare. In June 2001 the ÖVP/FPÖ decided on the law on children's care benefits (Kinderbetreuungsgeldgesetz), following the path of the FPÖ model and abolishing the parental leave regulation. The child care benefit (Law on children's care benefit) is no longer a compensation for wage loss during child care (as was the parental leave), but it should be seen as a (rather low) salary for child care for all mothers (and fathers).

In 2002, the government coalition broke up, but the new coalition of the same two parties again stressed the importance of the family. The new government positioned family issues in the debates on population policy and decline of birth rates. In September 2003 a new debate started as the Minister of Education (ÖVP) said in a newspaper interview that the Austrian youth is too selfish and not enough interested in founding a family, leading to declining birth rates in Austria. This evoked an outcry in the Austrian public. Federal chancellor Schüssel publicly made an argument against his minister; but nevertheless a new value frame of family policy has been set on the agenda.

Greece

Family policy does not have, for various reasons, a long history in Greece as areas of equality policy. Of course family policy has always been important, but the target was not until very recently gender equality. Family issues were always at the centre of public interest, political debate and government policy in Greece due to the paramount importance of the institutions of family and marriage for the Greek society. The underdevelopment of the welfare state in Greece has traditionally burdened women, who had and still have to fulfil roles that in other societies are undertaken by the state. For the past 5 or 6 years, the family has been at the centre of public debate and official action, since it is

involved in a more general discourse on the all-embracing issues of demography, employment and social security schemes. In this context, various discussions and policy plans have been developed, involving motherhood protection schemes, insurance, pregnancy and social security benefits for married and single mothers, regulations for family life and work reconciliation, which contain elements that can be considered to promote women's position within family and society. However, only limited state interventions have taken place and overall family policy has not adjusted to emerging new social conditions. Ongoing discussions focus on the reorientation of existing policies and the formulation of new and more coherent policy programmes that will include more explicitly a gender dimension.

Family policy has not been systematically developed in Greece after World War II, but specific measures were indirectly included in a range of social regulations. Particularly, various studies indicate that despite population decrease and low birth rates after the 1980s an explicit and effective family policy has not yet been shaped. Only some laws and regulations regarding employment and social security include elements that can be considered as supporting families. However, these measures are characterised by complexity, lack of co-ordination and disparate distribution of benefits among social groups. A gender equality perspective is apparent only recently in specific measures. The supportive role of the family counter-balances to an extent the state's inability to satisfy social needs and the role of women is decisive for the care of the younger and the older family members (Symeonidou, 1997).

Family policy in Greece is limited to a socio-security nexus concerning the following policy areas: a) employment policy (reduced working hours, parental leave, maternity leave and provisions, prevention of dismissal for pregnant women, help at home for the elderly etc), b) insurance policy (maternity allowances, childbirth benefits, pension rights for uninsured divorced spouses etc), c) socio-educational policy (nurseries, children's activities in school, all day schools etc), d) income policy (tax exemptions) and e) family benefits for children (working parents support for private and public sector employees), welfare benefits, and benefits to support unprotected children, benefits for families with many children, benefit to mothers for the third child, life-long pension for mothers with many children etc). However the benefits allocated to people entitled are very low and in no case do they cover the cost of children's upbringing. Benefit objectives are connected to family size. The emphasis is on large families (3+ children), thus leaving out thousands of families and households. This direction subordinates social policies for families to the commands of a demographic policy focusing all public support on families with many children ("politeknes" in Greek). The provisions take into account neither the new developments and changes within families nor new functions of family members in the framework of reciprocal obligations and responsibilities in the private sphere.

The rising participation of married women in the labour market as well as the increase in the numbers of divorces and births out of wedlock lead to the redefinition of gender roles in and out of the house and to the economic independence of women. While dual earner families have increased and despite the changes in social roles the idea of gender equality in the domestic sphere has not been recognised as an issue in Greek equality policy. It is evident that re-organisation of economic responsibilities was not accompanied by a redistribution of domestic responsibilities in the context of two-working parent families. Women continue to be responsible for domestic work and taking care of small children.

The most important laws during the period 1995-2003 with regard to family and gender issues are those related to provisions for support of large families and facilitation of working mothers and fathers. They concern the operation of daylong schools and regulations on parental leave, laws regarding the protection of pregnancy and maternity as well the protection of pregnant in the workplace. Furthermore, some laws concern the institutionalization of informal types of work, such as

work at home and tele-work whereas the gender dimension seems not to play an important role in public debate. Recently (29/1/2004) a law about "Issues of Social Security and other Provisions" was passed. Its article 4 regulates issues pertaining to rights of pension for divorced-widowed men and women. This is an attempt for the protection of the 'weaker spouse' and particularly the protection of uninsured single divorced women.

(Shifts in) Frames around the organisation of labour?

The Netherlands

Dutch policy and legislation in the realm of labour and care appears to be framed primarily around the notion of 'combining citizens', reflecting a primacy of the labour market. People are addressed firstly in their roles as employees, combining being presented as the key to make room for people's 'additional' roles in other realms of life, including the family. Generally, the government refrains from direct intervention in the organisation of intimacy (stated to belong to the privacy of people and families) or in the organisation of labour (realm of the social partners). Instead it aims to "create conditions" to enhance people's 'freedom of choice'. Despite these common elements, shifts and variations occur which make it hard to pinpoint 'the' combining frame. The overall problem sketched, in the policy documents we analysed, concerns the lack in 'choice options' or opportunities to combine labour and care. Labour market participation is seen as the standard with which care needs to be combined. Only for the Project Group Redistribution Unpaid Labour (1995) care seems to prevail to paid labour. In the diagnosis of the problem changes in society are often presented as a cause of peoples' combining problems. Some texts picture the lack in combining facilities as problematic because it hinders women's labour participation (speech Minister Melkert 1998). Other texts reverse this causality: they picture women's increased labour market participation as a cause of the combining problems in society (CEDAW-letter 1998).

