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## FRAMING THE ORGANISATION OF INTIMACY AS A POLICY PROBLEM ACROSS EUROPE<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*This article analyzes how the issue of gender inequality has been framed in connection to families and family policy, especially in the European Union, the Netherlands, Austria and Greece. The period studied is 1995-2004. The analysis shows 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. Accents on presenting 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). Moreover, the absence of attention for gender inequality within families is a problem in itself. The analysis also shows attempts to legitimise gender equality by linking measures originating 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 these linkages, it is striking that in all of the*

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1. The work presented in this paper draws upon the collective effort of the MAGEEQ team, and more specifically on four internal reports: van Beveren and Verloo, 2004; van Lamoen, Paantjens and Verloo, 2004; Pantelidou Maloutas et al., 2004; Sauer and Tertinegg, 2004. Special thanks to Ilse van Lamoen who has contributed parts to the sections on the Netherlands.

*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. These (re)traditionalised frames redirect measures such as reconciliation towards goals that could very well be contradictory to gender equality.*

In the second half of the 20th Century, especially radical feminism focused strongly 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 depicted as a crucial basis of power of men over women, and marriage and families were understood as primary sites of male domination. Marxist feminism 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 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 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, an EU funded research comparing policy frames on gender equality in six European countries and the European Union. This paper analyses material from the European Union, the Netherlands, Austria and Greece. The period studied is 1995-2004.

## GENDER EQUALITY FRAMES IN CONNECTION TO FAMILY POLICY 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 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, p. 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, new policies often mainly consists of creating possibilities for women to combine care for children and paid labour, while they involve 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, and thus fails to challenge stereotyped gender relations (Stratigaki, 2004, 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, 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, p. 307). Duncan argues that in the 1990s 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, p. 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, p. 310) identifies two sets of policy responses to this perceived «demographic time bomb». Firstly, negative and descriptive measures, such as redefining women as child bearers in traditional households; and secondly, positive and supportive policies, such as changing structures so that women and men can both have a life *and* 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, p. 307).

More generally, there seem to be 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 (Kaufman, 2002). In the last type of regime, family policy is often a way of facilitating home care for children.

What does the analysis within the MAGEEQ project contribute to these findings? Looking first at the EU level, 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 commissioner Diamantopoulou, to illustrate the development of ideas on family matters at the EU level.

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 actively 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. Our analysis shows that the absence of actors at the EU level who focus on gender inequalities within families is a problem in itself. 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 are always –as Stratigaki points out– that caring is women’s duty. In the texts on family policy, moreover, a traditional model of the family, in which heterosexual families are the norm, can be detected. Even if mentioning other causes of changes in families, 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 changes in gender relations as problematic. This is all the more striking because 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 transformative elements, such as the importance of more active fathers, or the need for workplaces that are more responsive to family life. The more «real» measures are more easily compatible with frames that include traditional gender roles.

The next paragraphs will analyze the Netherlands, Greece and Austria along three dimensions: the degree to which family policies are subordinated to labour market issues, the degree to which they are addressing the (gendered) organization of intimacy, and the way gender is conceptualized (or not). The final discussion will highlight similarities and differences across countries and between the three countries and the European Union.

## FAMILY POLICY IN AUSTRIA, GREECE AND THE NETHERLANDS

### **The Netherlands**

In 1995, the Christian-Democratic Party unsuccessfully proposed a separate minister of Family Affairs to emphasise the role of the family as a counterweight to the increasing individualisation in society. This 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.

In connection to emancipation policy family policy concentrates specifically on matters of labour and care. The major legislative and policy initiatives in this field 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– asked a Committee on Future Scenario's for Redistribution of Unpaid Labour to develop «four scenarios on the organisation of care, and in relation to that on the organisation of paid labour». In 1996, this committee published its final report, promoting the so-called «combination scenario».<sup>2</sup> 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 final Labour and Care Act unites a range of new and existing arrangements facilitating the combination of labour and care. The first part,

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

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, proposed 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 in force since 2005.

In addition to these legal provisions, several policy initiatives have been developed. The first Purple Cabinet installed a Daily Routine Committee (1996-1998), which linked the combination scenario to issues of time and spatial planning.<sup>3</sup> This approach was elaborated 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 on the combination of labour and care by municipalities, provincial states, companies, and NGOs), 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 was installed, focusing specifically on the mutual attuning of education, childcare and spare time facilities. The Stimulation Measure has been succeeded by the Project Daily Routine (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

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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.



