Low Fertility and Policy Responses in Some Developed Countries

With Special Reference to Europe

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1. Demographic Changes and Political Responses

In recent years, the attention to social policy and its interaction with employment and economic policies has increased considerably in the supranational and national political discussion. In particular, in the European Union the analysis of the social situation takes on new importance in light of the "European Social Agenda" and the renewed concerns over social exclusion and pensions. It has been precisely the alarm over the sustainability of the pension system and the welfare system – as we have developed it in Europe starting from Bismarck's construction in the late 1800s – that has attracted the attention of politicians, and now also of part of the public opinion, on the "demographic shock" that European countries are undergoing or are about to undergo. Demographers had long, but to no avail, predicted punctually the arrival of the shock and its enormous scope. But, as it was said, it was necessary for economists and politicians to start to see its impact on the welfare system for the demographic emergency to become a generalised alarm. Also the Pope Giovanni Paolo II speaking, for the first time in the history on the 14th of November 2002, to the Italian Parliament defined the birth crisis, the demographic decline and the population ageing like a "heavy threat that rest on the future of this country [Italy], conditioning already today its life and its possibilities of growth" (Giovanni Paolo II, 2002).

The growing and continuous raising of the expectation of life, the fact that fertility is remaining at low or extremely low rates, and the consequent ageing of the population are the phenomena which, in recent years, have most characterised the population of the European Union, and also of many other European countries, and are leading to the end of the growth of EU population. According to the *Eurostat* projections, most of the regions in the European Union will see their populations stagnate or decrease by 2015 (Eurostat, 2002). And thus, in recent years, foreign immigration has become the main factor of growth of the EU population: 70% of the European Union's population increase in the past 5 years has, in fact, been due to the migration component.

At the same time, as an obvious consequence, major changes have taken place in households and families. In particular, three trends are being emerged. In the first place, the percentage of families made up of two parents and their cohabiting children is progressively decreasing (from 52% in 1988 to 46% in 2000). In the second place, in the past 15 years, the percentage of children who live in one parent families, almost exclusively with the mother, has increased significantly (in 1998, 13% of all dependent children lived with one parent, compared to a much lower 8% registered in 1983). In the third place, the number of one-person households is increasing and the average households size is decreasing (to slightly more than two members). In the Community area, the first stage of life as a couple is

more and more often taking the form of cohabitation, since young people tend to postpone marriage until they wish to have children or when they are certain that their relationship has become stable. In 2001, 33% of all couples of young EU citizens less than 30 years old had, in fact, chosen cohabitation (Eurostat, 2002).

In particular, it is the low – extremely low in many cases – fertility that is the element characterising the population of Europe and its countries during this historic period; and therefore, through the population changes, one of the elements characterising society, the economy, culture, collective psychology, and international relations. On the average, in Europe, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 1.4, an "unimaginable" value only a few years ago. In some European countries or regions, it has even fallen to 0.8-0.9, a value that is close to the absolute minimum that can be registered for fertility in real populations of countries that are not extremely small and which thus have a considerable population size[1].

In this situation – and considering that in today's perspective fertility does not appear easy to change in the short term –, the questions we can ask ourselves are: whether Europe will be short of children; and whether such low levels of fertility are sustainable in the longer run as far as their social, economic, and many other implications, at both the domestic and the international level, are concerned. These questions arise from the fact that from the demographic standpoint, the most important implication of low or very low fertility levels is the intense and rapid ageing of the individuals, the families, the populations, and all the subpopulations, starting from the labour forces. The two greatest difficulties in countries or areas with *prolonged extremely low fertility levels* (characterised by a TFR lower than 1.3 or 1.2) are connected with the sustainability, mentioned earlier, of the pension system, and the sustainability of a labour force that is declining rapidly and ageing intensely. On the other hand, in the countries or areas where *low fertility levels* (characterised by a TFR around 1.7-1.8) is registered, the very gradual reduction of the labour force could result in an advantage in a phase such as this where Europe could be short of jobs[2]. On the basis of the results of various simulations, it would seem, in any case, that where extremely low fertility levels continue for 70-80 years, the deformation of the age structure would cause such an accentuated *momentum* that the population decline could reach a point of no return.

[1] In 1998, I attempted to evaluate how low fertility can go in a real population. Besides giving some of the lowest TFRs observed (e.g. 0.77 in the former Eastern Germany in 1994, or around 0.80 in some Italian provinces in the first years of '90s), I also calculated a TFR of 0.72 by combining the lowest age-specific fertility rates observed between 1990 and 1995 in national populations. With respect to cohort fertility, according to the lowest fertility in Italian provinces I simulated a case in which 20-30 percent of all women remain childless and the rest have just one child. This results in 0.70-0.80 children as the lower boundary for cohort fertility. Whether such low levels will actually be reached at national level is a different question (Golini, 1998).

[2] Referring to the medium variant of the projections of the Population Division of the UN (2001), we find that for Italy and France, who currently have a totally similar population size (58-59 million inhabitants), the 20-39-year-old population should drop between 2000 and 2010 in Italy by 3.3 million from the current 17.3 million; on the other hand, in France it should drop by 0.9 million from the current 16.7 million. The Italian decrease (334,000 per year) could cause a crisis in the production system, while the French decrease (88,000 per year) is decidedly easier to manage and could even prove to be beneficial, as has been explained in the text.

Faced with demographic trends that may lead to a zone of unsustainability of the trends and even to a point of no return[3], which may thus become dangerous for the future survival of the populations, it is necessary to ask what the appropriate political responses may be, at what territorial level they should be adopted, and to whom they should be directed.

From a macro standpoint, this is a problem already at the territorial level, because it is a question of drafting and implementing policies which, although they necessarily take into account the different traditions of the family policies in the European Union, have a common frame of reference in order to attempt a harmonisation of European policies. These are policies that should then have a national and, especially, local validity, with reference to homogeneous areas of intervention (for example, metropolitan areas, depopulating mountain areas, etc.).

From a micro standpoint, it is possible to pose the alternative of whether policies must privilege the family or the individual. If we were to opt for the individuals, then it would be a question of seeing what kind of priority to give: for example, children or the elderly, women or fathers, and so on. But by privileging individuals at the micro level, there is a risk of causing an excess of individualism, already so widespread in European societies, moreover encouraged by a growing level of education (which, positively, tends to stress the values of the individual qualities of each person) and the modern work activities (which, positively, are eliminating the repetitive jobs lacking individual contributions). It should also be considered that from a micro point of view and looking again at the European experience, one can notice the passage of a single person through an increasing number of families, which in turn feeds individualism. In this framework, family is not seen as a fundamental social structure where a person can normally live with satisfaction his/her whole adult life, but families are seen as transition phases of the *own individual life*. But even if in his/her own life a person passes through several families, implementing policies that support and strengthen the family means, in any case, increasing the well-being of the individuals and social cohesion. The best political response is perhaps precisely that addressing the family.

Supporting the family means, in practice, implementing a policy that at the micro level has a holistic view of the population-related problems, and not a sectoral policy that, in fact, tends to privilege certain groups of individuals and thus, almost necessarily, to be detrimental to the others. A sectoral policy which, at the macro level, unfortunately seems to be in effect in the United Nations system, where the problems of the population are segmented and treated separately, thus causing the unitary nature and consistency of the social policies of the sector to be lost[4].

[3] On the problem of the sustainability of low fertility in the long term, to measure it, it is possible to identify (Golini, 2000) various parameters that, first of all, highlight the situation from the demographic standpoint.

[4] In the United Nations system, there are: UNFPA, the United Nations Fund for Population, which occupies itself almost exclusively with birth control, even if seen in a broader context; UNICEF, which deals with children, a Social Affairs Commission for older persons, UN Women, the IOM and the UNHCFR for immigrants and refugees, the UNAIDS for HIV/AIDS, and so on, with a series of agencies, commissions, and funds that do not always succeed in communicating and collaborating effectively with one another.

2. Family and Social Policies

2.1. The Different Traditions of Family Policies in the European Union

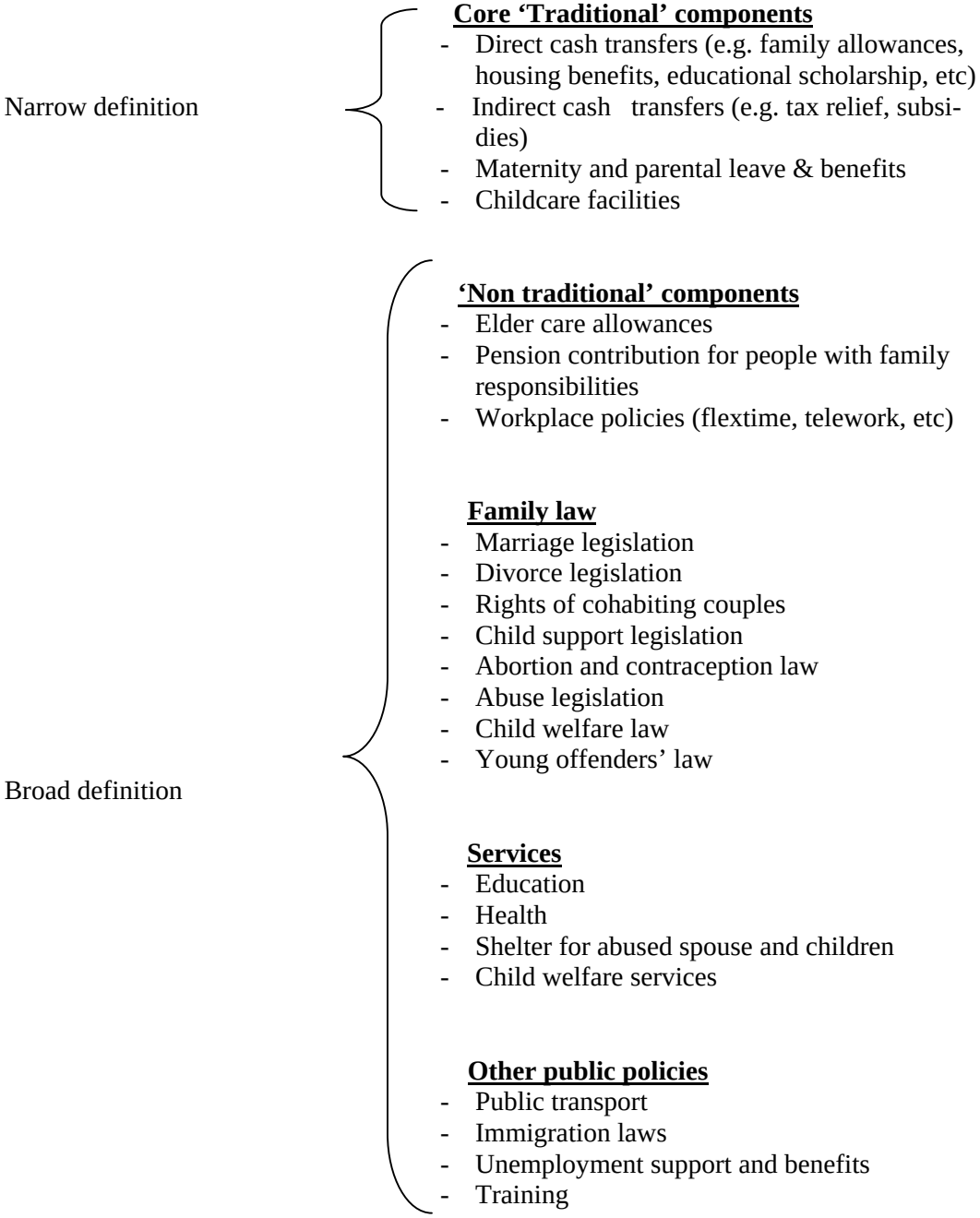
Although the demographic trends and social changes, mentioned above and described further in the appendix, are observable throughout the entire European Union, their incidence varies considerably from one Member State to another. Within the European Union, there are various social policies adopted by the Member Countries in order to organically organise government intervention in the family sphere.