Usually, refraining from enforced regulation in the prognosis is legitimized based not only upon a demand for 'policy freedom' in view of international treaties (CEDAW-letter), but also upon a more general reluctance for top-down intervention itself. Usually this results in complex compromises even in legislation, nearly parodying the Dutch polder model⁷. Take for instance the 2001 cabinet proposal, granting employees a 'provisional right' to long-term leave, meaning that this right can be denied by employers in the case of 'strong company interests'. Likewise, the draft Act Basic Provision Childcare assigns employers the responsibility of financing a share of their employees' childcare facilities, but does not oblige them to do so (speech Minister de Geus 2003). Appeals to free market mechanisms increasingly play a role in the prognosis as well. Underpinning the current proposals for the demand-oriented financing of childcare and the salary saving scheme for long-term leave, free market mechanisms are assumed to promote a better attuning to individual needs and to enhance people's freedom of choice.

In the analysis we encountered shifts in the representation of people's roles outside the labour market. More specifically, we found that the meaning of 'care' varies while the combination scenario seems to be stretched beyond its original meaning at times. In the early 1990s, the labour market was juxtaposed to the realm of 'unpaid labour', defined as the daily emotional/physical care for people close by (Project Group Redistribution Unpaid Labour). In the successive Daily Routine projects (see Stimulation Measure 1999-2001) the policy scope was extended to combining all kinds of daily activities, ranging from work and care, to shopping, to health care facilities, and even recreation. In

⁷ What is more popularly known as the "Poldermodel" refers to the consensual political exchange and concertational corporatist decision-making structures in the Netherlands, more specifically between organized capital and labour in this country. See Becker 2001

legislation, on the other hand, the only realm demarcated as a legitimate ground for leave appears to be care (Labour and Care Act), and here, care is conceived of primarily as the care for children. Currently, the government is preparing a Course of Life Arrangement in which education is included as a leave ground as well, but this arrangement does not provide in the legal right to leave: it consists of a saving scheme assigning individual responsibility to employees in building their own leave budget (fiscally facilitated by the government).

Greece

While to some extent dual earner families have started to become a frequent family model in Greece, and despite social changes, the idea of gender equality in the domestic sphere has not been recognized as priority in policy making. In the overall social development, various obstacles are present that make gender equality difficult to achieve. The most important laws and provisions during the period 1995-2003 with regard to family and gender issues are those focused at the facilitation of working parents and pregnant women-mothers and at enhancing women's participation in the labour market. They concern the operation of daylong schools; regulations on work hours, parental leave, help at home of the elderly family members, the institutionalization of informal types of work, the protection of pregnant women in the workplace. However, the internal rationale of family policy is related to family size. The emphasis in provisions is given to large families (3+ children).

Analysing a law on "Working women during pregnancy and working mothers in childbed and breast-feeding", we found that frames reflect traditional social roles. The underlying norm is: "women must be protected in order to fulfil their duties". Furthermore, many cases stress "bad working conditions for pregnant women", or that "women are threatened to be fired if they are pregnant", and that "the employers must follow orders and take the necessary measures for the safety and health of both women and foetus". In the Bill that regulates issues of informal work, where women predominate, the speaker (woman MP) believes "that suggested provisions reinforce gender inequality and are against women". As she points out: "Although the state is responsible for the regulation of labour relations, it shows an anti-labour mentality and lack of concern for the developments in the labour market, for the protection of women's rights in employment. The regulations suggested by the law favours the employers only. The underprivileged groups are working women and mothers as well workers/employees".

In the National Action Plan, women are considered a 'vulnerable group because of their low participation in employment'. The basic premise is the reconciliation of family and work life. For this purpose there is a need to develop high quality structures harmonizing professional and family life. It is believed that women's participation in the labour market will contribute to the prosperity of national labour force and the development capital of the country.

Austria

The frame on 'reconciliation of work and family life' which we found to be hegemonic in Austria until 1999/2000, applied by the social democratic SPÖ (and Green Party), stressed the importance of labour market participation of women. A more equal sharing of family and care work between men and women was continuously part of this frame. This emphasis was not only found in parliamentary debates and party programmes, but also reflected continuously in media articles at the time. By 1999 (discussions during election campaigns for parliamentary elections, followed by a new government coalition ÖVP/FPÖ), the discourse took on quite divergent concepts.

After 1999/2000, there is a major shift as a clear focus on the family emerges in the framing. The dual-breadwinner-model, in the new frame, is modified as a model of one (male) main breadwinner, with another (female) additional contributor to family income. To stress the fact that

women are mainly regarded as 'additional income earners', it is held that they may feel 'forced' to work since the income of the main – male – breadwinner is no longer sufficient for an entire family. Implicitly, women are seen as preferring to - or: as expected to prefer to - care for their children at home, only choosing gainful employment (and thus, not to care for their children themselves) if they are 'forced' by economic restraints. The 'force' of having to (re)enter gainful employment is contrasted to the argument of 'choice between work and family'. In this new frame, the economy has an ambivalent position. The negative depiction of economy (economic restraints forcing women to leave the family and take up work) is opposed to the positive depiction of family in economic terms: family as 'enterprise' (Government Program 2003). Economy – or, more precise, enterprises - is also called upon to create a more family-friendly world of work. In this frame, economy is thus depicted as both negative (danger to families), positive (role model for socialisation), and responsible for providing family-friendly conditions.

These highly contradictory frames are all part of the shift of meanings in 'reconciliation' frames, which we identified to have taken place. The original meaning of facilitating women's labour market participation and redistributing paid labour and unpaid care work between men and women has changed to encompass a value frame with respect to founding a family, caring for a family, and prioritising family over gainful employment. This is linked to a demographic aspect of ageing society and decline in birth rate.

(Shifts in) Frames around the organisation of intimacy: producing more (national) citizens?

The Netherlands

To some extent, non-traditional family structures are taken as a standard in Dutch policymaking and legislation. This certainly holds for double income households, but also for same-sex couples who in most spheres legally are equalised to heterosexual couples. Other non-traditional family structures, however, are not recognized as legitimate standards for policy and legislation. In the rare cases that such households – like divorced parents, single parents, childless couples, or singles - are mentioned, they tend to be pictured as 'problem groups' rather than being granted the positive connotation generally attached to expressions of 'modernity'. During the presentation of the final advice of the Committee Daily Routine, the minister of Social Affairs and Employment describes the case of a single mother and her specific problems, while at the same time individualising these problems by claiming that her situation is "not representative" given the "general labour and care situation in the Netherlands".

Many texts refer to 'changing family patterns' as a factor that legitimises policy action in combining labour and care. The government turns out to be relatively arbitrary in appealing to the need to keep up with changes in society. The policy note Position and Function of the Family (1996) even explicitly appeals to traditional family connotations: it stresses the role of the family as the crucial pillar for a healthy society. At the same time, migrant families are pictured as problematic for not being able to keep up with changes and (new) society demands.