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 preparation of an Inventory Course of Life,<sup>4</sup> partly inspired by external recommendations and reports. The Inventory (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 this arrangement to January 2006, along with the introduction of a new fiscal system (Tax Plan 2004, including plans to abolish early pension arrangements). The government and the social partners agreed on the arrangement in 2005. The social partners have increasingly interpreted the Course of Life Arrangement as a sabbatical opportunity for leisure or study, rather than as an arrangement for facilitating daily care.

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 2003, the Secretary of State on Emancipation and Family Affairs launched the project *Men in the Leading Role*. The project consists of a study on «Working Fathers, Caring Men» [(Duyvendak and Stavenuiter (eds), 2005)] and a multi-media campaign called *Who Does What*. Stereotypes also were discussed in the digital forum «To men's/women's advantage», on which the government invited women and men to «share their opinion on future priorities of the Dutch emancipation policy» (2003). The main recommendations were presented in a brochure (2003), followed by a report with final conclusions in 2004.

## **Austria**

The 1990s were the period of growth, consolidation and expansion of women's politics in Austria. In 1990, the «Federal Ministry of Women's

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

Affairs» was installed and expanded, and the ministry was allotted its own budget. The minister had a cross-sectional responsibility for women's issues and was actively taking part in the debates on family policy. Up to the year 2000 Austria was governed by a coalition government of SPÖ and ÖVP. Since then the right-wing FPÖ formed a coalition with the ÖVP. In 2000, the new government claimed «new politics» for Austria and dissolved the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs. 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 April 2003 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. 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).

In 2004, family policy is located in a specific 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, while simultaneously 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 coalition partner in government, 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, 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). 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 female education levels), the perception of the labour division 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, p. 162).

In the mid 1990s, after Austria's accession to the European Union, the SPÖ/ÖVP government started welfare state retrenchment. At the same time ideas of restoring family values arouse. 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 for more child care facilities. In the same year, the Women's Minister started an initiative called «Fifty-Fifty», encouraging men and women to 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 create incentives for childcare at home. The FPÖ had started this campaign earlier in Carinthia, where Jörg Haider was governor, arguing that women should have the choice between waged labour and domestic childcare. The FPÖ therefore suggested the so called «children's cheque» (Kinderscheck). According to this model, all mothers receive money to either buy public childcare or stay at home with their children and take the money as childcare wage. In 2001 the ÖVP/FPÖ decided on the law on children's care benefits (Kinderbetreuungsgeldgesetz), following this 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**

The institutions of family and marriage are of paramount importance for the Greek society. Compared with other European countries, social protection in Greece is mainly restricted to income allowances, while welfare provisions and services are lacking. The provision of care to children and the elderly is a responsibility that burdens the family and particularly women. 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 [Symeonidou, 1996; Charalambis, Maratou-Alipranti and Hadjiyannis (eds) 2004]. Part of the exceeding demand is channeled into the private sector (nurseries, elderly house) and particularly into the expanding market of personal services due to the work of migrant women who are usually not insured and illegal (Matsaganis and Petroglou, 2001; Carlos and Maratou-Alipranti, 2003).

For the past five or six years, the family has been at the centre of public debates and official action on the all-embracing issues of demography, employment and social security schemes. Various 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, state interventions have been limited and overall family policy has not adjusted to emerging new social conditions. Moreover, while family policy has been of growing importance in Greece, until very recently the target was not gender equality. Ongoing discussions focus on the re-orientation of existing policies and the formulation of new and more coherent policy programmes that will include a more explicit gender dimension [Maratou-Alipranti (ed.), 2002; Mousourou and Stratigaki (eds), 2004].

Despite population decrease and low birth rates after the 1980s, family policy has not been explicit and effective in Greece, but specific measures were indirectly included in a range of social regulations. Only a few 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. Family policy in Greece is limited to a socio-security nexus concerning employment policy (reduced working hours, parental leave, maternity leave and provisions, prevention of dismissal for pregnant women, help at home for the elderly etc), insurance policy (maternity allowances, childbirth benefits, pension rights for uninsured divorced spouses etc), socio-educational policy (nurseries, children's activities in school, all day schools etc), income policy (tax exemptions) and 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 are generally very low and in no case 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. Thereby social policies for families are subordinated to a demographic policy. 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 (Maratou-Alipranti, 1999; Symeonidou et al., 2002).

In the period 1995-2003, the most important laws 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 as the protection of pregnant women in the workplace. Furthermore, some laws concern the institutionalization of informal types of work, such as work at home and telework whereas the gender dimension seems not to play an important role in public debate.