Nevertheless, in most countries of the European Union, family policy is a concept that is not perfectly defined, used to refer to legislative and financial measures and services addressed to families with the precise intention to improve their well-being. Indeed, most of the countries have never developed an explicit family policy – meant as a series of social-policy programmes intended to reach specific aims concerning family well-being – but instead have introduced a series of legislative measures, monetary subsidies and services, which, within other contexts of the social policy, implicitly take into consideration the family dimension of the social policies.

In the same way, a family and a household, the subject of these policies, are not defined clearly in time and space, since their formation and dissolution are subject to various, profound transformations[5]. Precisely in order to narrow down and define the field of analysis, already back in 1978, several scholars proposed the inclusion within family policies of only those addressing couples with children (Kamerman e Kahn, 1990). A complete overview of family policies is given in Scheme 1.

[5] For example, it may be noted how variable the proportion of civil marriages in the various European countries is, and how divorce has been provided for by the various legislations in very different time periods. In reference to the most recent times, it can be seen how homosexual marriages are permitted in The Netherlands; such couples in France are permitted the so-called "PAC", which is more simply a civil "agreement" (which may be signed also by persons who decide to live together, for example friends, without their union being considered a "marriage", even by themselves). In Italy, neither of these two forms of recognised, ratified union is permitted, but only a *de facto* union. These differences in legislation obviously reflect different conceptions of the family bond and institution. It is not by chance that very violent contrasting stances have been, and continue to be, expressed at the UN every time there is an attempt to approve documents and recommendations that concern the family. And the contrast begins already with the title – family vs. families – to be given to the chapter of recommendations.

Scheme 1: Components of family policy



Source: Gauthier A. H., 2000

The analysis of the division between the public and private sphere of the various charges aiming to support the family makes it possible to delineate the different conceptions at the basis of the family policies in the various countries. Different lines of action and contents of the policies supporting families reflect the

characteristics of the different *welfare state* systems. For the sake of brevity it is possible to refer to the main family-policy elements of a "Scandinavian model", represented by Sweden, a "Francophone model", represented by France, and a "Southern model", represented by Italy (Sgritta G. B., 1997). These three models correspond to family policies based respectively on the accentuated independence of the individuals, on an explicit and programmed social policy and on the centrality of the family.

Sweden, perfectly integrated into the Scandinavian model, has been characterised by the centrality attributed to the question of gender equality and the attention paid to children's needs and rights, through the introduction of social measures that allow parents to reconcile their work and family life.

France is one of those countries which have created an explicit social policy which with time has succeeded in reconciling demographic aims[6], cost of children, and gender equality, thanks to generous forms of monetary transfers in favour of families and services, enabling women to carry out a non-conflictual dual role of working mothers.

On the other hand, Italy, like the other countries of the European Union's South, has not formulated an explicit family policy, on the contrary giving rise to a fragmentary and inconsistent social policy that has translated into family transfers supporting families with children that are definitely limited. In Italy, there is no universal system of family allowances for people who have children, and the public services for early childhood and policies aimed at reconciling work and family life are poorly developed; within the European Union only Spain remains in this situation. The fascist experience in Italy and Francoist experience in Spain, characterised by a strong government intervention in population policies, have probably contributed to strengthening a traditional family form, creating a family based on the solidarity of family and relatives. According to this form, the family system functions on the basis of family and intergenerational solidarity throughout the entire lifecycle. The basic idea is that the social-reproduction duties are almost exclusively the responsibility of the family and only to a subsidiary extent of the State. In this context, the latter has created for itself a role of "non-intervention". At the same time, within this model, the State has provided for a fiscal and social policy, also in line with family law, in which there is an extended definition of *family duties*. These obligations extend to relatives and in-laws, and in any case beyond the nuclear family, even in the case where the members live in different places.

2.2. The Cost of Children

Within the European Union, as in other developed areas of the world, the fertility issue is by now largely connected with the cost of children. Here "cost" refers only to two elements: the responsibility for supporting children, i.e. who has to financially shoulder the cost of children as consumers of goods and services; the responsibility for the care, i.e. who has to shoulder the cost of children in terms of care time. The ways of interpreting and dividing the burden of these re-

[6] In fact, France and Sweden were the first countries to have to deal with the fertility decrease, already at the end of the 19th century.

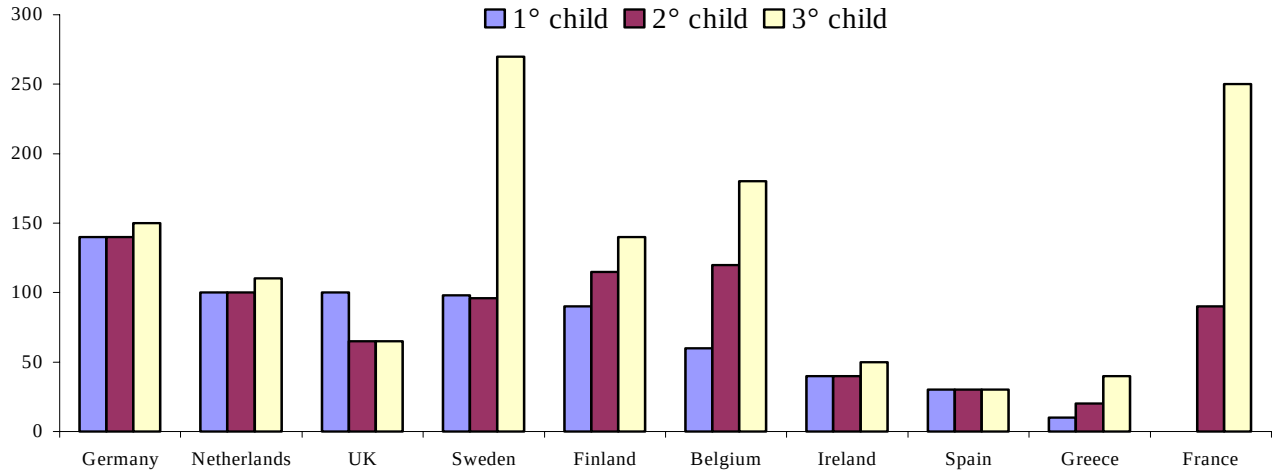
sponsibilities give rise to policies and regulations aiming to support the parents' income, concerning working mothers, parental leave, and possibly the creation and functioning of public services for children.

2.2.1. The Financial Cost of Children: Direct And Indirect Monetary Transfers and the Collective Conscience of Births

Family allowances were introduced to respond to the spread of poverty, widespread especially among large families, as well as to propose a solution for the fear of the fertility decrease (between 1870 and 1920, the average number of children per woman had halved in many European countries). Today, family allowances occupy a fundamental position within the framework of the forms of monetary support to families with children. In most of the countries of the European Union, allowances are of a universal nature, i.e. envisaged for all families with children and financed, generally speaking, through the tax administration. But several countries, such as Italy, envisage a selective distribution, i.e. directed only to certain categories of families with children.

The amount of the allowance varies according to the family policy. Sweden envisages the assignment of a high monthly allowance only starting with the 3rd child, while for the first and second it gives an allowance in line with the EU average. France envisages an amount in relation to the children's age; in particular, it provides for the assignment of the contribution only starting from the second child, a contribution that becomes very sizable for the third child (as in Sweden). Instead, in Italy allowances are differentiated on the basis of income, the number of the family nucleus, and/or the form of family; the result is that only a very small number of families manages to receive the allowances.

Graf. 1: Amount of allowances by number of children in some EU countries (1999)



Source: Naldini M, Saraceno C., 2001

It is important to stress that family allowances are not only an important, and sometimes fundamental, financial aid to parents, but contribute to create and nourish a different culture, a collective conscience with regard to birth and child-raising. In fact, they are also a tangible, directly and constantly perceptible and perceived, measure of the interest of the collectivity in child-raising, thus contributing to giving them a dimension of a *collective good*, reducing that of an exclusive good of the couple. Also, family allowances reduce the iniquity which, in terms of income and savings, and therefore of wealth, is created between couples with children (children who in the future will shoulder the burden of financing the pension system *for everyone*, when it is a Pay As You Go system) and couples who deliberately decide not to have children. On this topic we come again in the final section of the paper.

The State contributes to the financial cost of the children also through specific tax treatments (almost always in the form of tax relief) for families. These are indirect monetary transfers that are difficult to take into account in the evaluation of social policies because of the diversities in the tax systems, and in the calculation systems used to take into account the composition of the family nucleus. This type of facility for dependent children is another form of compensation for the monetary costs of child support and is, especially for high-income families, a more important benefit than family allowances themselves. It is, however, a benefit that is less direct and less immediately perceivable.

In most EU countries, there are other monetary services to support the cost of child support: allowances granted at the moment of birth, as services for one-person families, allowances for child support and care during early childhood or school age, as well as aid for housing expenses in favour of dependent children. These forms are practically unknown in Italy.

The offering in terms of family policy, as financial support to couples, is thus very diversified within the European Union and also within each country, since local authorities give, in addition to or in replacement of, local-level financial support.

2.2.2. The Cost of Childcare in Terms of Time and Opportunity: Childcare Services and Social Measures Envisaged for Working Parents

With the intention of softening the inequalities among countries, in the early 1990s the European Union promoted *reconciliation* policies, i.e. aiming to draft directives, recommendations, briefings, and suggestions to the various countries so that they would adopt measures capable of safeguarding the possibility of reconciling work and family life.

The diversities in the contents and policies actually adopted in the single countries reflect the different conceptions of the family and the characteristics of the different welfare systems.

Scheme 2: Welfare System, Family Role, and Reconciliation Policies in European Union Countries: 3 Groups of Countries

	WELFARE SYSTEM	**FAMILY ROLE**	**RECONCILIATION POLICIES**
Scandinavian countries	SOCIALDEMOCRATIC: Public intervention tends to replace both the market and the family, and aims to guarantee access to equal services for all.	Emphasis on individual citizenship rights (also for economic and tax benefits) and very limited family-assistance obligations	*Integrationist*-type reconciliation policies intended to reconcile work and family, through the defence of gender equality both in leaves and in flexible forms of work, and in children's rights through the wide availability of services for early childhood with high-quality standards, financed with public funds
Francophone countries	CONSERVATIVE-CORPORATIVE: The State is in a subsidiary position compared to the family; it contributes to lessening the family burden by means of programmed support policies	Assignment to the family nucleus of the responsibilities for care and assistance	Reconciliation policies based on segregationist strategies, i.e. with a clear separation between work for the family and work for the market, which take place in time sequence, through long leaves paid entirely or in part, childcare services, family allowances, and tax benefits
Southern European Union countries	LIBERAL TYPE: The State has a subsidiary role, and does not normally intervene in the family sphere; female employment is widespread, but poorly paid and not very qualified	Assignment to the family nucleus of the responsibilities for care and assistance. Family solidarity is obligatory, because there is no alternative.	Consider the reconciliation between work and family life as a private affair that women must manage in agreement with their employers. These policies are based on "familyist" strategies, in which all responsibility for childcare rests on the shoulders of the women of the extended family. The labour market does not present favourable conditions and the welfare model of reference implicitly presupposes a strong family solidarity, gender relations, and marriage stability, but clashes with a rapidly changing social reality.