The government's definition of what constitutes a family is non-traditional though, in the sense that families are not restricted to heterosexual married couples with children. The Project Group Redistribution Unpaid Labour goes furthest in this respect: it even transgresses family boundaries by defining unpaid labour as the care for oneself, children, parents, housemates and members of the primary social network. The government's conceptualisation of the family is the definition as formulated in the policy note Position and Function of the Family (1996): one or more adults taking care of/being responsible for children. Though most texts do not explicitly define families, this family

model seems to be generally accepted. In legislation, however, the model seems to have been subjected to implicit modifications. In parliament, the draft Labour and Care Act has been fiercely criticised for being attuned primarily to *cohabiting* parents in *double income* households, neglecting the interests of divorced or single parents – let alone childless singles - who might be in need to take care of relatives as well. Only in exceptional cases like calamity leave (2 days, death of a relative), the act provides in a right to leave for other relatives than children. Legislation also has been drafted on the right to care leave for terminally ill relatives (Long Term Leave Arrangement). While including ‘modern’ forms of partnership - unmarried registered partners, same-sex partners - the proposal adopts a strict concept of the family - children, partners, and parents – which does not even include brothers and sisters.

Producing more citizens was until recently not a subject in the Dutch family policy, as Dutch women still choose to have as many children as their Scandinavian counterparts, despite the fact that reconciliation policy in The Netherlands is much weaker than arrangements in Scandinavian countries (Knijn & Hooghiemstra, 2004). Therefore there seems to be no demographic need for the Dutch government to create better conditions for reconciliation. Also the habit of Dutch women to take part-time jobs has weakened the demand for better state arrangements for reconciliation. At a recent Debate on Emancipation and Family organized on May 15, 2004 by the Dutch Family Council in cooperation with an NGO expert centre on gender equality (E-Quality) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, warnings were given that not having a reproduction policy at all will have its repercussions on Dutch society in terms of higher medical costs and higher financial discrepancies between families. Higher medical costs, because women postpone their pregnancy into their 30s and discrepancies in society, because lower educated women will prefer to have children and stay at home to take care of them.

Greece

In Greece the crucial problem depicted in the texts is related to the drop in the birth rate. This subordinates social policy for families to the commands of the demographic policy focusing all public support on families with many children (*‘politeknes’* in Greek). In the analyzed texts it is stressed that the drop in birth rate is an ‘ongoing tendency and is related to wider economic and social changes’ and more particularly it is related to ‘new family patterns and young couples preferences as well working women’s negative attitudes towards pregnancy and maternity’. The speakers – MP’s from the socialist government party - suggest that the agreement of all parties is necessary in solving the problem. For this purpose ‘the ultimate goal will be to shape a national demographic policy involving the socio-economic integration of migrants and motives for families in order to have more than two children’. It is also implied that a ‘drop in the number of abortions’ will contribute to an increase in birth rates. They do not refer to gender in the prognosis of this problem.

On the same topic, the right wing opposition speaker (MP) considers again that ‘the mechanisms that reproduce the problem are new family types (cohabiting couples, children out of wedlock) which have significantly changed the traditional family structure’. Also, ‘modern cultural patterns and loss of religious feeling are contributing to a weakening of family bonds’. Given the rise of various ethno-nationalisms in the Balkans in the previous decade that had as a result in certain cases the redrawing of the borders, these countries are thought to be ‘a national threat’. In this context, the solution of the problem is crucial and must be a ‘national objective’. It can be argued that the speech depicts an ‘overall supremacy to the nation’ which seems however to contradict the speaker’s view on the respect of the rights of couples. Another MP for the right wing expresses that the demographic ageing of the population is a serious problem and emphasises that the demographic problem is a ‘cultural problem resulting from a crisis in the value-orientations of society’. He describes its different

aspects as a cultural and social problem (related to modern couples' self-centred well-being mentality and behaviour as well as to society's 'powerlessness' to react); a socio-economic problem (interrelated with economic deprivation that may create an explosive situation threatening social cohesion and social structures) and a national problem (compared to the rapid increase in the population of Turkey, the ageing of Greek population lags behind).

From a totally different point of view the left wing MP argues that 'women do not play the role of 'childbearing machines' in society' and they must not be considered as the only responsible for children and family. It appears that women are political actors having also an active role in the labour market. At the same time, they struggle to strengthen their position in society by combining family and professional life. The speaker expresses more liberal views than the previous ones concerning women's role in employment and contemporary society. He appears sensitive to the problems that women have and their efforts to reconcile maternity with professional life. His stand on the issue seems to be the equality of gender roles within the family life. The state has a role in providing women with family and maternity support involving public and free nurseries, funds to help young couples and flexible working hours for women and mothers.

Overall most of the frames are related to contemporary cultural patterns which have influenced the way people conceptualise the idea and notion of the institution of family. 'Consumer culture' and 'socio-economic prosperity' have contributed to society's overall 'rejection of the traditional value-system'. Throughout the speeches however there is no particular reference to gender roles and the traditional model of man and woman as a couple prevails in the analysed texts, even in the texts from left wing speakers. It is also pointed out that women's rising participation in employment, abortions and sterility are causes of the problem. Moreover, in the representation of the policy problem, women are almost solely responsible for childbearing. At the same time, young women are presented as being focused on career priorities implying that they may be less interested in starting a family.

Austria

As said before, after 1999/2000 a clear focus on family emerged in Austria: 'domestic work' was now to be 'valued equally to waged labour'; 'reconciliation' was contrasted to the concept of 'choice (of women) between work and family life'. 'Family' was de-gendered and the question of having children was politicised. In such a frame, the family is the centre of a good and prosperous Austrian society, and an ideal place to provide for a child's needs. The pre-modern, multi-child farmer's family is presented as a response to the perceived danger of 'erosion of families' caused by globalisation, modernisation and individualisation. Financial benefits are seen as stimulants for young people to give birth to more children, and for women in particular to give up employment and care for their children themselves. A demographic aspect is stressed: Austria is presented as a 'dying nation', in need of more (Austrian) children in order to keep up the pension and welfare system. Women now constitute a homogenous group of persons who are best capable to perform caring tasks within families. The importance of 'founding' a family (i.e. to give birth to – and care for – children), to perform care work within that family and to value this work equally to waged labour are central to the frame which we found to have become hegemonic after 2000. Men are seen as (main) breadwinners, who, individually, should try to be more active fathers.