#### (SHIFTS IN) FRAMES AROUND THE ORGANISATION OF LABOUR?

##### **The Netherlands**

Dutch policy and legislation on labour and care appears to be framed primarily around the notion of «combining citizens», reflecting a primacy of the labour market, as labour market participation is seen as the standard with which care needs to be «combined». 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 diagnosis in the policy documents we analysed, concerns the lack in «choice options» to combine labour and care. Only rarely care seems to prevail to paid labour (Project Group Redistribution Unpaid Labour, 1995). 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, while other texts reverse this causality: women's increased labour market participation causes the combining problems in society (van Lamoen, Paantjens and Verloo, 2004).

Usually, refraining from enforced regulation in the prognosis is legitimized based upon a demand for «policy freedom» vis-à-vis international treaties (CEDAW-letter), and a more general reluctance for top-down intervention itself. Usually this results in complex compromises in legislation, nearly parodying the Dutch polder model.<sup>5</sup> Take for instance the 2001 cabinet proposal, granting employees a «provisional right» to long-term leave, which can be denied by employers in the case of «strong company interests». Likewise, the draft Act Basic Provision Childcare assigns employers the responsibility but not the obligation of financing a share of their employees' childcare facilities. Underpinning the current proposals for the demand-oriented financing of childcare and the long-term leave scheme, free market mechanisms are assumed to promote a better attuning to individual needs and people's freedom of choice.

The analysis shows shifts in the representation of people's roles outside the labour market. More specifically, the meaning of «care» varies while the combination scenario is sometimes stretched beyond its original meaning. 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

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5. 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.

care, to shopping, health care facilities, and even recreation. In legislation, on the other hand, the only realm demarcated as a legitimate ground for leave appears to be care for children (Labour and Care Act). Recently a Course of Life Arrangement has been agreed which includes education as a leave ground, but this arrangement does not provide in a legal right to leave: it consists of a long term salary saving scheme.

### **Greece**

The most important laws and provisions during the period 1995-2003 with regard to family and gender issues are, as already mentioned, 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, and the protection of pregnant women in the workplace. However, the internal rationale of family policy is related to family size, facilitating large families (3+ children).

The law on «Working women during pregnancy, in childbed and breast-feeding» largely reflects traditional social roles. The underlying norm seems to be to protect women so that they can fulfil their duties as mothers. Furthermore, many cases stress discrimination and unhealthy working conditions for pregnant women, and for the foetus. In the debate on the Bill on informal work, where women predominate, one speaker (woman MP) believes «that the suggested provisions reinforce gender inequality and are against women». As she points out that the state shows an anti-labour mentality, a lack of concern for the developments in the labour market and for the protection of women's rights in employment. The regulations suggested by the law favours the employers only, and not the working women.

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**

Although the frame on «reconciliation of work and family life» which we found to be hegemonic in Austria until 1999/2000, 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, the discourse took on quite divergent concepts in the election campaigns and in the new government coalition plans.

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 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) is opposed to the positive depiction of family in economic terms: family as «enterprise» (Government Program, 2003). Enterprises are also called upon to create a more family-friendly world of work. In this frame, the 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 that has occurred. The original meaning of facilitating women's labour market participation and changing the unequal gender division of labour has shifted to encompass a value frame with respect to founding a family, caring for a family, and a gendered prioritising of 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 are legally

equal 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». Although there is attention for their specific problems, these problems are seen as not representative in the Netherlands.

Many texts refer to «changing family patterns» as a factor that legitimises policy action in combining labour and care, referring, quite arbitrarily it seems 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, as «families» are not only heterosexual married couples with children. They are defined as: one or more adults taking care of/being responsible for children (*Position and Function of the Family*, 1996). Though most texts do not explicitly define families, this family model seems to be generally accepted. The Project Group *Redistribution Unpaid Labour* even transgresses family boundaries by defining unpaid labour as the care for oneself, children, parents, housemates and members of the primary social network. 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 and childless singles, who might be in need to take care of relatives as well. Only in exceptional cases like calamity leave and leave for terminally ill relatives, the act provides in a right to leave for other relatives than children. While including «modern» forms of partnership –unmarried partners, same-sex partners– the proposal adopts a strict concept of relatives (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 and Hooghiemstra, 2004). Better conditions for reconciliation have rarely been articulated as related to a demographic need. Recently, the first link to a demographic frame was found at a national Debate on Emancipation and Family (2004). Warnings were given that, in view of the ageing of society, not having a reproduction policy at all will have its repercussions on Dutch society in terms of higher medical costs (because women postpone their pregnancy into their 30s) and higher financial discrepancies between families (because mainly 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 birth rates. This subordinates family policy to the commands of the demographic policy focusing all public support on families with many children. The analyzed texts present the drop in birth rates as an related to wider economic and social changes and more particularly as related to «new family patterns and young couples preferences as well as working women's negative attitudes towards motherhood». It is suggested that the agreement of all parties is necessary in solving this problem, the ultimate goal being a national demographic policy involving the socio-economic integration of migrants and incentives for large families. It is also implied that decreasing numbers of abortions will contribute to an increase in birth rates. Gender is not referred to in the prognosis of this problem.