Source: adapted from Scisi A., Vinci M., 2002

In this framework, the childcare services and social measures envisaged for working parents must be considered.

- Public Childcare Services. The offering is particularly differentiated among European Union countries, as among the different age groups too. The public services for children up to 3 years of age, together with parental leaves, are of strategic importance for allowing working mothers to support, without disproportionate burdens, the cost of their children. The territorial distribution of these services is not high in any of the European Union countries, but is particularly low where women's participation in the labour market is limited, as in Italy. On the contrary, these services are more widespread where the women's employment rate is higher, as in Sweden (Censis, 2001). Table 1 below shows the substantial difference that exists between the 0-3 year and 3-6 year age groups.

Table 1: Public childcare services in some European countries 1990-1995

	Age at the beginning of school	Age group of children and percentage of children admitted to public services[a]		
		0-3 %	3-6 %	6-10[o] %
Austria	6	3	75	6
Belgium	6	30	95+	[2]
Denmark	7	48	82	62[3]
Finland	7	21	53	5[3]
France	6	23	99	30[1]
West Germany	6	2	78	5
East Germany	6	50	100	88
United Kingdom	5	2	60	<5[2]
Greece	6	3	70	<5[1]
Ireland	6	2	55	<5[1]
Italy	6	6	91	[2]
Holland	5	8	71	<5[1]
Portugal	6	12	48	10
Spain	6	2[1]	84	[2]
Sweden	7	33	72	64[3]

[a] For public services we meant all the services where more than half per cent of the total cost is paid by public funds: in most countries this cost is supported by public resources in a percentage from 75 to 100.
[o] Data are not referred to the compulsory education but to educational and socialization services provided for school age children
[1] approximate data
[2] Not available information but in any case under 5%
[3] to this values pupils aged 6 and over should be added
Source: European Commission 1996 in Naldini M, Saraceno C., 2001

In several countries of southern Europe, including for example Italy, the historic reason for the limited existence of services for children of 0-3 year age group lies in the little value attributed to this type of care compared to the mother's own care, and in the very high cost of this type of service. In these countries also, where there is a lack of collective services compensated for through the recourse to the informal care of the family and, in particular, of women, there has been an introduction of new regulations that increasingly take into account the possibility of forms of care alternative to collective public services.

In other countries, this type of service is used very little because of a different conception of what the most suitable forms of childcare are. This is the case in Sweden, where it is preferred, during the first year and a half of the child's life, to resort to care that involves both parents (this basic arrangement of Swedish education finds legislative confirmation in the possibility for a parental leave).

There are also forms of individual care, in alternative to parental leave, which are supported by public resources. In particular, France has witnessed the public support given to non-collective childcare services increase with the passing

of time; these have mostly taken the form of tax benefits. These benefits are offered to those who, for work reasons, or due to the lack of collective public services, or else for different needs, decide to resort to a recognised nursery assistance (*assistante maternalle agrée*), or a person who provides home childcare.

- Forms of Protection for the Mother

Women are thus protected by Community regulations and national provisions against specific risks connected with their situation, at the same time preventing it from being used as an excuse for on-the-job discrimination (European Commission, 2000 e Ufficio delle pubblicazioni ufficiali della Comunità Europee, 2002). In order to ensure that, regardless of the country where they work, women are sufficiently protected before and after childbirth, i.e. to ensure women's health at the workplace, a minimum period of leave and protection from arbitrary dismissal have been provided.

The definition of a breastfeeding-woman worker and a woman worker who has recently given birth refers to the national legislation of each country, thus varying according to the country. These differences give rise to different degrees of protection of the woman workers.

During pregnancy and breastfeeding, women are entitled to a certain level of health and safety at work. With this in mind, the Directive 92/85/CEE states that an *evaluation of the workplace and tasks performed* by pregnant workers, new mothers, or breastfeeding mothers must be carried out.

The implementation of the directive has permitted the integration of the provisions that already existed in all EU countries, granting legal status to several aspects on the subject of protection of health and safety (European Commission, 1999), such as the right to periods of paid leave (where it is impossible to change the woman's job or working conditions) and the right to momentary paid leaves for perinatal check-ups. The directive also *prohibits the dismissal* of pregnant workers or workers on maternity leave.

- Social Measures Envisaged for Working Parents

Considering the responsibility mothers have in the raising of their children, especially when they are very small, and considering the increase of women's employment, special maternity leaves have been envisaged to provide an obligatory period of abstention from work to which the mother is entitled - except in exceptional cases - during the period of pregnancy and post-childbirth. Recently parental leave, i.e. the optional period of abstention from work (obviously after childbirth) has been introduced, with both the father and the mother being entitled to it. The differences in the duration and compensation envisaged for the maternity leave are significant among the EU countries, although they are decidedly lower than those existing for parental leaves. For example, in the directive, the *maternity leave* is envisaged for a minimum of 14 weeks in the United Kingdom, while the maximum is 28 weeks in Denmark.

As for paternity leave, this may be taken by the father only in the event of the death or serious illness of the mother.

In Sweden, where the leave was introduced in 1974, by now the prevailing idea is that both parents must care for the child during the first year and a half of his life. With this in mind, the legislation has provided for a fair distribution of rights in terms of compensation and duration of leave. Table 2 shows the situation of parental leaves in Europe.

3. What Are the Prospects in Demographic Changes and Political Responses?

It may be stated that up to now, in the countries of the European Union, social policy and family policies have pursued almost all the objectives that had been set, with particular regard for the setting-up of an equal family relationship between spouses (Commaille J., Strobel P., Villac M., 2002). It should be stressed that the transformations of the family and of family policies have taken place in parallel with the condition of women.

Women's new condition – in the family, in interpersonal relations, in education, and in employment – which by now has a firm hold in the collective conscience, has both fed the modernisation process and drawn nourishment from it, in a spiral that has brought everything in the family and in society to change. It has also been aided by the significant growth of women's education and by the profound and incisive changes in the production structure, in which the weight of the heavy-industry and building sectors (in which the presence of women is certainly more difficult and therefore rarer) has decreased, and that of the services sector (where the presence of women is certainly easier and more in demand) has strongly increased. This change has taken place in parallel with the availability of easy, inexpensive and safe contraceptives that, moreover, arrived on the market only about forty years ago. It is precisely due to these factors that within just a 50-70-year period (i.e. in the time of just a couple of generations) a transition has taken place from a *child-oriented* family, first to a *couple-oriented* family, and then, especially in Nordic countries, to an *individual-oriented* family, in which children's rights are considered in the same way as the rights of every other individual.

The response to this revolution has been a series of family policies that, at first, to a large extent, were still those conceived and implemented a hundred years ago, at the time of the fear in France of the great population decline (and then in Sweden and various European countries, too). But the population policies of that time, and of a few decades later, had been obviously conceived and applied during a period when the fertility and marriage rates were still moderately high. The concerns arose especially if there occurred, or there was a fear of, a slowdown in the population growth in a country that was more accentuated than that of countries with which there might be future military or production conflicts.

Now the concerns are, instead, connected with an "excess" of low fertility that, together with an accentuated fall in the mortality rate in old age, causes, as we have said, an *intense and rapid* ageing, in addition to - in perspective - a population decline. Nor can it be hoped that self-regulating driving force will be found for a better population equilibrium, precisely because of the low/extremely low

fertility[7]. The most recent family policy instruments do not, in fact, seem totally adequate for our times, also because they have been directed towards making family life more harmonious, balanced, and easy for all its members. Only very indirectly has the objective of stimulating fertility been posed (Bagavos C., Martin C., 2000).

I believe that today it is necessary to have a different, at least partially, approach to family policies, attacking the problem of low fertility directly[8]. Indeed, it is unsustainable from two standpoints: that of the woman and the couple who, as all surveys show, state that they want an average of two children, whereas in reality they have slightly more than one; and that of the collectivity, which demographically can survive for a very long time with a below-replacement fertility rate, of around 1.7-1.8 children per woman, but which certainly cannot survive with one around 1.0-1.3.

In societies with a very low fertility, often for a woman, having a child is considered as work, and so it is possible to decide not to have one, depending on the various circumstances of life – not only, as is obvious, the important and serious ones, but also the less demanding ones. In this situation, having a child is considered, by the woman and the couple, as merely a right to be exercised if and when desired; but it is not considered a duty also.

But a population, a society, and an economy can survive only if both work and having children are considered a *duty* at the *collective* level; if the sense of these duties enters into and takes root in the collective conscience of a people. Without prejudice, totally, to *individual rights*: working, and how much, or not working; having children, and how many and when, or not having them. In order to obtain this double level, a cultural revolution is necessary, and so should be the first objective of a family policy that explicitly intends to achieve goals that are also strictly demographic. Goals which, up to a short time ago, were extremely difficult to bring out because women might consider them means for keeping them at home. Now that the position of women is strongly and irrevocably strengthened outside of the home, and first of all at the workplace, this risk no longer exists.

The collective sense of duty should also imply an undertaking of responsibility with regard to the entire collectivity. And in fact, as everyone's sense of responsibility is called upon for limiting births in countries with high or very high fertility, it may be understood how it may be called upon for increasing them in countries with extremely low fertility. The problem is that in the first case, sooner or later, connected with the modernisation process, a community of interests almost always comes to be created between the interests of the collectivity and those of the woman and the couple to fall in the birth rate, while in the second

[7] Of course we may, and must, rely on foreign immigration, which is absolutely necessary for Western populations, societies, and economies. But immigration cannot completely fill the demographic deficit, because otherwise it would have to be extraordinarily massive, thus altering the social and cultural fabric of the receiving populations.

[8] Also the Pope Giovanni Paolo II, in the already mentioned speech of the 14th November 2002, stressed the exigency of a political response to an extremely low fertility saying: "… there are also great opportunities for a political initiative that … makes less hard, socially and economically, the procreation and education of the children" (Giovanni Paolo II, 2002).

case this community of interests is almost ever not created; so that when the collectivity is interested in raising fertility – moreover, always modest – and the woman and the couple are interested, instead, in keeping it low, in a Western democracy it is the individual's interest that prevails over that of the collectivity (more than ever when the collectivity is not fully aware of it), and fertility remains low.

Since, in order to raise the fertility rates of the collectivity from 1.1-1.3 children per woman to 1.7-1.8[9], the keystone is those women who want to have 3 or 4 children, where it is desirable to pursue this objective, it will be necessary to make sure that having 3 or 4 children is not only in the interest of the collectivity, but also in the interest of the women. In order to obtain a TFR equal to 1.8, one of the possible distributions of women by number of children may be, in fact, that of Table 2

Table 2: Possible distribution of women by number of children to get a TFR = 1.8

Per capita number of children	*0*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	Total
Number of women	15	25	30	25	5	100
Total number of children	0	25	60	75	20	180

In a case such as that of the table, while for 40 percent of women who do not want to have children or want only one, society must ensure all possible freedom to follow their aspirations and realise their life projects (as it actually happens in Western societies), similar freedom should be also granted to 30 percent of women who would and should have 3 or 4 children (as it actually does not happen in Western societies).