Contrasted to the focus on family as sanctuary, yet continuously applied by ÖVP and FPÖ, is the neo-liberal frame of 'choice' and the dual-breadwinner model. As for 'freedom of choice', 'reconciling work and family life' in the frame of the conservative parties takes on a strong, and contradictory, value frame: favouring – thus: 'choosing' – family and family work seems to be the normative priority, particularly for women. In terms of the two sets of policy responses identified by

Duncan, it seems that in Austria, with its visible retraditionalisation of gender relations in family policy, mostly negative measures are part of the current frame.

Where is gender equality in gender equality policies?

The Netherlands

Gender inequality in terms of a difference in status and power, or patriarchy is a non issue in the Dutch family policy strategy. Gender is often not mentioned explicitly. It seems that political correctness with neutral words combined with ambiguity is more often the case. In the problem representation of the Project Group Daily Routine gender does not seem to play a role at all: all people are assumed to have daily routine problems. The project group pictures the problem as a matter of the organisation of society, failing to keep up with changing work and family patterns. In other texts that do specifically refer to people's sex/gender, women tend to be pictured as the main category having this problem, or even having caused this problem, while men remain largely out of sight.

The Cabinet Paper on Long Term Leave even pictures women's labour participation as a threat to the 'the social quality' of society and of individual lives, implicitly appealing to women's traditional roles as caretakers. The text reveals a remarkable friction between diagnosis and prognosis: while stressing women's responsibility in 'mutual care of people', at the same time women are urged to go out and work. Combining facilities are seen as the key to solve this friction, avoiding assigning any (explicit) responsibility to men. While in this text as in many, women form an explicit social category in the diagnosis, this hardly appears to be the case in the prognosis. Most texts tend to make all people responsible for resolving the (combining) problem, irrespective of sex.

Gender stereotypes within the context of the family – especially stereotypes about and among men – have been (re)set on the emancipation policy agenda by the Secretary of State on Emancipation and Family Affairs. In his opening speech of the project "Men in the Leading Role" – targeted at promoting men's responsibility in the private realm⁸ - women and men ultimately are assigned the shared responsibility of "discussing their mutual task distribution" (speech State Secretary Phoa 2003). One could remark cynically here that in this speech the important thing seems to be that partners discuss tasks, and that it does not seem to matter what the outcome of this discussion is. Also when it comes to financing childcare or leave arrangements 'shared responsibility' is the keyword: employers, employees, and the government are supposed to share the costs (speech Minister Melkert 1998, Course of Life Arrangement 2003, speech Minister de Geus 2003). Stereotypes also have been discussed in the digital forum *To men's/women's advantage*⁹, on which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment invited women and men to "share their opinion on future priorities of the Dutch emancipation policy"¹⁰.

Greece

Women are usually perceived in policy texts as wives and mothers, and when the above are linked to working (wives or mothers) they are presented in a heroic manner, in which their sacrifice and inclination to offer is described in elegiac terms. Women's traditional roles are never disputed as theirs, not even in the most progressive policy frames. The only relative demand is that they have to be helped by the state to 'fulfill their roles' as mothers and wives (when working). The basic premise is

8 The project Men in the Leading Role (launched in February 2003) consists of a study entitled Working Fathers, Caring Men (still to be published) and a multi-media campaign called Who Does What, including a TV-campaign and the digital discussion forum www.wiedoetwat.nl. [p://www.mannenwordenerbetervan.nl](http://www.mannenwordenerbetervan.nl) www.mannenwordenerbetervan.nl/ www.vrouwenwordenerbetervan.nl)

10 (start: January 2003). The main recommendations were presented in a brochure (June 2003), followed by a report with final conclusions in January 2004.

the reconciliation of family and work life. For this purpose there is a need to develop structures harmonizing professional and family life and rendering services must be of high quality specifications. It is believed that the improvement of women's participation in the labour market will contribute to the prosperity of the national labour force and to the development capital of the country. While the analysed texts refer to working women and working mothers, there is no reference to gender roles and the problem of upbringing children in Greece seems to concern mainly women-mothers.

The speakers of the Left have more liberal and progressive ideas. They underline that demographic issues are linked to economic and social changes associated with women's position and emancipation. At the age of fertility women happen to be at the same time at an economically productive age. These are two different life patterns, and thus the possibility should be given to women to accomplish both, something that is not happening today. As to gender the above speakers mention that women are not 'childbearing machines' and that they must feel free to decide when and how many children they will have. They also believe that the state must support maternity. However the dichotomy of female and male roles characterizes the whole of the political discourse and is obvious and unchallenged even in the above. Across the spectrum of political affiliations traditional stereotypes of gender roles seem to exist in all collective representations.

Austria

The family as a site of gender inequality or as related to gender equality questions has been hardly referred to in Austria, other than appeals to individuals to change their behaviour (call for 'more active fathers'). The family is seen as society's basic unit, as a sanctuary providing children with everything they need. While care within families is seen as 'naturally' the best possible kind of care, the quality of public childcare is called into question. Sharing responsibility for childcare between women and men is viewed as desirable, but only in the sense of appealing to men to change their roles as fathers and help women with childcare. This goes along with a call for more fathers' rights in the case of divorces. The notion of 'family' seemingly combines contradictory frames: a (modern) enterprise as well as a (traditional) inter-generational sanctuary as place where many children grow up to be valuable citizens for Austrian society and where the old and sick are cared for. This care work is now to be seen as work, and is to be valued equally, yet not paid equally, to gainful employment. Thus, family is mainly depicted as sanctuary that is contrasted to a market-oriented world of work - but in the same frame it is seen as smallest place of economy and – unpaid but valued – work.