Parties from the right stress that the problem is caused by the new family types (cohabiting couples, children out of wedlock). They see modern cultural patterns and loss of religious feeling as contributing to a crisis in the value-orientations of society and a weakening of traditional family bonds. This cultural and social problem is related to a self-centred mentality and behaviour of modern couples as well as to society's powerlessness to react. It is a socio-economic problem (as economic deprivation may threaten social cohesion and social structures) and a national problem (compared to the rapid increase in the population of Turkey and the rise of various ethno-nationalisms in the Balkans, the Greek population lags behind). Therefore, the solution of the demographic problem is crucial and must be a «national objective». Such framing depicts an «overall supremacy to the nation».

From a totally different point of view the left parties argue that women do not play the role of «childbearing machines» in society and should not be seen as solely responsible for children and family. They present women as having an active role in the labour market, but struggling to strengthen their

position in society by combining family and professional life. Such framing is sensitive to the problems that women have and their efforts to reconcile maternity with professional life, and equality of gender roles within family life is part of it. Therefore the state is seen as having 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.

Even if most frames relate to contemporary cultural patterns, the traditional model of a heterosexual couple prevails, even in the texts from left parties. Producing children for society is almost solely women's responsibility or reality. It is also pointed out that women's rising participation in employment, as well as abortions and sterility are causes of the problem. Young women are presented as being focused on career priorities implying that they may be less interested in starting a family.

### **Austria**

After 1999/2000 a new 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, for women 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.

In contradiction to the focus on family as sanctuary, there is a simultaneous neo-liberal frame of «choice» and a 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 is a non issue in the Dutch family policy strategy and gender is often not mentioned explicitly. 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 problem is pictured as a failure of society 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 social quality» of society and of individual lives, implicitly appealing to women's traditional roles as caretakers. This text presents a friction between women's responsibility for «the mutual care of people», and the need for women 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, they are not in the prognosis. Most texts tend to make all people responsible for resolving the (combining) problem, irrespective of sex.

Gender stereotypes on family roles have been (re)set on the emancipation policy agenda in 2003. Stereotypes could be discussed in a digital forum, on which the government invited women and men to share their opinion on future priorities of the Dutch emancipation policy. In a project targeted at promoting men's responsibility in the private realm, women and men ultimately are assigned the shared responsibility of «discussing their mutual task distribution» (van Lamoen, Paantjens and Verloo, 2004). One could remark cynically here that in this framing 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 (van Lamoen, Paantjens and Verloo, 2004).

### **Greece**

Greek policy texts usually present women as wives and mothers, and if depicted as working 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 a need for support by the state to «fulfil their roles» as mothers and wives (when working) through possibilities for the reconciliation of family and work life. For this purpose there is a need to develop high quality structures harmonizing professional. 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 wealth of the country. While the analysed texts refer to working women and working mothers, there is no explicit reference to gender roles.

The speakers of the Left 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 an economically productive age too. Motherhood and work are two different life patterns, and thus the possibility should be given to women to accomplish both, something that is not happening today. These speakers mention that women are not «childbearing machines», and stress that they should feel free to decide when and how many children to 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, in contrast to public childcare which is seen as of lesser quality. 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.

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: reference is made to the ageing society and difficulties to keep up the pension and welfare system. The young generation is blamed for not fulfilling their duties assigned to them by the «generation contract». Such framing can be seen as rather strengthening the role of women as primary care givers by now suggesting that society «values care work equally» to gainful employment. 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

In general, the Dutch diagnosis of the gender inequality problem addressed by family policies seems to be located in the labour market, increasingly linked closely 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 main goal in almost all texts. The problem is mostly pictured as a matter of 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. The problem is becoming degendered, and in texts that specifically mention 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 of 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, even –exceptionally– 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 to solve the friction that arises because women are supposed to be responsible for caring, while also being urged to go out and work. The Dutch family policy does not address gender inequality within families as a problem in itself, due to this strong accent on labour market problems resulting from the domestic division of labour.

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: most texts tend to make all people responsible for resolving the (combining) problem, irrespective of sex. This can be mainly 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 (van Lamoen, Paantjens and Verloo, 2004). 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.