In order to deal with and attempt to fight an extremely low fertility rate, and to create a collective conscience about its necessity, possible policies to consider would be those which:

1. Guarantee for couples with 3 or 4 children very sizable and lasting family allowances for the third and fourth children, which would mean:
   a) Gratifying the women and couples by allowing them to have the desired number of children;
   b) Permitting them, from the economic standpoint, to raise the desired number of children in an adequate manner, preventing the risk of poverty for innocent children;
   c) Giving them much more trust in the long term challenge that a child represents; assuring them that from an economic point of view they will be not alone in the long story of bringing up their children, even in the case of divorce;
   d) Rendering explicit and tangible the interest of the collectivity for about one third of the couples to have 3 or 4 children;

[9] It is useless to stress how a TFR of 1.7-1.8 is still very low, since it is 10-15 percent below the replacement threshold. This means that in the average-long term, it also brings about an ageing and a population decline, but these are much more gradual, and therefore more manageable, than those caused by a fertility rate of 1.1-1.2.

e) Not considering, from the psychological standpoint, these couples as heterodox, or even extravagant, as, instead, is often the case in countries with extremely low fertility;
f) Making the situation fairer in comparison to couples who have decided not to have children, or to have only one, who today have greater opportunities of higher incomes and savings, and in the future will have their pensions paid (in a PAYG system) precisely by the children of the couples who decided to have children;
g) Giving procreating couples the possibility - much higher for couples who want no children - to enjoy their leisure time more and better;
h) Increasing the number of couples with 2 children since, simply stated, in order to have a third and then possibly a fourth child, it is necessary to have a second first.

2. Render the labour market more flexible so as to guarantee, among other things, that women and men who want to devote themselves to raising their children for a certain period of time may leave and return to their jobs very easily. For this purpose, there could be forms of compensation and incentives for employers;
3. Aid the bringing forward, compared to today's situation, of the age of leaving adolescence and starting work and procreation. If a person has his or her first child after the age of 30, there is no longer the biological time, social time, and psychological room to be able to consider a third or fourth child.
4. Lighten the workload of women 40-45 years old, who procreated 3 or 4 children and who are still very busy raising their children, in the care of their own parents, who are now about 70-75 years old and therefore may need care and help. For this purpose, there could be forms of intergenerational co-operation and solidarity between the elderly who can be caregivers and those who need care;
5. Lighten the workload of women 50-55 years old, who procreated 3 or 4 children and who are still very busy raising their children, in the care of their youngest grandchildren. For this purpose, there could be forms of incentive-based volunteer work for young people, for example during the secondary and tertiary school cycles.

These measures should join the more "classical" family policy ones, shown in Scheme 1, because the classical tools alone are no longer sufficient. It is necessary to find something more valid and purposeful for managing not only the new family, but the entire population and society, which are so different from those of the past.

Table 3 - Life births, TFR, mean age at birth of first child, extra-marital births and sum,by age-group, of age-specific fertility rates (age in completed years) in Italy, France and Sweden (1960-1999)

Year	Live births			TFR			Mean age at birth of first child (1)			Extra-marital births			Live births per 1000 females					
													< 30	> 30	< 30	> 30	< 30	>30
	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy		France		Sweden	
1960	910192	816296	102219	2.41	2.73	2.20	25.8	24.8	25.5	22038	49430	11535	1400	975	1890	839	1518	680
1961	929657	835240	104501	2.41	2.81	2.23	25.7	24.7	25.5	21858	49354	12215	1440	982	1959	856	1551	680
1962	937257	828920	107284	2.46	2.79	2.26	25.7	24.7	25.4	20575	49006	13297	1453	988	1951	834	1582	676
1963	960336	865339	112903	2.55	2.89	2.34	25.6	24.7	25.4	20698	51042	14172	1515	986	2031	856	1641	696
1964	1016120	874249	122664	2.70	2.91	2.48	25.5	24.5	25.3	20698	51627	16117	1616	1036	2050	855	1750	733
1965	990458	862333	122806	2.66	2.84	2.42	25.4	24.4	25.2	19608	50888	16950	1596	997	2014	825	1714	704
1966	979940	860242	123354	2.63	2.79	2.36	25.4	24.5	25.3	19115	51182	17962	1587	987	1974	816	1687	675
1967	948772	837481	121360	2.53	2.66	2.27	25.3	24.5	25.3	19048	51415	18323	1565	935	1883	779	1632	638
1968	930172	832847	113087	2.49	2.58	2.07	25.2	24.5	25.6	19014	53041	18972	1553	902	1825	753	1494	578
1969	932466	839511	107622	2.51	2.53	1.93	25.2	24.5	25.8	18993	54570	18208	1558	905	1788	738	1392	535
1970	901472	847783	110150	2.43	2.47	1.92	25.1	24.4	25.9	19640	57866	20753	1539	844	1767	706	1403	516
1971	906182	878647	114484	2.41	2.49	1.96	25.1	24.4	25.9	20990	61765	25241	1564	832	1788	701	1449	511
1972	888203	875093	112273	2.36	2.41	1.91	24.9	24.3	26.0	21948	65835	28492	1558	789	1750	661	1427	483
1973	874546	854880	109663	2.34	2.30	1.86	24.9	24.3	..	22119	69932	31114	1545	760	1687	615	1400	465
1974	868882	799217	109874	2.33	2.11	1.87	24.9	24.4	24.2	22324	67480	34451	1547	738	1560	547	1411	462
1975	827852	745065	103632	2.21	1.93	1.77	24.7	24.5	24.4	21461	63429	33543	1489	682	1448	479	1334	434
1976	781638	720395	98345	2.11	1.83	1.68	24.7	24.6	24.6	24451	61469	32656	1413	631	1396	433	1255	427
1977	741103	744744	96057	1.98	1.86	1.64	24.8	24.6	24.7	25689	65398	33300	1344	588	1432	430	1220	424
1978	709043	737062	93248	1.87	1.82	1.60	24.9	24.8	24.9	27693	69221	33499	1285	556	1399	424	1162	436
1979	670221	757354	96255	1.76	1.86	1.66	25.0	24.9	25.1	26386	77833	36124	1215	515	1416	440	1181	476
1980	640401	800376	97064	1.64	1.95	1.68	25.0	25.0	25.3	27456	91115	38558	1153	489	1472	475	1181	497
1981	623103	805483	94065	1.59	1.95	1.63	25.2	25.2	25.4	27589	102146	38742	1104	481	1451	495	1129	506
1982	619097	797223	92748	1.56	1.91	1.62	25.3	25.3	25.6	29055	113398	38915	1082	480	1419	494	1102	519
1983	601928	748525	91780	1.51	1.78	1.61	25.4	25.4	25.8	29287	118851	40059	1031	476	1320	465	1082	531
1984	587871	759939	93889	1.46	1.80	1.66	25.6	25.6	26.0	30098	135265	41877	983	475	1319	483	1088	569
1985	577345	768431	98463	1.42	1.81	1.74	25.9	25.9	26.1	31121	150492	45640	942	477	1303	511	1128	612
1986	555445	778468	101950	1.35	1.83	1.80	26.0	26.2	26.1	31569	170682	49324	884	468	1293	539	1160	641
1987	551539	767828	104699	1.33	1.80	1.84	26.3	26.4	26.3	32133	184926	52218	851	478	1245	557	1171	672
1988	569698	771268	112080	1.36	1.81	1.96	26.5	26.6	26.3	33226	203066	57090	849	511	1223	583	1244	718
1989	560688	765473	116023	1.33	1.79	2.01	26.6	26.8	26.3	34075	216063	60077	814	513	1191	598	1267	747
1990	569255	762407	123938	1.33	1.78	2.13	26.9	27.0	26.3	36810	229107	58248	799	536	1167	611	1333	798
1991	562787	759056	123737	1.31	1.77	2.11	27.0	27.2	26.5	37826	241628	59628	767	541	1149	618	1298	814
1992	567841	743658	122848	1.31	1.73	2.09	27.3	27.4	26.7	37956	246867	60771	753	562	1106	623	1262	824
1993	549484	711610	117998	1.27	1.65	1.99	27.4	27.6	27.0	40457	248331	59489	714	553	1042	612	1189	803
1994	533050	710993	112257	1.22	1.66	1.88	27.7	27.9	27.1	41683	256653	57927	666	553	1022	633	1105	777
1995	525609	729609	103422	1.20	1.70	1.73	28.0	28.1	27.2	42644	274210	54769	627	569	1028	675	999	731
1996	528103	734338	95297	1.19	1.72	1.60	28.3	28.4	27.4	43758	285514	51348	603	589	1017	703	903	695
1997	528901	726768	90502	1.18	1.71	1.52			27.5	44092	290848	48945			996	715	850	674
1998	515439	740500	89028	1.15	1.75	1.50			27.8	46604		48658			1003	749	802	703
1999	523463	744100	88173	1.19	1.77	1.51				48118		48751						

(1) Biological birth-order

Source: Council of Europe 2000

Table 4 - Total legitimate births and live births by order in Italy, France and Sweden (1960-1999)

	Total legitimate births			I births	II births	III births	IV births or higher order	I births	II births	III births	IV births or higher order	I births	II births	III births	IV births or higher order
Year	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy				France				Sweden			
1960		592621						277372	194590	120659	174245				
1961		607865						283047	201824	122994	178021				
1962		606917						282125	202904	121888	172997				
1963		637865						298938	211984	126943	176432				
1964		647643						302697	216483	128463	174979				
1965		644936						304384	216312	124240	166509				
1966		386593						43894	219801	122898	162009				
1967		374998						40489	215717	118792	149801				
1968		369743						37042	216219	116482	140037				
1969		368344						34015	217970	116359	130557				
1970		363448						31310	219017	113121	122638				
1971		372064						29306	229287	113471	119806				
1972		364287						26461	231067	106759	108093				
1973		355115						25455	229103	100557	96763				
1974		333298	104325					25317	219655	88326	80992	48980	40661	14684	6575310
1975		312125	98699					24233	211137	76755	64906	46267	38956	13476	5258250
1976		307155	93814					22751	213454	70950	52164	43250	37917	12647	4365990
1977		325298	91650					21976	228435	74887	49013	41232	37892	12526	4102856
1978		323865	88694					20508	227052	76305	45484	38815	36937	12942	4278425
1979		343122	91139					19163	236233	87726	44840	39651	36982	14506	5415520
1980	596507	366577	91733	298825	219830	77852	43894	17791	245376	103410	47074	40510	36396	14827	5751158
1981	582614	366714	88842	289670	216623	76321	40489	16295	240178	110241	52339	38894	34990	14958	5461542
1982	582055	353645	87504	290907	216336	74812	37042	16081	236800	100764	53126	37984	34523	14997	5505984
1983	567913	581073	86328	285333	210432	72148	34015	275814	222153	83106	48601	37434	33787	15107	5779851
1984	556561	576248	87891	278501	207873	70187	31310	269924	219292	87032	48426	37861	34273	15757	7138957
1985	548039	567896	91832	274503	204953	68583	29306	260490	215546	91860	50043	40030	34911	16891	8680620
1986	528984	557301	95183	266649	197200	65135	26461	250558	212250	94493	50485	42610	35486	17087	9193570
1987	526084	534145	97862	266982	194238	64864	25455	236427	203385	94333	48757	44373	36653	16836	9476460
1988	544381	518936	104776	276031	201914	66436	25317	231535	195014	92387	49266	47546	39273	17957	10887879
1989	536455	501465	108296	275008	196426	65021	24233	227823	184861	88781	47945	49788	39959	18549	12166050
1990	546504	487769	115191	282339	199571	64594	22751	228868	176791	82110	45531	52923	42607	19661	15845970
1991	540811	475298	114538	281764	197306	61741	21976	229311	169625	76362	42130	51201	43005	20332	18108630
1992	547333	457748	113129	287002	199858	60473	20508	222192	164275	71281	39043	50220	43102	19807	20070934
1993	530321	428326	108691	279929	193655	56737	19163	209905	154446	63975	34953	48440	41381	18870	19247910
1994	515259	421240	103502	272482	189693	53084	17791	204633	153814	62793	33100	44544	41051	17907	17058556
1995	509314	423267	95605	268478	189475	51361	16295	200243	159020	64004	32132	41214	37901	16490	13527366
1996	512022	418780	88323	269545	191058	51419	16081	203564	153720	61496	30044	38989	34918	14416	11052465
1997		435920	83880									37125	33325	13430	9802792
1998			82871									36502	33139	13230	8691280
1999			83261									37010	33228	13023	7952940