In Austria a 'reconciliation' frame was strong in the mid-1990's, but by the onset of the new century there has been a parallel retraditionalisation of gender relations (such as assigning a primary and 'natural' responsibility of women for care work), along with an individualisation of gender structures. Individual behaviour of young people, and (implicitly) particularly of young women, such as decisions on whether or not to have children, and at which age to give birth, is now seen as responsible for the 'demographic time-bomb'. While gender is de-articulated, the generation issue is politicised in this context: reference is made to the ageing society and difficulties to keep up the pension and welfare system in general. The young generation is blamed for not fulfilling their duties assigned to them by the 'generation contract'. Within the set of policy responses identified by Simon Duncan, this discourse can be seen as rather strengthening the role of women as primary care givers by now suggesting that care work (which is still predominantly done by women) is 'valued equally' to gainful employment by society. It does not challenge the traditional division of labour nor attempt to put a more equal distribution of care work between men and women on the agenda, other than a weak appeal to change individual men's behaviour and assigning responsibility to 'the economy' in order to create a more 'family-friendly world of work'.

Conclusions

The Netherlands

In general, the diagnosis of the gender inequality problem addressed by family policies seems to be located in the labour market, increasingly closely linked to neo-liberal notions of choice. The problem sketched concerns the lack in 'choice options' or opportunities to combine labour and care. Labour market participation of women is the goal in almost all texts, the standard with which care needs to be combined. The problem is mostly pictured as a matter of the Dutch society failing to keep up with changing work and family patterns. In this problem representation gender more and more does not seem to play a role at all: all people are assumed to have daily routine problems. In this way, the problem is becoming degendered. In texts that do specifically refer to people's sex/gender, women tend to be pictured as the main problem holders or even causers, while men remain largely out of sight. Some texts picture the lack in combining facilities as problematic because it hinders women's labour participation. Other texts reverse this causality: they picture women's increased labour market participation as a cause of the combining problems in society. The Cabinet Paper on Long Term Leave even pictures women's labour participation as a threat to 'the social quality' of society and the quality of individual lives, implicitly appealing to women's traditional roles as caretakers. Combining facilities are seen as the key to solve the friction that arises because women are supposed to be responsible for 'people's mutual care', while also being urged to go out and work. With some exceptions the analysed texts avoid assigning any (explicit) responsibility to men and thereby bypass the need to take a position on preferred gender roles. While in many texts women form an explicit social category in the diagnosis, this hardly appears to be the case in the prognosis: most texts tend to make all people responsible for resolving the (combining) problem, irrespective of sex. In the opening speech of the project "Men in the Leading Role" women and men ultimately are assigned the shared responsibility of discussing their mutual task distribution. Also when it comes to financing childcare or leave arrangements 'shared responsibility' is the keyword: employers, employees, and the government are supposed to share the costs (speech Melkert 1998, Course of Life Arrangement 2003, speech de Geus 2003).

Usually, the prognosis explicitly refrains from enforced regulation, and turns to complex compromises where different actors are called upon, but no actor is given a strong obligation. In this sense, family policy is mostly soft measures. What counts as a family is not traditional in its explicit definition, but implicit traditional assumptions about double income cohabiting parents can be detected, and the propositions made are mainly tailored to the needs of this category. What counts as 'care' when it comes to the 'combining of labour and care' has been extended to mean very different things, including leisure time and permanent education (taking care of oneself). In this process, the concept of care has been emptied to some extent. The Dutch family policy does not seem to perceive nor address gender inequality within families as a problem in itself, due to the strong accent on labour market problems resulting from the domestic division of labour.

Greece

The demographic issue is a central topic when analysing family policy in Greece. In the analyzed texts we can identify two types of frames that revolve around the demographic problem. The speakers of the two major parties (PASOK and New Democracy) consider the demographic problem as a national threat and don't take into account changes in the institution of the family and in the labour market. They also point out that the demographic problem is a cultural problem resulting from a crisis in the value-orientations of society. Their frame is a mere reflection of conservative views associated with traditional societal values. More specifically, they severely criticize contemporary life-styles and values that are the products of cultural consumer patterns relating to materialism and economic

prosperity. New family types are depicted as a problem in itself. There is no overt reference to gender roles except to the traditional model of men and women as couples with specific complementary roles. The speakers from the left while making the link to women's position and emancipation still distinguish strongly between female and male roles, taking the position that women should be supported to raise children and participate in the labour market at the same time. For them the problem is the double burden of the women that should be alleviated. A second topic in our analysis is maternity protection in relation to the demographic problem and the low birth rate. Working women during pregnancy and working mothers during childbed and breast-feeding must be protected in order to fulfil their duties. In this case, frames do not reflect cultural patterns but entail legal measures for the convergence of Greek legislation with EU directives. Such frames do not express party ideologies. In the debates around this it is clear that the aim is to protect women to fulfil their – traditional – duties (raise happy families), and that gender equality is not the perspective used.

The third theme is women's employment and parental facilities. In Greece working conditions combine the following characteristics: inflexible working hours, limited range of options available to employees, and incompatibility between working hours and the hours observed by the social infrastructure. In the discussions on the establishment of provisions such as 'day-long kindergarten and primary schools' (Law 2525/1997) these provisions are stressed to be 'a vital measure for families and more specifically for families with two working parents'. At the same time, the regulation signifies the Ministry's endeavour to improve pre-school education. Although the text refers to both parents there is no mentioning of gender equality, because the problem of upbringing children in Greece is seen as concerning mainly women-mothers. There is no reference to the equality of gender roles in social and private life. Most of the frames reflect a dichotomous perception on the distribution of gender roles according to the traditional family model. 'Working parents' and 'social needs' constitute the basic points of reference. Since mentalities and practices in the context of everyday life are not currently changing, reforms and provisions in the policy area do not have a positive impact in the private sphere.

As we saw, recent provisions neither take into account the new developments and changes in the family nor new functions of its members in the framework of reciprocal obligations and responsibilities in the private sphere. As a result there can be no general consciousness of equality between men and women in the Greek family and in the related policy context. In Greece the redistribution of gender roles within family life is not seen as an essential precondition to promote equal opportunities between spouses and there is no particular suggestion to achieve this goal.

Austria

Preliminary results of analyses carried out in the MAGEEQ-project show that shifts in frames on 'reconciliation of work and family life' in Austria can be identified in the period 1995 – 2002. We hold that these shifts occur along changing (hegemonic) discourses attributed to political power balances (changes of government). A striking aspect is that these shifts do not occur along an even line without contradictions; the frames rather add conflicting or even divergent meanings to an idea which originally seemed to have had different goals. A gender equality perspective in the sense of a more equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women has been weakened in the frames analysed between 1995 and 2003; in its place, a de-gendered frame focussing on the family/children as the smallest important cell of society has emerged.