### **Greece**

The demographic issue is a central frame in family policy in Greece. The two major parties consider the demographic problem as a national threat, resulting from a crisis in the value-orientations of society. More specifically, they severely criticize contemporary life-styles and values that are the products of materialism and economic prosperity. They don’t take into account changes in the institution of the family and in the labour market or depict new family types as a problem. There is no overt reference to gender roles except for the traditional heterosexual model of a couple 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 women that should be alleviated.

Policies on maternity protection are also related to the demographic problem and the low birth rate. Working women during pregnancy and working mothers during childbed and breast-feeding are depicted as in need for support in order to fulfil their duties. Such frames do not express party ideologies or cultural patterns, but refer to legal measures for the convergence of Greek legislation with EU directives. Gender equality however is not the perspective used and the main aim is to protect women to fulfil their –traditional– duties (raise happy families).

Working conditions in Greece are such that they present problems for parenting. Working hours are inflexible, the range of options available to employees is limited, and working hours and the hours observed by the social infrastructure are incompatible. Hence parental facilities are necessary for women's employment. In the discussions on the establishment of provisions such as day-long kindergarten and primary schools these provisions are stressed to be «a vital measure for families and more specifically for families with two working parents». Simultaneously, the regulation is meant to improve pre-school education. Although the text refers to both parents gender equality is not mentioned, because the problem of upbringing children is seen as concerning mainly women. Most of the frames reflect a dichotomous traditional perception of gender roles.

Recent provisions neither take into account 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. There is no general consciousness of equality between men and women in the Greek policy context. As a result 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**

Our analysis shows shifts in the frames on «reconciliation of work and family life» in Austria in the period 1995-2002. These shifts occur along changing (hegemonic) discourses attributed to political power balances (changes of government). These shifts do not occur along an even line without contradictions; the frames rather add conflicting or even divergent meanings. A gender equality perspective in the sense of a more equal

sharing of family responsibilities between men and women has been weakened between 1995 and 2003; in its place, a de-gendered frame focusing on the family/children as the smallest important cell of society has emerged.

In Austria our findings show a similar, yet markedly different, cooptation of gender concepts as at the EU-level (Stratigaki, 2004). Stratigaki argues that in the EU a key concept –sharing– was conceptually transformed by its subordination to other policy priorities –labour market–, resulting in loss of potential for changing gender relations. (Stratigaki, 2004, p. 3). A cooptation of concepts did also occur 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 EU-level. In contrast to Stratigaki’s findings, 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. In such framing, the family is a de-gendered place of important socialisation and tasks for society, and there is a naturalisation of women and men and a retraditionalisation of the distribution of labour. Even in the frames of the left parties after 2000, female gainful employment is not stressed as much as it was before 2000; rather, «reconciliation» of work and family life for women is stressed. Cooptation in Austrian «reconciliation» frames changed the original meaning of «sharing responsibilities between men and women» to 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. This new frame seems to carry rather contradictory goals: women are to be both primarily responsible 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 then is a metaphor for market oriented flexibilisation: on the one hand, the new frame identifies women’s (full-time) labour-market 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.

## DISCUSSION

There are several similarities across Europe in family policy as connected to 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 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 the balance between these two goals shifts heavily towards the economy and gender equality seems to fade away. In this sense our findings are parallel to the analysis of Stratigaki (2004) for the European Union level.

Accents on presenting *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 demanding 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 indispensable in order to make it more attractive to women to perform these tasks and to choose the right things: care and housework. Such a valorisation of care and housework that is presented as part of gender equality policies in Austria amounts to a retraditionalisation of gender roles.

A second common pattern 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 new phenomenon. Because there are many problems for society in connection to families, such as low fertility and generational solidarity, and in the absence of a gender equality perspective, this framing is easily 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, it is striking 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, the analysed texts are gendered, but not from a gender equality perspective. The Austrian frame (since 1999/2000) is the strongest of this kind, seeing the problem to be that women are forced to choose between work and family, and arguing for a family policy that facilitates 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. Here the findings of our analysis are in line with the study of Duncan (2002), and the frame is linked to the «demographic time bomb discourse», and especially to negative policy responses. 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. The soft policy for gender equality 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.

Our analysis also shows attempts to legitimise gender equality by *linking measures originating 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. This is a problem, as increasingly the accent seems not to be on gender equality, but on traditional gender roles within families. These retraditionalised frames redirect measures such as reconciliation towards goals that could very well be contradictory to gender equality. The underlying assumption in such frames seems to be that gender equality is not good for families, and hence detrimental to society. The Austrian case shows this most clearly, and Greece to some extent. In the Netherlands and at the EU level, the assumption that gender equality leads to well functioning families seems to predominate, but elements of the opposite can be found too. In the absence of an explicit gender equality family policy 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 actually reinforcing gender inequality.

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