** Biological birth-order*

Source: Council of Europe 2000

Table 5 - Mean age at female first marriage (<50 compl years), marriages, total female first marriage rate, divorces and total divorce rate in Italy, France and Sweden (1960-1999)

	Mean age at female first marr, (<50 compl. years)			**Marriages total**			**Total female first marriage rate (<50 compl.years)**			**Divorces**			**Total divorce rate**		
Year	*Italy*	*France*	*Sweden*	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden
1960	24.8	23.0	23.9	387683	319944	50149	0.98	1.03	0.95		30182	8958		0.10	0.16
1961	24.7	23.0	23.9	397461	314841	52449	1.00	1.02	0.96		30809	8696		0.10	0.16
1962	24.6	23.0	23.8	406370	316873	53913	1.03	1.02	0.96		30569	8849		0.10	0.16
1963	24.5	22.8	23.7	420300	339463	53480	1.08	1.07	0.92		30298	8496		0.10	0.16
1964	24.3	22.7	23.6	417486	347525	58439	1.07	1.05	0.97		33250	9169		0.11	0.17
1965	24.2	22.7	23.5	399009	346308	59963	1.03	0.99	0.95		34877	9563		0.11	0.18
1966	24.2	22.7	23.5	384802	339746	61101	0.99	0.92	0.94		36732	10288		0.12	0.19
1967	24.1	22.7	23.5	380178	345578	56561	0.98	0.89	0.86		37194	10722		0.12	0.19
1968	24.1	22.7	23.7	374097	356615	52291	0.96	0.88	0.78		36063	11228		0.11	0.20
1969	24.0	22.7	23.8	384672	380829	48357	0.98	0.91	0.71		37485	12140		0.12	0.22
1970	23.9	22.6	23.9	395509	393686	43278	1.01	0.92	0.62		40004	12943		0.12	0.23
1971	23.9	22.6	24.1	404464	406416	39918	1.03	0.94	0.58	18132	47410	13540	0.06	0.14	0.25
1972	24.1	22.5	24.2	418944	416521	38636	1.05	0.95	0.56	33494	50222	15179	0.12	0.14	0.28
1973	23.8	22.5	24.4	418334	400740	38251	1.05	0.91	0.56	18500	51049	16021	0.06	0.15	0.30
1974	23.7	22.5	24.5	403215	394755	44864	1.02	0.89	0.65	18122	58699	26802	0.05	0.17	0.52
1975	23.7	22.5	24.8	373784	387379	44103	0.95	0.86	0.63	10759	61286	25383	0.03	0.17	0.50
1976	23.8	22.6	24.9	354202	374003	44790	0.89	0.82	0.64	12251	63484	21702	0.03	0.18	0.43
1977	23.6	22.7	25.2	347928	368166	40370	0.88	0.80	0.57	11969	73712	20391	0.03	0.21	0.41
1978	23.8	22.8	25.4	331416	354628	37844	0.82	0.76	0.53	12039	82247	20317	0.03	0.23	0.42
1979	23.9	22.9	25.8	323930	340405	37300	0.79	0.73	0.52	11995	78568	20322	0.03	0.22	0.43
1980	23.8	23.0	26.0	322968	334377	37569	0.78	0.71	0.53	11862	81143	19887	0.03	0.22	0.42
1981	23.8	23.1	26.3	316953	315117	37793	0.76	0.66	0.53	12619	87613	20198	0.03	0.24	0.44
1982	24.0	23.3	26.5	312486	312405	37051	0.73	0.65	0.52	14696	93571	20766	0.04	0.26	0.46
1983	24.1	23.6	26.8	303663	300513	36210	0.70	0.62	0.50	13649	98402	20618	0.04	0.28	0.46
1984	24.3	23.8	27.0	300889	281402	36849	0.68	0.57	0.51	15080	103638	20377	0.04	0.29	0.46
1985	24.5	24.2	27.2	298523	269419	38297	0.67	0.54	0.53	15659	107507	19763	0.04	0.31	0.45
1986	24.7	24.5	27.5	297540	265678	38906	0.66	0.53	0.54	16895	108379	19107	0.04	0.31	0.44
1987	24.9	24.8	27.6	306264	265177	41223	0.68	0.52	0.56	27092	106528	18426	0.07	0.31	0.43
1988	25.1	25.0	27.8	318296	271124	44229	0.69	0.53	0.60	30844	106094	17746	0.08	0.31	0.42
1989	25.3	25.3	30.4	321272	279900	108919	0.70	0.55	1.51	30376	105296	18862	0.08	0.31	0.44
1990	25.5	25.6	27.5	319711	287099	40477	0.69	0.56	0.55	27728	105813	19357	0.08	0.32	0.44
1991	25.7	25.8	27.6	312061	280175	36836	0.67	0.55	0.49	27398	108086	20149	0.08	0.33	0.45
1992	25.9	26.1	28.0	312348	271427	37173	0.68	0.53	0.50	26016	107994	21907	0.07	0.33	0.48
1993	26.0	26.4	28.1	302230	255190	34005	0.66	0.50	0.45	23877	110759	21673	0.07	0.33	0.48
1994	26.3	26.7	28.5	291607	253746	34203	0.63	0.49	0.45	27510	115658	22237	0.08	0.34	0.50
1995	26.6	26.9	28.7	290009	254651	33642	0.63	0.49	0.44	27038	119189	22528	0.08	0.36	0.52
1996	26.7	27.4	28.9	278611	280072	33484	0.60	0.54	0.44	32717	117382	21377	0.10	0.36	0.50
1997	27.0	27.6	29.2	277738	283984	32313	0.60	0.55	0.42	33342	116158	21009	0.10	0.35	0.51
1998			29.4	276570	282100	31598	0.60	0.55	0.41	33510		20761			0.51
1999				275250	285400	35628	0.62	0.57				21000			

Source: Council of Europe 2000

Table 6 - Longitudinal data on fertility, mean age at childbirth, proportion of evermarried women by age 50 (%) and mean age of women at first marriage (below age 50) in Italy, France and Sweden (1930-1965)

	Completed fertility			**Mean age at childbirth**			**Proportion of ever married women by age 50 (%)**			**Mean age of women at first marriage (below age 50)**		
Year of birth	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden	Italy	France	Sweden
1930	2.28	2.63	2.12	29.2	27.5	27.2	88	94	92	25.1	22.9	23.8
1931	2.29	2.62	2.14	29.1	27.4	27.1	89	94	92	25.1	22.9	23.7
1932	2.30	2.62	2.15	29.0	27.4	27.0	90	93	92	25.0	23.0	23.6
1933	2.32	2.61	2.16	28.9	27.3	26.9	90	93	92	24.9	23.0	23.5
1934	2.31	2.60	2.15	28.8	27.2	26.8	91	92	92	24.7	23.0	23.4
1935	2.28	2.57	2.14	28.6	27.1	26.7	91	92	91	24.6	22.9	23.4
1936	2.25	2.55	2.12	28.4	27.0	26.6	91	92	92	24.5	22.9	23.3
1937	2.23	2.52	2.11	28.3	26.8	26.5	91	92	91	24.4	22.9	23.3
1938	2.20	2.48	2.09	28.1	26.7	26.5	91	92	91	24.3	22.8	23.3
1939	2.17	2.44	2.07	27.9	26.6	26.4	91	93	91	24.2	22.7	23.3
1940	2.14	2.41	2.05	27.8	26.4	26.4	91	93	91	24.2	22.6	23.4
1941	2.13	2.36	2.03	27.6	26.3	26.4	91	92	90	24.1	22.5	23.4
1942	2.12	2.31	2.00	27.5	26.1	26.4	91	92	90	24.0	22.4	23.5
1943	2.10	2.28	1.99	27.3	26.0	26.4	92	92	89	23.8	22.4	23.5
1944	2.09	2.26	1.98	27.1	26.0	26.4	93	92	88	23.7	22.3	23.6
1945	2.07	2.22	1.98	27.0	26.0	26.4	93	92	87	23.6	22.3	23.8
1946	2.04	2.17	1.98	26.9	26.0	26.5	93	92	86	23.5	22.4	24.0
1947	1.98	2.13	1.99	26.9	26.1	26.6	92	92	85	23.4	22.4	24.3
1948	1.94	2.11	1.99	26.9	26.3	26.8	91	91	83	23.4	22.5	24.8
1949	1.90	2.11	2.00	27.0	26.4	27.0	91	91	82	23.4	22.5	25.3
1950	1.89	2.11	2.00	27.0	26.5	27.2	91	90	81	23.4	22.6	25.7
1951	1.87	2.12	2.00	27.0	26.6	27.3	91	90	80	23.3	22.6	26.1
1952	1.86	2.12	2.01	27.0	26.7	27.5	92	89	79	23.3	22.7	26.3
1953	1.84	2.12	2.02	27.0	26.8	27.7	94	88	77	23.3	22.7	26.6
1954	1.82	2.12	2.02	27.0	26.9	27.9	96	87	76	23.3	22.8	26.8
1955	1.80	2.13	2.03	27.1	27.0	28.0	93	86	74	23.3	22.9	27.0
1956	1.77	2.14	2.04	27.2	27.1	28.2	89	86	73	23.5	23.0	27.2
1957	1.74	2.14	2.05	27.3	27.2	28.3	86	85	72	23.7	23.2	27.3
1958	1.71	2.13	2.05	27.5	27.4	28.5	86	84	70	23.9	23.4	27.4
1959	1.68	2.12	2.05	27.7	27.5	28.6	85	82	68	24.1	23.7	27.5
1960	1.65	2.10	2.03	27.9	27.6	28.6	85	81	66	24.3	24.0	27.5
1961	1.61	2.08	2.02	28.1	27.8	28.6	86	79	64	24.5	24.3	27.6
1962	1.56	2.06	2.00	28.3	27.9	28.6	85	77	63	24.7	24.6	27.6
1963		2.03	1.99		28.1	28.6	85	76	61	24.9	24.9	27.6
1964		2.00	1.97		28.3	28.6	83	74	59	25.1	25.3	27.6
1965							82	72	58	25.4	25.6	27.7

Source: Council of Europe 2000

APPENDIX

Fertility Below the Replacement Threshold: A Comparison of Three Paths

Annalisa Busetta

1. During the past 40 years, the **number of births** has decreased considerably in all countries of the European Union (Figures 7 e 8. Data are in table 3). In particular, since 1960 Italy has seen its number of births drop drastically from 910,000 to 523,000 in 1999; at the same time, France has witnessed a decrease from 816,000 to 744,000 in 1997, while in Sweden the reduction was by about one fifth of the number of births (from 102,000 to 88,000 in 1999). In the current situation, due to the widespread use of various types of contraceptives, women are not normally fertile. In this situation, for a child to be born, the woman (on the basis of her own choice or that of the couple) must restore the condition of fertility. The individual, and more in general the couple, must thus face a "cascade of hierarchical and reasonable choices" (Dalla Zuanna G. 1996) that concern the number of desired children, as well as the choice of the most reliable (and at the same time least bothersome and unpleasant) contraception method, in order to avoid unwanted, or at least unplanned, births.