In the Austrian frames on 'reconciliation between work and family life' between 1995 and 2003, preliminary findings show a similar, yet markedly different, cooptation of gender concepts as the one identified by Maria Stratigaki (2004) on the EU-level. Stratigaki argues that at the EU level, the original policy goal of redistributing domestic and care work between men and women, has become

subordinated to a labour-market oriented objective (encourage flexible forms of employment). Cooptation means that the meaning of a key concept - sharing - was conceptually transformed by its subordination to different policy priorities - labour market -, resulting in loss of potential for changing gender relations. (Stratigaki 2004:3). A cooptation of concepts did not only occur on the EU-level, but also in the Austrian frames; however, even if the key concept originally appears to be the same in both the EU and the Austrian frames - more equal sharing - the policy priorities to which this original concept was subordinated in the Austrian frames clearly differ from the one identified on the EU-level (encourage flexible forms of labour).

More specifically, we can identify a shift away from the issue of women's labour market participation towards a strong emphasis on family, as a de-gendered place of important socialisation and tasks for society, as well as towards a naturalisation of women and men and a retraditionalisation of the distribution of labour. Even in the frame of the Social Democratic and Green Party after 2000, female gainful employment is not stressed as much as it was during the mid-1990's, rather, 'reconciliation' of work and family life for women is stressed. Cooptation in Austrian 'reconciliation' frames has taken place in the sense that the original meaning of 'sharing responsibilities between men and women' is taking on a value frame of founding a family and caring for family members, with a tendency to hold women responsible for the decline of families and birth rates where that value frame is particularly strong. A loss of potential for changing gender relations is apparent. Increasing women's gainful employment figures and redistributing care work and paid work between women and men, as original goals, seem to have become superseded by the new family-as-sanctuary-frame. This new frame seems to carry rather contradictory goals: women are to be both the primarily responsible ones for family care and domestic work – and, at the same time, be available for flexible forms of labour – because of their roles as caregivers. 'Choice' between family and work may be seen as a metaphor for market oriented flexibilisation: on the one hand, the new frame identifies women's labour-market participation (and especially full-time participation) as a potential danger for the family-as-sanctuary; on the other hand, it is seen as inevitable that women must contribute to family income by preferably flexible part-time work.

In contrast to Maria Stratigaki's findings about the cooptation of the concept of 'reconciling family life and work' towards a market oriented objective on the EU-level, a clear labour-market focus was present in Austria only until 1999/2000; afterwards, a different kind of cooptation can be detected, as labour-market objectives are articulated in a more hidden, less obvious way, accompanied by the emergence of a contradictory family-as-sanctuary frame, in which gender equality has become de-articulated as a goal.

Discussion

There are several similarities across Europe when it comes to family policy in connection with gender equality. One is that the focus is primarily on *the division of paid labour* as the diagnosis of the policy problem that should be addressed by family policies. The problem is then that women do not participate actively enough on the labour market, due to family responsibilities. The major goal being a competitive economy, measures on reconciliation are then seen as win-win measures, contributing both to the economy and to gender equality. Unfortunately, our analysis shows also that in the process of implementation of such measures, the balance between these two goals shifts heavily towards the economy and gender equality seems to fade away (levensloopregeling Netherlands, flexible labour EU). Accents on a diagnosis on *the division of unpaid labour or care* as a problem are scarce, and seem to be found mainly in the 1990s (in the Netherlands, Austria and at the EU level). Slight echoes on the importance of more involvement of fathers are the only part of this that remains, but these calls are never connected to hard policy. Besides, the undervaluing of care and housework is almost never

addressed as part of gender equality policies. This is ambivalent in Austria: the frame of calling for a stronger valuing of care and housework is quite strong, and - although it is connected to assumptions on women's duties in care - is referred to frequently as a gender equality issue. Yet, stronger valuing of care and housework in itself is not what is called for, nor are concrete measures proposed to let more men participate in this highly valued service for society. It seems that the valorisation is mainly called for in order to make it more attractive to women to perform these tasks and to choose the right things: care and housework. Thus, a valorisation of care and housework that is called for as part of gender equality policies in Austria amounts to a retraditionalisation of gender roles.

A second similarity is the *absence of attention for gender inequality within families* as a problem in itself. In most texts, families are constructed as a safe heaven, and problems occurring within families are seen as linked to changes in the structure of families, or to women's participation on the labour market. The implicit reasoning is that problems in families are a novel thing, something that has not been there, or that has not been there as much in the past. Because there are many problems that are mentioned in connection to families, such as low fertility and generational solidarity, and as the perspective of gender equality is mostly absent, this framing can easily be linked to traditional thinking in which families are supposed to produce children for societies, and women are the main persons responsible within families to fulfil this role.

Moreover, what is striking is that in all of the analysed countries, and even at the EU level, a *traditionalisation of thinking about families and the role of women in families* can be detected. With the exception of Greece, this seems to be a retraditionalisation. Linked to shifts in governments to the Right, we did find texts that construct gendered policy frames concentrating on relations within the family. One such frame (the Austrian frame since 1999/2000) sees the problem to be that women are forced to choose between work and family, and sees family policy as having to facilitate the right choice, namely the choice for the care of the family. Here, not the gendered division of labour is the problem, but rather, the ungendering of the division of labour is described as a negative process that should be reversed. The element of putting a higher value to care and to housework is found only in connection to this frame. In Austria, an additional problem is constructed to be the lack of rights of fathers to their children. This frame takes the element of a lack of involvement of fathers in families on board to plea for more fathers' rights. This soft policy is then combined with hard measures supporting father's rights. In this last frame, the gender problematic seems to be exclusively represented as being female domination over men in families.

As to strategy and strategical framing, our analysis shows *a strong linking of measures that have originated in gender equality policies*, such as child care services, part time work and parental leave *with other goals* such as flexible labour, more employment, more children or better functioning families, in attempts to legitimise gender equality. Is that a problem? This seems to be a problem indeed, as increasingly the accent seems to be not so much only on gender equality as a problem, but on retraditionalising gender roles within families. These retraditionalised frames redirect measures such as reconciliation towards goals that could very well be contradictory to gender equality.