2. Starting in the 1960s, in almost all the countries of the European Union, a slowdown in marriages was observed, in the total nuptiality rate and a postponement of the mean age at first marriage. Although the **number of marriages**[10] (Figure 1 e 2) remains very high, the analyses by age and cohort are starting to indicate in many countries, particularly in northern Europe, a slowdown in the marriage trend and a raising of the age at marriage (Saraceno C., Naldini M., 2001).

The 1960s mark a turning point: in France and Italy, it corresponds to the start of the descending trend that leads to the current values (in 1999, the **total nuptiality rate was** 0.57 in France and 0.62 in Italy), while in Sweden[11] a sort of trend reversal is recorded from a period of decline of the above-said rate, to a phase of relative stability (with the exception of a peak registered in 1989) around 0.50. In fact, it is only in recent years that the rate has started to decrease again in Sweden (Figure 3).

From the mid-1900s, there has been a reversal of trend of a falling **mean age at first marriage** (Figures 4 e 5)**.** Indeed, in almost all the countries of the European Union, it tends to rise continuously and constantly. For Italy, the drop in marriages may be attributed to the combination of the decrease in marriages contracted before 20 years of age, and the simultaneous decrease in the age at first marriage (Santini A., 1986). It is, however, a widespread opinion among popula-

[10] In almost all countries of the European Union, the only form of legally recognised and permitted marriage is civil marriage. An exception is Italy, where the civil rite is included in the religious rite, as established by the Concordat between the Italian State and the Catholic Church.

[11] Sweden has a regulation of the couple relationship that has progressively ended up granting an equal treatment to both *de facto* couples and married couples.

tion researchers that if this trend were to become consolidated, a sizable proportion of persons, particularly women who have reached the age of thirty and are still single, will end up never getting married. The increase in the mean age at first marriage recorded in France and Sweden is, instead, accompanied by a growth in cohabitations which, in many countries of the European Union, are unions recognised in many ways by legislation in terms of inheritance, access to public services, and access to financial benefits.

3. Fall in the fertility rate has been involving the countries of the European Union already for several decades. It is a fact that in all developed countries the fertility is currently at its all-time low and that there is no clear and evident sign of a reversal of trend, at least for the near future (De Rose A., 1997). If we look at Italy, France, and Sweden, it turns out that in 1999, the **Total Fertility Rate** (TFR) does not go past the replacement level, standing respectively at 1.19, 1.77, and 1.51 (Figure 10). In particular, in Italy the fall in fertility since 1960 goes through two phases: initially there is a relatively slow decline until 1975 (the TFR falls from 2.41 to 2.21), while later the decline becomes rapid and substantial, arriving at the all-time low of 1.15 children per woman in 1998. At the same time, in Sweden the female fertility rate has risen from 1.6 children per woman recorded in the late 1970s to 2.11 in 1994, then dropping again during the following years, remaining, however, at higher levels than in the southern and continental European countries where, on the contrary, more stable marriages and limited female employment rates[12] should, theoretically speaking, give rise to a greater fertility.

If we observe the **cohort total fertility rate** (Figure 9) trend of the generations born between 1930 and 1965, we find results that are not too far apart. Italy saw a decrease from 2.28 in 1930 to 1.56 in 1962, while France saw its fertility rate drop from 2.63 to 2.06 (Santini A., 1986). The decline recorded by Sweden was decidedly slower, with the fertility descending, during the same period, from 2.12 to 1.97. In all cases, there is a situation in which the proportion of women who pass from the postponement of the suitable time for having children to a definitive renunciation is often significant (De Sandre P., Onagro F., Rettaroli R., Salvini S., 1997). In this context, it can be expected that the fertility will remain at low levels or, at the most, that there will be a slight increase in certain countries, such as Sweden, which could also reach the replacement level.

While Italy is one of the countries with the lowest fertility in the world, this indicator also reflects one of the lowest natural fertility, i.e. births out of wedlock, among developed countries, even if it is continuously increasing. In fact, in

[12] During the 1970s, many demographers asserted the close relationship between low female employment and high fertility rates. However, since the late 1980s-early 1990s, this relationship seems to have reversed. It is the countries with high female employment that currently have the highest rates, while those where female employment is limited not only have reached extremely low rates, but do not even seem to have curbed the decline yet. On the contrary, in France and the Scandinavian countries, the fertility level has stabilised, also showing some undeniable signs of an upswing (Saraceno, C., Naldini, M., 2001). There are various explanations for this reversal of the ratio of female employment to fertility rate, but they always depend on the way the different societies react to the growth of female employment and schooling, the way various societies decide to support the cost of children, and the way they promote economic autonomy.

Italy, **children born out of wedlock** in 1999 account for 9.2% of all births, compared to 40.0% in France[13] and 55.3% in Sweden. In Italy (ISTAT, 2000), it is marriage that marks the start of a cohabitation and procreation. Births must take place during marriage, and an unexpected pregnancy easily leads to a marriage before the child is born. On the contrary, in Sweden, as in France[14], more than half of all births take place within relationships of cohabitation that are hard to distinguish from marriage, or else outside of the couple relationship (these are often lone mothers, mostly of young ages) [15]. The fall in the to levels below the replacement threshold highlights a difficulty in dealing with, in economic and organisational terms, the presence of children and, at the same time, it highlights a change in the position that having children brings about in the unmarried and married life.

Considerable changes are also recorded in the **mean age at the birth of the first child** (Figures 11 e 12). The pattern of fertility, the role of women, their level of education and insertion into the labour market, and the prevalent pattern of life as a couple are changing. All this has effects on the mean number of children ever born per woman and on the absolute number of children (indicators of intensity of the variable) and at the same time on the traditional timing of the unmarried and married life, which is considerably extended. The mean age at the birth of the first child (indicator of frequency of fertility) is increasing everywhere in the European Union: in particular, Italy, after a slight decline recorded from 1960 to1975 which brought the mean age down from 25.8 to 24.7, has embarked on a rapid ascent, which led in 1996 to recording the birth of the first child, on the average, at the age of 28.3 years. A similar situation exists in France, where the decline recorded during the first period was barely worthy of note, leading in 1973 to 24.3. On the other hand, during a second period, the mean age at the birth of the first child recorded a sizable and continuous increase up to the current value (1996), equal to 28.4. In Sweden, the trend of the mean age at the birth of the first child registered a different trend up until the first half of the 1970s, then changing to conform to the Community trend just described for Italy and France. The current value, referring to 1998, is equal to 27.8.

4. Within the framework of the procreation choices, a significant importance is assumed by the break-up of the couple. From one society to another and from one period to another, the degree of legitimation of **divorce** (Figure 16) and the types of reasons acknowledged as legitimate for requesting it change (Barbagli M., Saraceno C., 1997). All scholars agree in identifying a strong relationship between the number of divorces and the introduction of a more permissive legislation concerning divorce (observed in many of the European Union's countries in the

[13] For France, the figure refers to 1997.

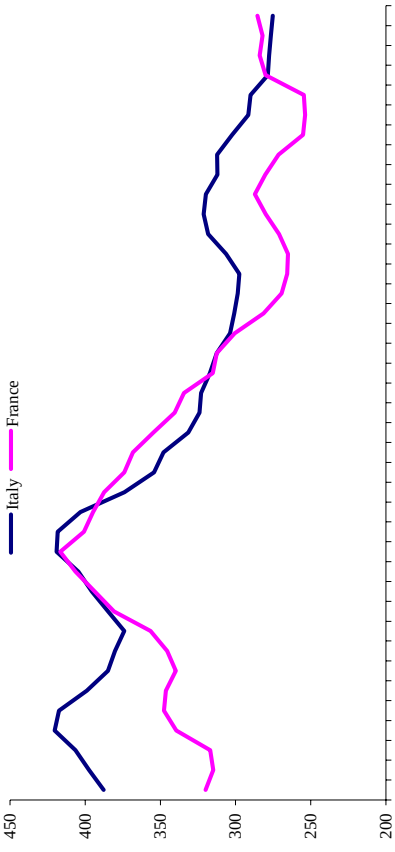
[14] Lesthaeghe R. sustains that in France, such as in Austria and in East Germany, "… extra-marital fertility rose in tandem with premarital cohabitation to the point that 30 – 45% of all births now occur to non-married women" (Lesthaeghe R., 2001).

[15] "In Protestant countries of Northern Europe, leave the parent nest and form a new household is a normal step of transition to the adult age, but is not necessarily connected to the building of a family through the marriage … In Catholic countries of Southern Europe and in Ireland, children born only within the marriage and get married is the way to build a new family" in IARD, 2001, "Studio sulla condizione e sulle politiche giovanili in Europa", Milano [page 12]

1970s). It should, however, be pointed out that the passing of more permissive laws may have been, depending on the cases, the cause or effect of cultural changes concerning marriage and its stability (Saraceno C., Naldini M., 2001). Divorce is, in fact, contextualised in the new scenario of couples' relationships: if people get married it is for love, so the marriage bond can be untied at any time when the bases for the union are no longer valid. In this scenario, Italy's case is particular: divorce was introduced only in 1970 and consists of an initial legal separation that, after a waiting period, leads to the right to dissolve the union. The phenomenon is, however, rather limited[16]: except for an initial peak registered between 1971 and 1973 because of the then-recent introduction of the law, the total divorce rate (Figure 17) has always recorded values lower than 0.10 per 1,000. On the contrary, both France and Sweden have witnessed a continuous increase of the rate in the past 40 years, reaching 0.51 and 0.35, respectively, in 1998. It should be pointed out that in Sweden, unlike in other countries of the European Union, including Italy, the dissolution of a marriage does not entail a situation of greater vulnerability of the woman, for two reasons: in the first place, most women are employed and, as such, they are financially independent, and in the second place, there are active policies supporting female employment and a guarantee of income for children which make it possible to compensate any financial difficulties that may be connected with the transition from a traditional to a one-parent family.

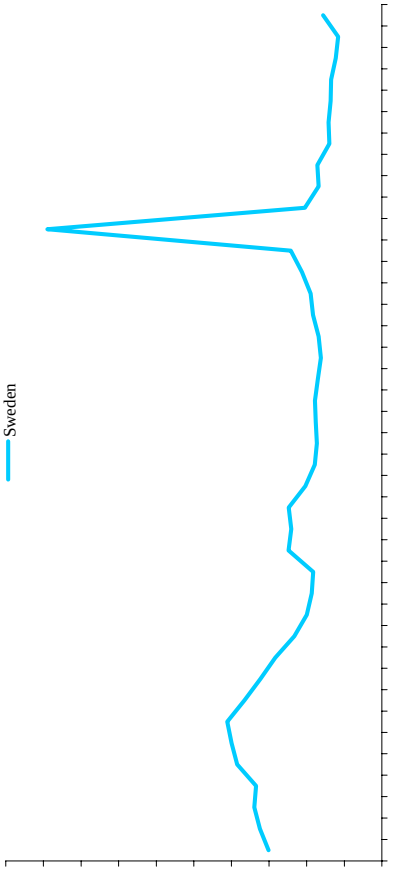
[16] Considering the particular Italian situation, often, to study the phenomenon, recourse is made to the data concerning separations, which offer a better picture of the characteristics.