According to Fux (in Kaufman 2002), there are two opposing assumptions underneath the variety of regimes in family policies: one stating that gender equality is not only good for women, but also for families; and the opposing one presenting a traditional division of labour as good for families while gender equality is not good for them. In the last type of regime, family policy is often a way of stimulating women to stay at home to care for the children. The Austrian case shows this most clearly, and Greece to some extent. In the Netherlands and at the EU level, the first assumption seems to predominate, but elements of the second assumption can be found too. The result of the absence of an explicit gender equality family policy is that these assumptions are not addressed explicitly. As a result, the EU and a country such as the Netherlands create a vacuum that apparently can be filled

quite easily by frames that are building upon the idea that gender equality is bad for families and for society, and that, while being presented as gender equality policies therefore are reinforcing gender inequality.

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Appendix

Selected texts of Austria

For our analysis we have chosen 15 documents. Two of them are minutes from the Austrian parliament, one from the National Council (Nationalrat, upper house) the other from the Federal Council (Bunderat, lower house), The minutes of the National Council are split into several documents to gather the voices of the party members. Debates in the Austrian Parliament give voice to all parties in parliament. In debates on laws, lawmakers usually are quite explicit with frames and arguments. The Bundesrat's debate about the Carinthian model of the children's cheque took place in February 1999 (BR 9902). The lower house of the Austrian parliament represents the federal states; in February 1999, it was debated whether the Carinthian children's cheque model could be adopted on the central state level. The debate of the National Council took place in June 2001 (NR 0106). It is the final debate on the law.

We also selected two statements on the bill on children's care benefit from May 2001. They show the comments, opinions and frames of organized interest groups in Austria. To analyse different interests in family policy, we have chosen the comment by the "Austrian institute for marriage and family" (ehe0105, Institut für Ehe und Familie), a conservative organization, by the "Austrian children's friends" (kifr0105, Österreichische Kinderfreunde), a social democratic children's organization, and one by the "Austrian Institute for Family Research", an umbrella organization of Austrian family institutes.

The next group of documents contains government documents. The first document is the "Austrian Family Report" (Familienbericht 1999), issued by the Minister of Families from 1999 (famrep99). Another document is Austria's 5th report to CEDAW from September 2000 (cedaw99rep). The last document in this group is the government programme of the coalition government by ÖVP and FPÖ (goprog03) from 2003.

The last group of selected documents are media articles. The selection covers the three major high quality dailies in Austria. Die Presse (Pres0308, August 2003), Der Kurier (Kur9596, 1995 – 1996, Kur98, 1998 and Kur00, 2000) and Der Standard (stan0309, September 2003). The articles range from the year 1995 to 2003. The selection shows public debates and public perceptions of family policy issues, as well as the opinion of federal chancellor Schüssel in an interview.

- "Fathers play, mothers feed" – Kurier – November 18, 1995
- "Family Minister demands more men" – Kurier – November 10 1995
- "We were more advanced than we are today: Dohnal fights steps backward" – Kurier – February 24, 1995
- "Mothers should be able to have a job" – Kurier – March 11, 1996

- "Working mothers are not worse" (Berufstätige Mütter sind nicht schlechter) – Kurier – November 28, 1998
- "Don't forget the children" (Die Kinder nicht vergessen) – Kurier – September 15, 1998
- "Parents alone at home with mixed feelings" (Eltern allein zu Hause mit gemischten Gefühlen) – Kurier – July 25, 1998

- Report on Families (Familienbericht 1999), edited by the Austrian Ministry for Youth and Family; encompasses articles by social scientists

- Minutes of the 650th session of the Federal Council (Bundesrat) (debate on a children's care cheque); Protokoll der 650. Sitzung des österreichischen Bundesrats

- Austria's fifth report to the CEDAW Committee of September 1999 and Austria's answer of April 4th, 2000 to the Committee's written questions regarding several points in the report
- "Children who have both mother and father are privileged for life". Selected article of January 18, 2000 of the daily "Kurier" – Kurier – January 18, 2000
- Statement of May 2001 by the Institute for marriage and family on Children's Care Benefit Act as proposed (Stellungnahme des Instituts für Ehe und Familie)
- Statement by the Austrian Children's Friends on children's care benefit act as proposed of May, 2001 (Stellungnahme der Österreichischen Kinderfreunde zum Kinderbetreuungsgeld)
- Minutes of the debate on Children's Care benefit Act in the Austrian National council (parliament) – SPÖ speakers (Sozialdemokratische Abgeordnete in der Nationalratsdebatte über das Kinderbetreuungsgeld-Gesetz) – June 6, 2001
- Minutes of the debate on Children's Care benefit Act in the Austrian National council (parliament) – ÖVP speakers (Abgeordnete der ÖVP in der Nationalratsdebatte über das Kinderbetreuungsgeld-Gesetz) – June 6, 2001
- Minutes of the debate on Children's Care benefit Act in the Austrian National council (parliament) – FPÖ speakers (Freiheitliche Abgeordnete in der Nationalratsdebatte über das Kinderbetreuungsgeld-Gesetz) – June 6, 2001
- Minutes of the debate on Children's Care Benefit Act in the Austrian National Council (parliament) – speakers of the Green Party (Grüne Abgeordnete in der Nationalratsdebatte über das Kinderbetreuungsgeld-Gesetz) – June 6, 2001
- Program of the Austrian Government/Coalition paper 2003 – Regierungsprogramm der ÖVP/FPÖ-Regierung 2003
- "Gehrer: Discussion of envious sods" (Geher: "Eine Neidhamme-Diskussion") – Presse – August 23, 2003
- "Opposition against "Back to the hearth" (Opposition gegen "Zurück an den Herd") – Presse – August 24, 2003
- "Anger about Gehrer's disinterest in parties" (Ärger über Party-Muffel Gehrer) – Presse – August 25, 2004
- "You cannot buy children". Interview with federal chancellor Schüssel in daily "Der Standard", September 2003 (Interview mit Bundeskanzler Schüssel, Standard, September 2003)

Selected texts of European Union

- 01 92/241/EEC: Council recommendation of 31 March 1992 on childcare Official Journal L 123 , 08/05/1992
- 02 Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union – 1996