Figure 1: Marriages in Italy and France from 1960 to 1999 (000). Period data



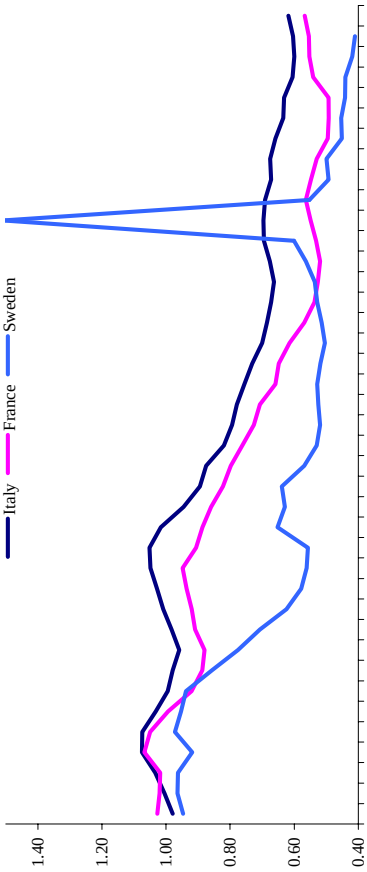
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 2: Marriages in Sweden from 1960 to 1999 (000). Period data



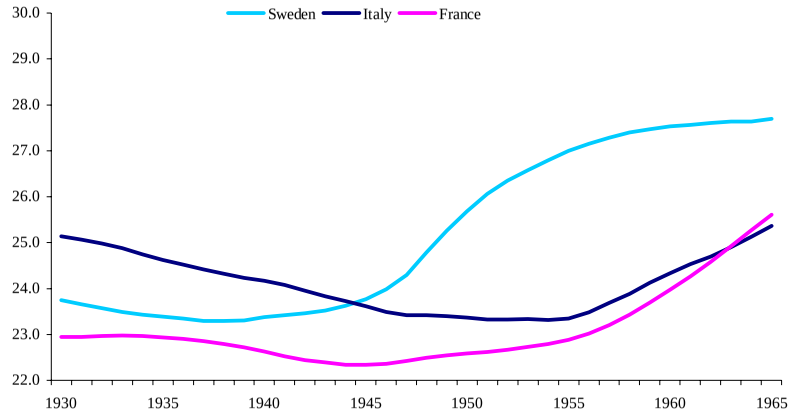
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 3: Total female first marriage rate (<50 compl.years) in Italy, France and Sweden from 1960 to 1999. Period data



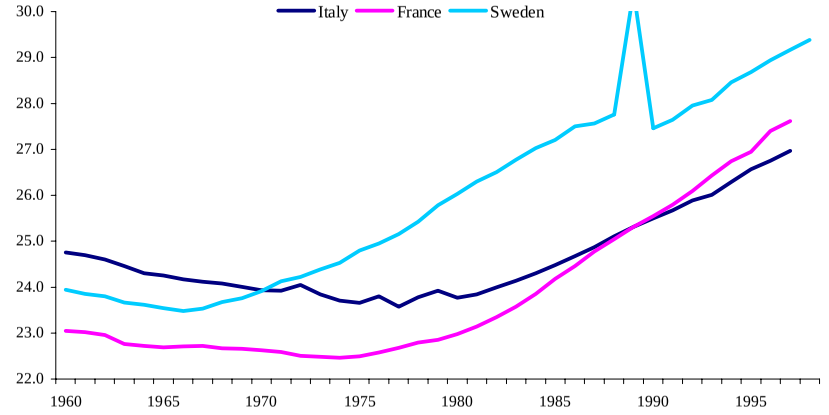
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 4: Mean age of women at first marriage (below age 50) in Italy, France and Sweden from 1930 to 1965. Cohort data



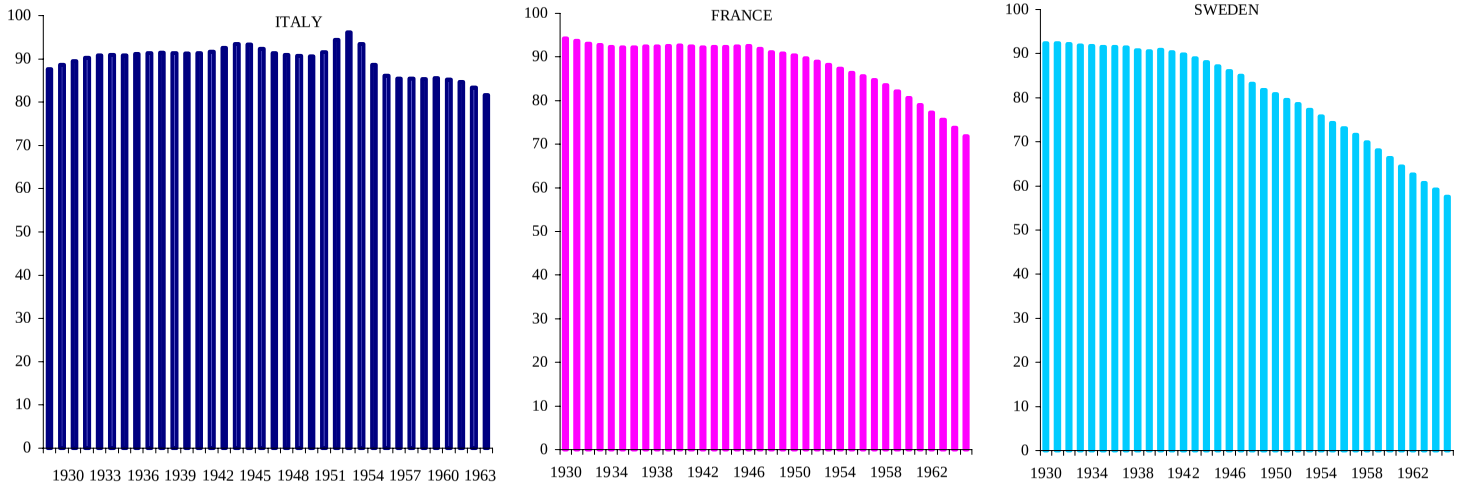
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 5: Mean age of women at first marriage (below age 50) in Italy, France and Sweden from 1960 to 1998. Period data



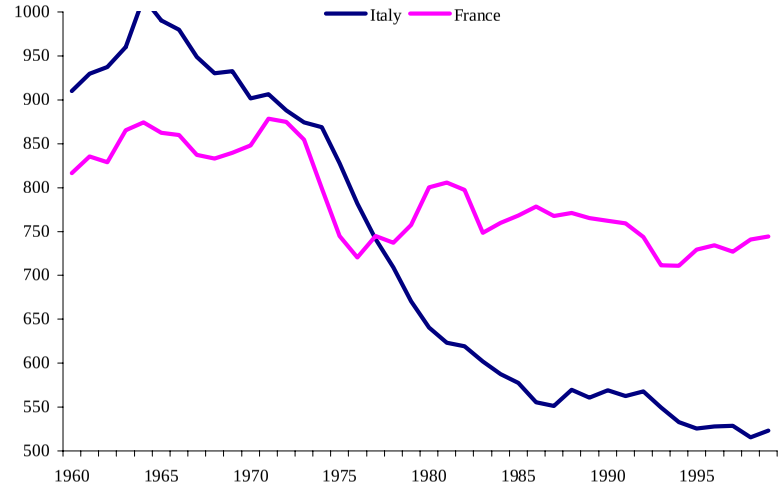
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 6: Proportion (%) of ever married women by age 50 in Italy, France and Sweden from 1930 to 1965. Cohort data



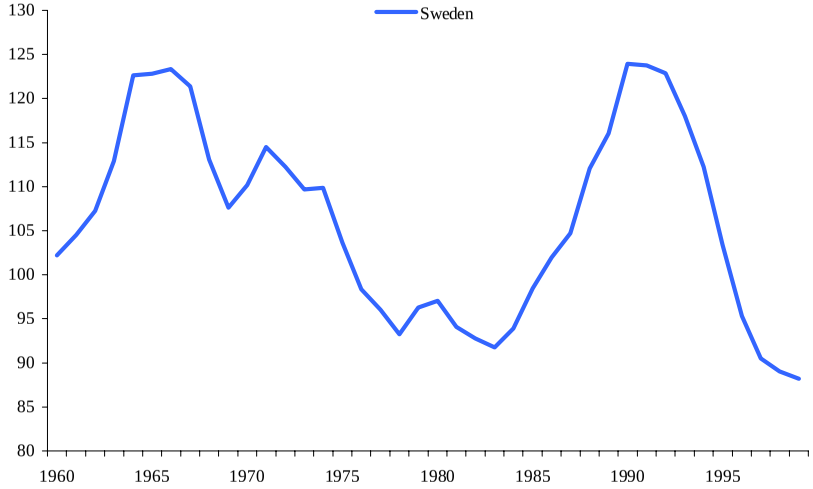
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 7: Live births in Italy and France from 1960 to 1999 (000). Period data



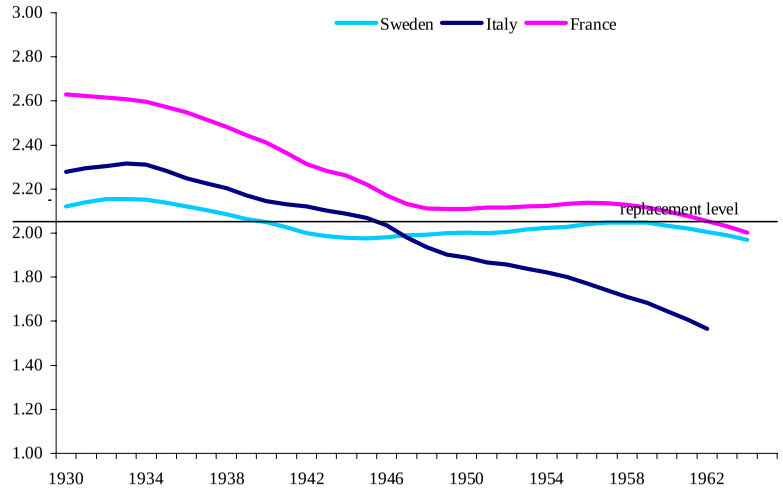
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 8: Live births in Sweden from 1960 to 1999 (000). Period data