- 03 COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC
- 04 Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC - Annex: Framework agreement on part-time work. Official Journal L 014 , 20/01/1998 P. CONSLEG - 97L0081 - 05/05/1998
- 05 Protection of families and children. Resolution on the protection of families and children (A4-0004/1999)
- 06 Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers for Employment and Social Policy, meeting within the Council of 29 June 2000 on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life
- 07 Council Decision of December 2000 establishing a Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) on the grounds of a Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Towards a Community Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005)
- 08 Low fertility, families and public policies, Synthesis Report, Annual Seminar, Seville, Spain, 15-16 September 2000 from the European Observatory on Family Matters
- 09 Young People and Children in EU Policies. Closing Statement on Behalf of Anna Diamantopoulou. Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs (Speech for the seminar on Family Forms and the Young generation in Europe, Milan, Italy, 20-22 September 2001)
- 10 Family Benefits and Family Policies in Europe (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, Unit E.2, June 2002)

Selected texts of Greece

The selected public documents that we analysed focus on the facilitation of working mothers and the institution of different facilities and laws related to the leading discussion on the demographic problem and decrease in birth rate. In the sample we included legal measures regarding working hours and parental leaves; laws for the protection of pregnant women at workplace. We decided also to analyse debates following the laws introduced in Parliament, and to highlight the dominant frames used to describe perceptions of gender.

The first six supertexts refer to the Parliament discussion on the law introduced by the Ministry of Health and Social Policy: "Welfare provisions to confront the demographic problem". Though the law was not passed, the debate over the issue had interesting elements that we decided to include into our analysis. Debates were concentrated on the consequences of the declining birth rate and the concurrent ageing of the population. Both Government and right-wing opposition emphasised that the demographic process will negatively affect the future of Greece leaving no room for progress and

development. In the texts, there is also description of the socio-economic dimensions associated with the drop in birth rate and its related consequences. Our interest in the demographic problem is gender-related since current views hold women as solely responsible for childbearing, and also responsible for the drop in the birth rate. In this context, we decided to analyse discussions that took place on 26/10/2000 with the interventions of political parties' spokesmen: P. Kritikos (PASOK, socialist party), G. Konstantopoulos (New Democracy, right wing), P. Kosionis (KKE-communist party) and G. Abatzoglou, (Sinaspismos-left wing). We also analysed the speech of C. Magoufis (New Democracy) on 29/11/2000. These are spokespersons of the four major parties. We consider the speeches as representative of all tendencies in the parliament.

Moreover, we analysed Law 2525/1997 for the "Unified lyceum, access of graduates to higher education, evaluation of the educational system and other provisions" that makes provision for the establishment of "day-long municipal kindergarten and day-long primary public schools". The law has certain provisions for both working and non-working mothers. Parliament debates took place in four sessions between 2nd, and 9th of September 1997. There are many short interventions by P. Eftimiou, D. Piperias, Al. Chrysanthopoulos, Sarris and P. Paraskevopoulos. In the particular case, we analysed articles 3 and 4 of the law and the discussion on 3rd September of 1997 (speech of P. Paraskevopoulos). Furthermore, the discussion on the 4th of August 1998 about the draft Law 2639/98 in which A. Psarouda-Benaki spoke against the informal types of work of women was important for our analysis as well. Finally, we decided to include in our analysis an official document: the Action Plan for social integration by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (2003-2005). More specifically, we analyzed sections related to women's employment and the measures that should be taken to facilitate women- mothers' access to the labour market.

1. Parliamentary discussion on draft Law "Welfare provisions to confront the demographic problem" on 26/10/2000. Speeches of Parliament member P. Kritikos.
2. Parliamentary discussion on draft Law "Welfare provisions to confront the demographic problem" on 26/10/2000. Speeches of Parliament member P. Kosionis
3. Parliamentary discussion on draft Law "Welfare provisions to confront the demographic problem" on 26/10/2000. Speeches of Parliament member G. Konstantopoulos.
4. Parliamentary discussion on draft Law "Welfare provisions to confront the demographic problem" on 26/10/2000. Speeches of Parliament member G. Abatzoglou.
5. 29/11/2000: speech of Chr. Magoufis
6. Discussion on the Draft Law 2525/1997, 3rd September of 1997, speech of P. Paraskevopoulos.
7. Law 2525/1997, Articles 3 and 4
8. Presidential Decree 176/
9. Discussion on draft Law 2639/98, 4th August 1998, A. Psarouda-Benaki's speech.
10. Action Plan for the Social Integration, 2003-2005, pages 17-18, 29-30.

Selected texts of The Netherlands

Given the large amount of policy texts and legislation available in the Netherlands, the Dutch country team decided to focus primarily on documents reflecting the standpoints of different government actors and – at least in the initial stage of the study - not to include media debates and texts produced by external experts and civil society organisations. For the same reason we chose to limit our scope to the national level, even though relevant actors are operating at the local or regional level as well.

I. Redistr-labour apr95

Project Group Redistribution Unpaid Labour: Progress report on the redistribution of unpaid labour, also in relation to the increase of men's care responsibility (04-04-1995).

II. Policy Note 16-09-96

Letter from the State Secretary of Public Health, Welfare and Sports containing a policy Note on the Societal Position and Function of the Family (16-09-96).

III. Speech Melkert apr98

Speech by Minister of Social Affairs and Employment during the presentation of the final advice of the Committee Daily Routine, The Hague (23-04-1998).

IV. CEDAW-let 25-11-98

Letter from the Secretary of State of Social Affairs and Employment containing a reaction to the report "Women's Treaty, Motherhood, Parenthood, and Labour" (25-11-1998).

V. Brochure Daily Routine 01

Project group Stimulation Measure Daily Routine: Information Brochure (2001).

VI. Report Labour and Care Act 26-02-01

Preliminary Report by the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs and Employment concerning the preparative research for the legislation proposals Labour and Care Act (27207) and the Implementation Act Labour and Care (27208) (26-02-01)

VII. Long Term Leave 16-11-01

Letter from the Secretary of State of Social Affairs and Employment to the President of the Second Chamber of Parliament containing a Cabinet Standpoint on Long Term Care Leave (16-11-01).

VIII. It Takes Two to Tango

Speech by the Secretary of State of Family Policy and Emancipation Khee Liang Phoa during the launch of the project "Men in the Leading Role" (27-02-2003)

IX. Adv&report 15-09-03

Council of State's advice concerning the draft Course of Life Arrangement (10-09-2003) and the additional report of the Secretary of State of Finances and the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (15-09-2003).

X. Speech De Geus nov03

Speech by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment during the manifestation "Business-like and Careful, 10 years of Child Care", 03-11-2003.