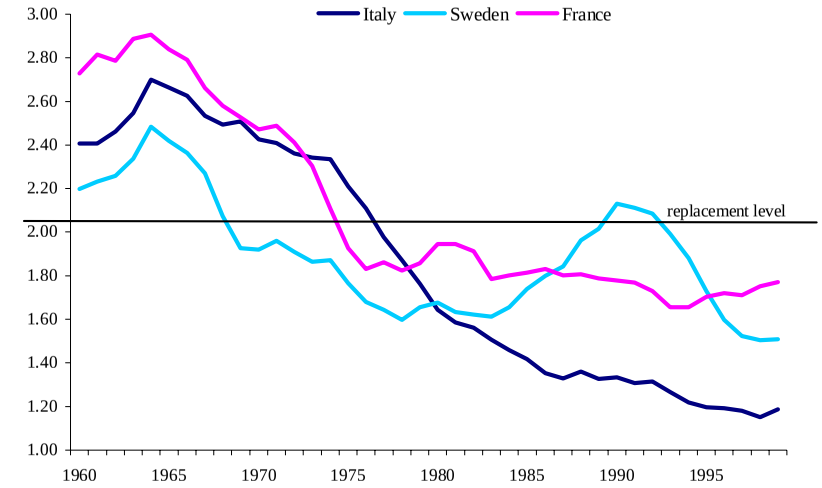
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 9: Completed fertility in Italy, France and Sweden from 1930 to 1965. Cohort data



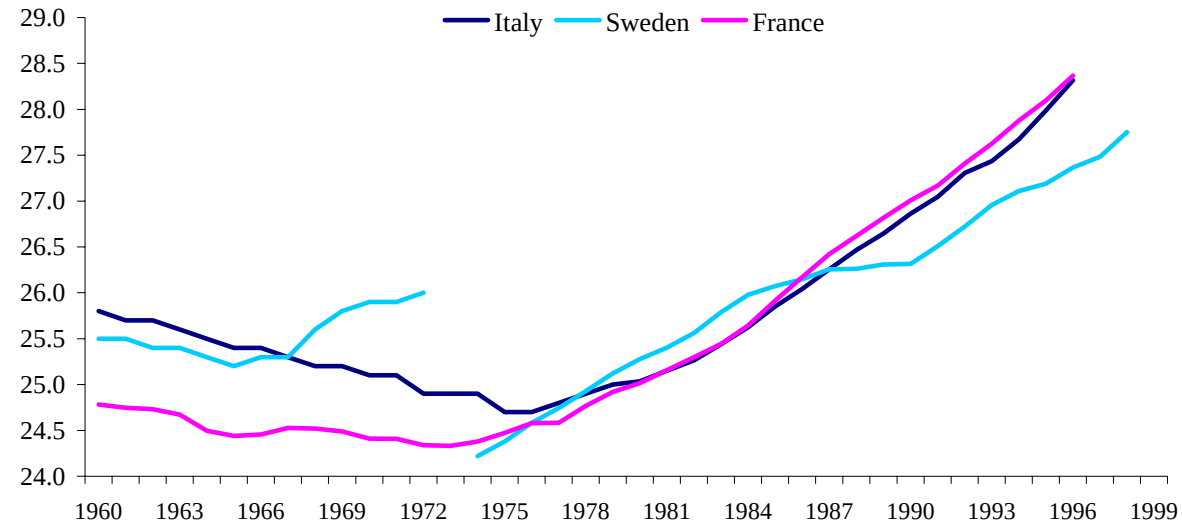
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure10 : TFR in Italy, France and Sweden from 1960 to 1999. Period data



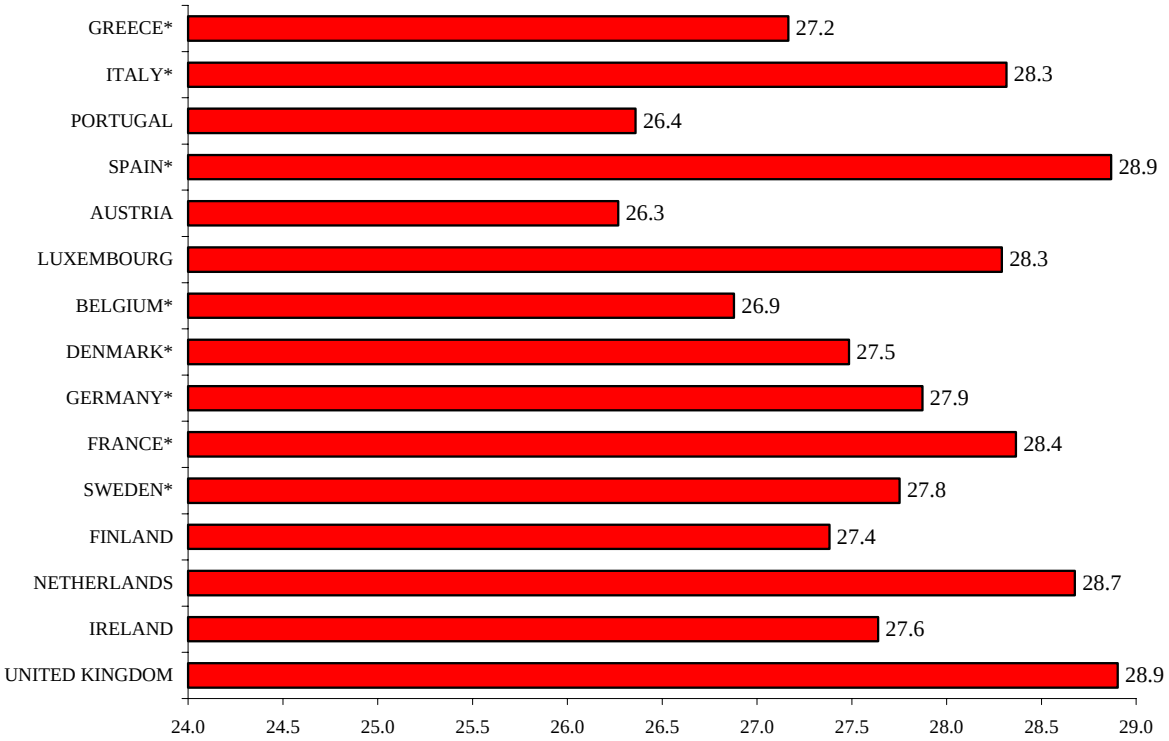
Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 11:Mean age of women at birth of first child in Italy, France and Sweden from 1960 to 1999. Period data



Source: Council of Europe 2000

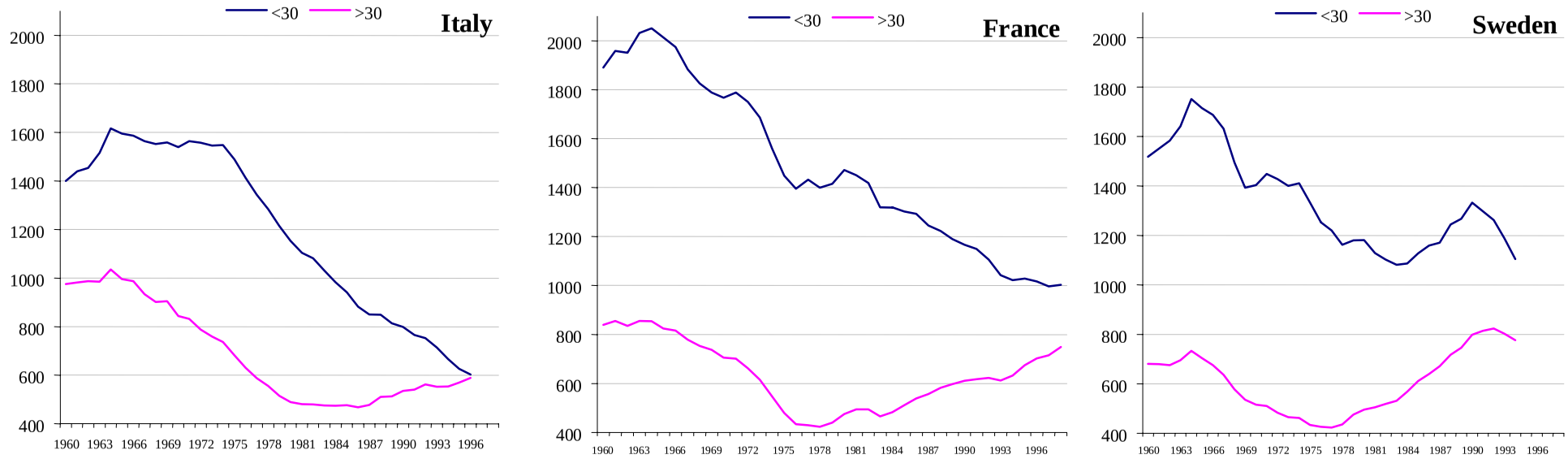
Figure 12: Mean age of women at birth of first child in European Union countries 1999. Period data



Source: Council of Europe 2000

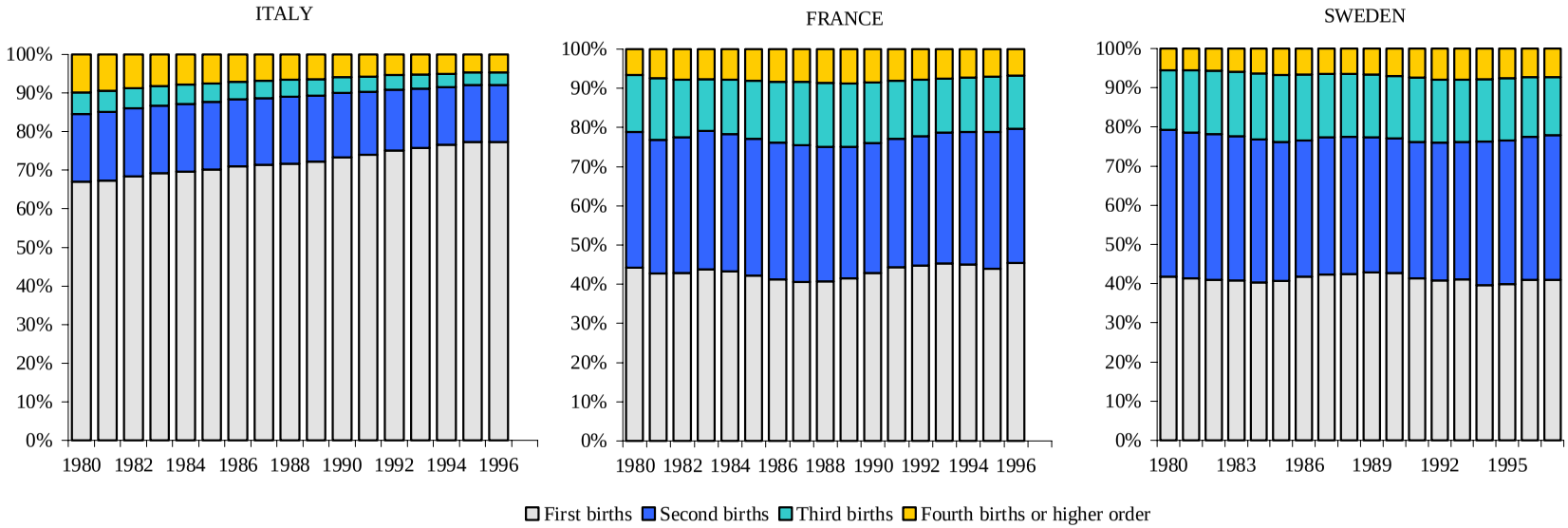
* Spain, Sweden, Greece and Germany 1997; Italy, Denmark and France 1995; Belgium 1993

Figure 14:Sum of age-specific fertility rates (age in completed years) in Italy, France and Sweden from 1960 to 1998. Period data



Source: Council of Europe 2000

Figure 15: Life births by order in Italy, France and Sweden from 1980 to 1997 (percentage values). Period data



Source: Council of Europe 2000

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